

MARIA GUNSBURG AND GUSTAV ENGEL COLLECTION, 1939-1945
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TRANSLATION:

The following translation is available in the supplementary materials of the Maria Gunsberg and Gustav Engel collection.

Translation from Polish - Diary

03/1551

Engineer Gustav Engel

On Wednesday, July 2, 1941, there was no longer anyone from the Soviet authorities left in our small town. The waiting and unrest lasted for three long summer days, i.e. until July 5. The local people, as well as the inhabitants of nearby villages did not miss this opportunity: all the remaining stores, offices as well as vacated living quarters of the Soviets were without exception totally ransacked. Neither were the headquarters spared – all remaining supplies and equipment were looted. Only the Ukrainian warehouses, “Sojuch”, secured by the Ukrainian organizations remained intact. A significant part of the population managed to pick up a lot. All that could be seen during that time were individuals, men, women and youngsters, straining under the load of the loot. This bustle lasted non-stop even for the first few days after the take-over by the Germans; it ended when notices were posted on the town’s walls forbidding looting and pilfering under death penalty.

The first German troops turned out in our town as late as July 5. They marched on the main road in the direction of Kopyczynce[?]. They were, for the most part, terrifyingly motorized, well equipped units. Only the smaller units and artillery divisions stopped in our town for a few-days’ rest. Our first interaction was precisely with those units. As soon as they settled in, most of them came to town looking for eggs and poultry – without paying for anything, of course. In spite of the fact that our apartment was located on the side and quite a way from town, we were not spared from their visits. Our neighbor, sitting on the terrace in front of the entrance to our joint hall, soon called us to act as translators for communication with the arriving soldiers. We learned some rather interesting things. We assumed that they would be extremely enthusiastic about their success, but to our amazement it turned out that they lacked enthusiasm and were going to war with the Soviets only out of duty but critical about the war with them. They expressed their feelings openly (without hiding them), saying that they had enough of this war and would have preferred to return to their homes, in order to enjoy the victories in the West. They promptly understood that on this front they must deal with a fierce enemy and that victory will not come easily. As it appeared from further conversation, in spite of the steady retreat of the Soviet army, the Germans suffered considerable losses, surpassing already in this phase those suffered on all the other fronts together. And thus, according to one of our guests – a non-commissioned field artillery officer – his unit, fighting from the early days of the war, had lost no more than 4 “comrades” on all the fronts together, while in the battles from Przemysl to Tarnopol they lost already most of the division’s crew, namely over 20 individuals, so that in order to replenish their numbers they were forced to stop here with us. All this news boosted our morale, by reinforcing our belief that Hitler had finally met a properly prepared adversary by whom he will, sooner or later, be defeated. However, we never expected that this victory will come at the cost of annihilation of 99% of the European Jewry. Already on that day, the local Jewry suffered their first losses. The first victim was the wife of the local physician, Dr. Kolina, who while occupying an apartment in the center of town, stood at the window watching the German soldiers marching in. That is when someone from the local inhabitants at her as being a Jew; she still managed to move back into the room and escape the shots aimed at her. That is when several thugs barged into her apartment shooting her dead on the spot. In addition to her, two more elderly citizens – Jews who lived in a small house situated on the main road - were also murdered.

Nevertheless, these events at the time did not yet cause any panic in the city because we had not yet heard about the tragic incidents taking place in the early days after the Germans marched into Tarnopol. The first news to reach us was so terrible, while at the same time so chaotic and inconsistent that the belief here was that it was simply impossible, or at least quite exaggerated. Unfortunately, it soon became obvious that in fact the number of victims was more than double the number previously given, i.e. 2500-

3000, meaning that it exceeded 6000, of which 90%, were men. Given that I myself was until 1940 a permanent resident of Tarnopol, and having there my own as well as my wife's closest relatives, friends and acquaintances, we tried to obtain more specific news which, in fact we soon did. We were horrified, and in spite of such news we simply could not believe that the German nation which prided itself with the western culture could be capable of perpetrating such mass murders and calculated bestiality on innocent civilian population. Additional news giving more specific details and describing the manner of carried out pogroms, as well as listing many names of victims, left no room for doubts. The first to lose their lives were individuals who were called by the authorities under the pretext of organizing an administration of the Jewish congregation. Of the 40 respected citizens from professional intellectuals and business circles, only the organizer of this project, Prof. Gottfried, remained alive as reward for his services. All the others who had shown up were taken out of town and, having been lined up, were buried alive on the grounds of the Petrykowska[?] brick factory, at the bottom of the hill. Some of the victims, such as Mr. Schenkelbach and Mr. Schlitz, took their sons with them to the first meeting of the council of the Jewish congregation, in the belief that they would be safer there; they perished together with their fathers. When in 1944, after the triumphant Red Army marched in and the graves were opened, all the corpses of the victims were found lined up in a standing position – among them one had his arms around two somewhat shorter bodies. Those were the remnants of Schenkelbach, holding his two sons in his last embrace.

Further mass murders were carried out by having SS patrols gather all men from Jewish homes, regardless of age, allegedly to do work for the army; none of them returned home. Other military divisions accompanied gathered Jews to the jail building, where they had to take part in transporting corpses to the cemetery, preparing graves for them and, finally, ending by being shot and finding their own final rest in them. Those who opposed, or who tried to escape, were shot on the spot. Many women who attempted to free their husbands, sons or brothers were met with the same fate, under pretext that they disrupted the ongoing procedure. Only a few succeeded to be released by pay-off in the form of gold watches or [illegible]. These murders went on for four consecutive days. There was hardly a Jewish family which did not mourn the loss of a close family member.

In the meantime, the organization of local authorities has begun. Dr. Bazar, the present county veterinarian, was appointed temporary district sub-prefect and in turn became in charge of organizing provision of most needed essentials to the local population – the Ukrainian local population “Sojush”[alliance]. “Sojush” carried out the task thanks to the fact that already prior to the German occupation all the bigger warehouses of rural products were under their management and thus they were able to protect them from pillage during the critical days. At the same time, the citizens (except for those of Jewish descent) were called upon to open their stores and workshops, exempting however craftsmen who, regardless of their ethnicity, were allowed to work in their professions. At the same time, the local division of the Ukrainian militia was organized. Their first heroic deed was murder of approximately thirty Jewish citizens. Having gathered several tens of Jewish men, they led them, presumably to work, to the barracks located outside of town, where they murdered them all in a bestial manner! and buried them right there. Only three individuals succeeded, by means of a substantial bribe, to be released and to return to their families.

As was later established, the victims were massacred in an unbelievable manner and buried on the site of the barracks.

After a while, the authorities ordered the establishment of the Jewish Council, the so-called “Judenrat”. The attorney Dr. Sereth, was appointed Chairman, and was empowered to select eight additional members. Mr. Steinig, Dr. Safrin, Dr. Hahn, Dr. Stern, Goldstein, Eisner, Bemse and Schwarz volunteered for the post. Mr Asderbal became the secretary. As early as in the first days of their officiating, it turned out that their main functions would consist of immediate meeting of all the requirements regardless whether from the local authorities or from individuals for their own use. This meant orders for supplies of any kind, so called “Beschaffungen”[procurement], of objects, money as well

as any number of people needed for work. All the Jews, regardless of age and sex, were subject to forced labor. The Jewish Council had more difficulties with supplying the work force because people tried every possible means to elude it, for fear of suffering the fate of the whole group of Jews murdered at the barracks. They also wanted to avoid merciless treatment and beatings at the hands of the Ukrainian militia who always tried to outdo the Germans at their bestiality.

Very soon we found out – and “felt” – that the Jews of the entire district were assigned a special protector in the person of a man named “Palfinger”, a dignitary for Jewish matters in the entire district of Tarnopol. Soon he reached us personally, at which time he proceeded to establish contributions in cash and metal, namely jewelry. In addition, he demanded a considerable number of coupons for suits, coats, shoes, men’s and women’s underwear, bed linen, silver wear for 12, sets of dishes, etc. etc. and everything of best quality, unused, and everything to be delivered at once, since he intended to take it with him to Tarnopol. Of course everything was complied with in order to get rid of this “nice and dear” guest as soon as possible. He turned out to be “very good” for us in the beginning since no day passed without similar orders. It happened often that during one day one would receive several similar requests from various sources, such as central local authorities, or units spending leisure time in passing through, or coming here for the above purpose. Their demands went in different directions, and were so diverse that it was impossible to foresee what they may be at the given time.

It is understood that it is the host’s duty to cater to his guests. Those guests were picky and very demanding. Brand name vodka, liquors and wines, meat, ham, sausages and breads had to be of top quality. To meet even the most difficult and most costly demands was a matter of course, while the slightest miss, even if only in timing, placed our “Representatives” not only in danger of getting acquainted with “Reitpeitsche” [riding whip] but also of raised ...?.charges. Understandingly, the Jewish Council did everything to avoid such retaliations. To meet those requirements, it became necessary to purchase a variety of items in advance; in order to accomplish it a special purchasing and warehousing division was created which required larger cash amounts. That money had to be supplied by the local population which, in addition to material contributions had to cover all of the cash expenses of the Jewish council. In order to meet the imposed burdens, cash as well as objects, a separate requisition and execution department was created. That department was taken over by a newly established militia temporarily composed of 12 individuals, headed by Mr. Safrin jun.[?] as its Commander. They distinguished themselves from other mortals who wore white, 10cm wide armbands with blue Star of David, by wearing yellow armbands with a sign “Ordnungsma n” [Order keeper], and a smaller star of David. Members of the “Judenrat” were decorated with dark blue armbands with a black star and a sign reading “Mitglied des Judenrates” [Member of the Jewish Council], or “Obman des Judenrates” [Representative of the Jewish Council]. After a while, the “Ordnungsamt” [Order keeping service] was given navy color hats with little emblems and a star of David, while the Commander received in addition a metal star, and Serra(?) – flat metal nails placed on the hats and on the armbands.

For the most part, our “Ordnungsamt” did not behave badly since, after all, they got all they demanded from most of the inhabitants, such as the levied amounts of cash, without having to use pressure. Of course, the members of the Jewish Council as well as the Order Keeping Service, together with their families and relatives were basically exempt from all contributions. On the other hand, whenever one of them had in his home a “procurement” item such as a piece of furniture or object, he would then get paid a considerably higher amount, sometimes even several times the object’s current value.

The second most important function of the Order Keeping Service was to deliver, at the request of the Ukrainian mayor, individuals to perform various occasional chores, mostly men to clean streets and sidewalks, and women for garden and home work. The work as such was not too hard but the reason for avoiding it was the fact that while working on the street or sidewalk one was in danger of heroic acts by soldiers, mostly from the 4I and 4D group. Characteristically, some of the Ukrainian “dignitaries believed

that it was their “obligation” to take advantage of the situation by requesting that the Jewish Council provide domestic help for their “Ladies”. – Some time later, the “Landkommissar” (regional prefect) abolished the requirement to provide any work force for the Ukrainians, i.e. their institutions.

In the second half of September, a new German dignitary, Gaukler, appeared in our town. While the nature of his position was unknown, within a short time he robbed all the Jewish inhabitants while torturing and wreaking his rage on them. One of his first victims was Dr. Stern, member of the Jewish Council. While appearing in his apartment he announced that he was requisitioning the apartment for himself and that the owner, and his family, must vacate it. From the 4-room apartment, he gave him only an insignificant number of least valuable furniture items, bed linen and kitchen ware. All the silver, tableware, rugs, furs, better clothing, etc., etc. had to remain in the apartment. In the end he forced them, under threat of shooting them, to hand over all the available cash, foreign currency and jewelry. Suspecting that they may hide some of it, he personally submitted all the household members, one by one, men and women, to body search, stripping them naked and hitting them with his riding whip until they bled. An enormous panic spread through the entire town. Nobody could foresee who his next victim would be. He terrified the town in this manner during several weeks, piling into his apartment and warehouse various Jewish properties. Among other things, he appeared the first evening in the apartment of Dr. Friedman, a lawyer, where after a scrupulous search and confiscation of a considerable stock of various valuables as well as a wallet containing several hundred zlotys, he demanded to be given furs even though he did not find them in the apartment but had been told that they had them. As a result, the owner of the apartment was beaten until he bled. Those unfortunate people thought that this was the end of the incident, that after all the looter would be satisfied with the loot. Thus they became alarmed when the very next day there appeared in the apartment the man’s messenger demanding that they hand over the man’s fur and the woman’s caracul fur coat.. Realizing that nothing would be gained by refusing, they expressed willingness to hand over the furs and explained that the wife only owned a seal skin fur, Nevertheless, the thug continued to insist on demanding the caracul fur which they never possessed and it took a great effort, and intervention from a member of the Jewish Council, for that “dignitary” to finally consent and accept the furs.

In the end, through interference on the part of our main protector, Palfinger, who apparently did not like the ongoing competition, the looter was ordered to leave. Prior to his departure, he loaded up his entire loot, consisting of most expensive furniture and several pianos, and sent it to his address in Stuttgart. After a while we heard rumors to the effect that as a result of not having accompanied all the looted Jewish possessions he was punished by being sent to the front.

Almost simultaneously with Gaukler’s appearance, the first so-called “camp action” took place here. As a result of an order from the “Arbeitsamt” [Labor Department] to bring in several scores of men to the labor camp situation in Borki Wielke, our “Arbeitsamt”, with the collaboration of the Ukrainian militia, conducted a round up. The rounded up candidates were pulled out of their beds and placed in the local jail and kept there until the next day when, under guard, they were taken in waiting cars to the camp in Borki. As of that time, a considerable number of men, ages 15 to 60, no longer slept at home, but at the homes of Aryan acquaintances, in their attics or huts, or at least in their own hiding places. Round-ups for camps became now a constant threat to almost all of us, because new “Einsatz”[action] was needed every so often.

Shortly after, another round-up of scores of individuals, this time for forced labor in Hloboczek Wielki. The first and the second camp used inmates in local quarries, mostly for breaking and extracting stone, crushing it and loading it on trains..That was hard work even for regular workers under normal conditions, and here there were mostly professional intellectuals and business people who never before did any physical work, and were now forced to perform at high level, while being undernourished.

In order to prevent a breakdown among their own people as a result of malnutrition, our Jewish Council organized additional food supplies by providing each camp with 6 kilograms of bread a week, plus a certain amount of fat for the poor. To make it work, a special department for care of camp inmates was created. This function was organized in the meantime as a result of instructions given by the headquarters in Krakow, "Jewish Social Self-Help Agency", i.e. "Judische Soziale Selbsthilfe". Our agency received from the Krakow headquarters proper instructions as well as identity documents issued by the General Government authorities in Krakow for delegates and co-workers of that institution. In addition, in the first three months, subsidies in the amount of 1000 zlotys a month were received from the Krakow headquarters. Once the subsidies were no longer received, our Agency had to provide the needed sums of money. Work of this institution was not easy since our population was always harassed with collection of all kinds of charges. One must remember that, with the exception of several physicians, dentists or a dozen or so craftsmen, the rest of the population of our small town supported itself only by successfully selling parts of its real estate or other personal properties. It was only thanks to the constant and difficult involvement of those inhabitants who dedicated all their energy to helping those unfortunate ones that our camp inmates were always provided with sufficient supplies of goods as well as clean underwear and soap. It soon became necessary to supply a change of shoes and clothing, since the individuals engaged in hard physical work in the quarries and sand piles quickly wore out to shreds their shoes and clothes. A collection of old clothing items was ordered; after the items were washed and brought into usable condition, they were sent to the needy ones. The Ladies' Committee was called upon to collaborate in this new undertaking. That committee undertook, in addition to collecting linens and underwear of all kind, to also provide weekly packages, so that each camp inmate received weekly, in addition to 6kg of bread supplied by the Jewish Council, sweet or salty buns made out of 1kg of wheat flour, ¼ liter of honey – or ¼ kg of butter, and 6-8 eggs. The regular supply of packages had a very positive effect on the population by boosting the people's morale with the ability of enabling the unfortunate ones to carry out their hard work. Thanks to that effort, for a long time there was no loss of life among our people in the camp, while in every other one there were daily shootings of inmates mainly for inability to keep up with the pressure, or weakening on the job, or even for being caught by the commanding officer while resting for a moment. It was enough for the officer in charge to come across an emaciated, worn out inmate, to pull a trigger and with one shot end that inmate's miserable life.

Several gallows were standing ready on the assembly area and they were often in use. Individuals were hanged for minor infractions, or for inability to continue working, while the escape of one inmate was punished by hanging of as many as a dozen or so of his roommates or work group members.

The commanding officer of the camp was a German who lived in the village outside of the camp. The guard consisted of several Ukrainian militia men, as well as a score of Jewish militia men who had their own commanding officer with whom the German commanding officer maintained good, even cordial relations. They kept strict rigor, and sometimes they themselves caused the loss of one of their unfortunate "brothers". In Borki as well as Kluboczek the position of Commanding Officers was filled by Jewish refugees from the West whose command of the German language was better than Polish.

In addition to the action of supplying the needy, another action was initiated for which each family obligated itself to provide 1 kg of products (or the equivalent in cash) every month. The kitchen gave out approximately 100 dinners and 50 to 60 breakfasts. In addition, a certain number of children of the camp inmates was assigned to some more affluent inhabitants who provided hearty dinners for them. This institution had a great number of responsibilities which, nevertheless, they met to the satisfaction of all those involved. One must also give recognition to the great generosity of the population which, with only few exceptions, was constantly contributing, and sometimes exceeded in meeting the required quotas, including the amount of food supplies.

Furthermore, many daily problems were added to the normal concerns. Almost every day brought new surprises, each of which brought as a consequence, in addition to degradation, a lot of unpleasantness and additional expenses. In spite of that, the labor camps, the so called “lagers” where over 100 of our people lived remained the community’s main concern. The conditions in the camps kept getting worse, resulting in increased number of deaths which, in turn, resulted in off-the-street round-ups to replace the labor force. In addition, shooting and hanging became regular daily events. The slightest misstep could mean death. In fact, death was waiting at every step for all those unfortunate ones. It happened quite often that the “Commandant”, following a substantial drinking binge, arrived in his car at the camp late at night for an inspection. If he happened upon or only saw from afar an inmate leaving the barrack for a normal bodily function, he would immediately put his gun to use.

An additional occurrence was the outbreak of typhoid and typhus epidemics in the camps. The afflicted individuals were not being treated – they were shot. As a result, many sick persons with high fever did not admit to being sick but continued to go to work. Their co-workers tried as much as they could to shield them and carry out their assigned work, alternating in carrying them on their shoulders from and to the work place. Families of the more affluent camp inmates began efforts to buy freedom for their closest ones; the ransom price varied depending on the whim of the member of the Jewish Council who acted as a middleman, so-called “Verbindungsmann“ [Connection Man], and fluctuated between 3,000 and 8,000, or even 10,000 zlotys, in dollar currency, metal or coupons, depending on the demands of those involved. Carrying out of those transactions was in fact in the hands of the “Verbindungsmann” who remained in direct contact with the Commandant of the camp, or the camp’s commandant of the Jewish militia from whom he obtained release of a few individuals for adequate ransom. Thus the released individuals were deleted from the camp records as having gone to their eternal rest. This started with buying out sick persons who were forced to pretend to be well. Unfortunately, in most cases their families who sacrificed the remnants of their means did not enjoy the presence of their dear ones for long because often, after only a few days, they came to the end of their miserable lives, much to the chagrin of the remaining family members.

In order to obtain funds for ransom of individuals of limited means, the ransom amounts collected from the more affluent was raised so that, for every 3-4 more affluent persons one camp poor inmate was released without paying for it. It is obvious that every middlemen had a free hand in handling these transactions and it was entirely up to his conscientiousness to decide on the extent of turning the situation to his own advantage. There were cases when in spite of receiving ransom funds it took weeks, even months, without results. That happened when the Jewish Council decided that it may be possible to demand and obtain additional sums from the interested parties. In the end they got what they wanted because, in order to save a husband or a son, people would strip themselves completely of all their remaining assets.

As mentioned already, all Jews, regarding of gender, ages 14 to 60, were subject to forced labor. The organizer of Jewish labor force was the so-called “Arbeitsamt” (Work Department) at which a separate office for registration of Jews was set up on October 1941. For the time being, only men 14 to 60 were required to register and were issued registration cards, the so-called “Meldekarte”. Some of them received at the time of registration assignment to steady work, mostly to town quarries, the Ukrainian Confederacy, to road repairs, as well as renovation of barracks. In addition, the “Arbeitsamt” needed daily a certain number of men and women for odd jobs. People were anxious to get work and, assuming that a steady job at the quarries, the barracks or road building would protect them from the threat of being sent to camp, let alone not being subjected to pay dues, albeit low ones, for getting work even though they still had to bribe their managers. The managers in turn did everything to retain those individuals for themselves and whenever one of them was caught, they had them released – which resulted in considerable rise in the “membership” ransom fees in given enterprises. The coming of spring was

favorable to those transactions since each of those enterprises was then able to increase considerably their activities given the new demand for work force.

As early as the first half of May 1942, we heard disturbing news about preparations being made in Tarnopol for deportation of larger groups of Jewish women respectively girls to farming work in the area of Jagielnice and Czortkow. It was not until the first half of June that several transports of girls, going from Tarnopol to Jagielnica passed through our town.

This was the beginning of the period of girls' hiding before the expected round-ups. In fact, the first round-up took place at the end of June, and the second – and last – in early July. All in all 20 girls were involved.

Our department of care for the camp inmates received a new contingent of “Lodgers” who needed to be provided with additional items, part of them linens and clothing, most importantly shoes.

Due to the fact that the camp in question was rather far, our Jewish Council reached an understanding with the Jagielnica Jewish Council which, in exchange for our providing supplies to a substantial number of their men in the Htuboczek camp, they supplied our girls with the necessary provisions. Almost simultaneously with sending our second party of girls, our “Judenrat” received an order from the Gestapo to immediately deliver to the penal camp in Kamionki (Podwoloczysk) all veterinary doctors from our congregation. This order was sent to all Jewish congregations in the entire district of Tarnopol. It was later established that the said order was the doing of their Aryan colleagues who deemed it proper to approach their chief – a German – with a memo in which they complained about the fact that the Jewish doctors were still practicing medicine, partly in a private practice. They were upset by the fact that, in spite of the ban, the peasant population showed more confidence in the Jewish doctors. As a result, two veterinary doctors were removed from our town but after a while, as a result of efforts on the part of their families, and a proper ransom, were later freed.

According to received news, the situation of our girls in Jagielnica was comparatively not bad. The work expected of them was not too hard and, most importantly, there was no special harassment. They lived in buildings, in group of 20 to 30, and were fairly comfortable. Each group managed a separate kitchen for themselves, receiving an allotment of provisions, which, supplemented by some received from home, were fully sufficient to prevent feeling hunger. Except for the work, they were not harassed and had a tranquil life. All of them returned to us only at the end of September or early October, tanned and satisfied with the time spent in a vacation place.

At the same time, our lives were all but normal. One lived in constant unrest, being in addition constantly pressed for all kinds of charges, most of all cash, the extent of which went against our means which kept shrinking daily.

As a result of arrivals of groups of Germans, namely stop-overs of small divisions traveling through, panic arose among our population. Aside from expenses involved, each of those divisions made a point of mercilessly ill-treating us. Thus, while stopping over in our town for a few hours while going through to Czortkow, the soldiers of the military police cavalry considered it a point of honor to sadistically and brutally mistreat any passing Jew. In addition, the “Judenrat” was forced to supply them with some fifty men who would take care of their horses. They did all sorts of things to those men, beating them till they bled. Naturally, as a result, it was not easy to get people for that purpose, given that the news of the arrivals would spread in a flash and the men would disappear, hiding in holes or running to the nearby woods. It ended up by the members of the Jewish militia having to do the job. I myself had the honor of meeting not only those soldiers but, what was worse, their whips as well. This occurrence took place on one Monday noon, while on the way to our kitchen in the company of another person on duty, on passing

the bridge, we heard some unclear calls. Not realizing that the calls were directed at us, we kept walking. When the calls did not stop but rather became louder to the extent that we could hear the word “Jude” (Jew), we stopped at once and turning in the direction from where the calls were coming, we saw a small group of cavalry men, well known to us, running directly at us with whips in their hands, while the one rushing at the head, the closest to us, held a gun aiming at us, ready to shoot. We immediately understood our unfortunate position. We stopped with trepidation awaiting their next moves. After I and my companion received as a welcome a substantial whipping, they ordered us to show them the way to the “Judenrat”. – Lucky for us. the Commandant of our militia came running and after he too received a considerable whipping, he started talking to them, giving us a chance to disappear from their sight.

Around that time, we started receiving troubling news about deportations to unknown destinations undertaken in larger Jewish settlements. Mention was made of departure of such trains which transported several thousand people, at one time, men, women and children regardless of age, from Lwow, as well as several other localities of that province.

The manner of carrying out those round-ups, loading of 60 individuals in a car, sealing the windows with barbed wire and partly with wooden planks, closing the doors from inside, not allowing anyone to take along anything except what they were wearing, left no doubt that the transports were intended for annihilation. Further news mentioning the town of Belz as the final stop confirmed our assumptions that a great number of such transports from various parts of the west were heading there to be annihilated. For a while we could not grasp the fact that in the 20th Christian century a nation priding itself on their presumably thousand-year culture, undertook this fight, were able to commit such mass murders on totally innocent population. And this is what a nation fighting to preserve culture in Europe looks like, calling on all other nations for unity in the common fight against the Soviets whose victory would mean distraction of that culture!!

Shortly after, in the second half of September, the first victim of such “action” was Mikulnice, a small town about 11 km from us. Over 1000 individuals, out of a Jewish community counting approximately 2000 were rounded up and after being loaded on the waiting trains were taken away. The remaining part of the population received orders to move immediately to the Tarnopol ghetto, thus making the little town of Mikulnice “Judenfrei” [free of Jews]. There remained on that spot approximately 20 dead bodies of persons murdered during the action for reasons of either trying to run away, or as punishment for any act of disobedience. They found their eternal rest on the no longer existing and broken down field of the old Jewish cemetery. Part of the families, instead of going to Tarnopol, came to our village and that is how we got all the news.

The beginning of the “action” and liquidation of the small gatherings in our district and in our closest neighborhood caused great unrest among us. This gave start to hectic preparations of hiding places for one’s families. This was easier for local Jews living until now in their own homes.

August went by without any unusual occurrences here. News was coming from Lwow about deportations to Belz thus depleting at a fast rate the local Jewish population which at the time of the creation of the ghetto counted 120,000. As I was able to verify later, my older brother, a veterinary doctor, was one of the victims killed in the second half of August. Having gotten out of the hell of the Janowski camp where, after having contracted typhus and having been ransomed and placed in an epidemic hospital, he was killed with other patients during an action carried out at that time. His letter addressed to us several days before in which he tells us about his life in the camp, about his serious illness and the hope of recovery and returning home was received sometimes later. In that same action I also lost one of my two sisters who, together with her husband, a pharmacist by profession, had to lose her life in the prime of life.. There remained my second sister who, while living in the Tarnopol ghetto together with her husband, daughter and son-in-law, fell into the claws of hooligans a month later, i.e. at the end of September. she

Having a Gestapo stamp on her Gestapo document confirming her employment as a housekeeper (“Haushalterin”) for three working persons, i.e. husband, daughter and son-in-law, and having assurance from the Judenrat that the stamp protects everyone from round-ups for labor camps as well as actions, she neglected any precautions as a result of which she fell into their hands. For that same reason a great number of people ended that way. It is important to mention that we had to pay a steep amount of money to the Judenrat who, on collecting all the identity documents of the workers as well as a lot of cash, took it to the “Judische Geschäftsstelle” [Jewish Agency] in Tarnopol where only the Manager remained in personal contact with the heads of the Gestapo and was the one to receive the larger part of the cash collected by Judenrat.

As appears from the above, the field of activities of the members of the Judenrat kept shrinking and was mainly limited to the function of executor for squeezing the remaining life juices out of the Jewish population, and to participate in the ongoing round-ups for forced labor in camps. Although they played an active part in systematic actions of liquidation of Jews, there existed in Tarnopol a second institution, named “Geschäftsstelle”(Agency) with wide powers over the Jewish population in the entire Tarnopol region. The Head of this Agency alone had access to the authorities and was getting from them direct orders concerning the Jewish population of the entire district, passing them on to the summoned representatives of the pertinent congregations. All the orders given by the German authorities were directed to the Head of the Agency who alone was allowed to deliver them into the hands of the German authorities. This mediation raised considerably the imposed burden on the already overburdened and drained Jewish population. In addition, the Agency collected a fee for every intervention undertaken for any of the congregation based on the type and degree of danger of the undertaking. The bigger the danger the higher the demanded fee. Their income was enormous, mostly in metal, jewelry or foreign currency. The previously mentioned action of stamping identity documents for working people was worth about hundreds of thousands. It is no wonder that those gentlemen were swimming in luxury and at the same time amassing wealth.

In the meantime, while carrying out actions in Tarnopol, where the Jews lived in a closed section of town from which they were able to go to work in groups only, those bandits had an easy task to round up a larger number of inhabitants each time. Assigned to it were hordes of SS, Gestapo men and Ukrainian militia, as well as members of the Jewish Order-Keeping Force engaged to collaborate; they scrupulously searched every building, checking every passing individual, regardless of age and sex, shooting on the spot the sick, old or resisting ones. Having found a baby hidden in an apartment, they were capable of bashing its head on the wall of the building in order to save a bullet.

All that was happening, according to constant speeches made, to save the 20th century culture from annihilation!

Almost every house in the neighborhood had one or more hiding places, some better equipped some less. They were underground, in municipal sewers, in cellars, in attics, or even in properly camouflaged parts of the apartments, so separated and with access so ingeniously hidden that often it was only after the walls were demolished that it became possible to go through. Unfortunately, most of the so cleverly and with so much effort created “Bunkers”, so called by the Germans, were discovered by our members of the Order Keeping Force among which there was a considerable percentage of scum, as well as 15-18 year old boys who did not yet fully realize the infamy of their actions. Besides, they often acted under threat to their lives if they did not carry out the duty of bringing in the proper number of victims. It also happened that in order to free his closest relatives who had been discovered and held, such a hero thought it proper and justified to turn in someone well hidden in a “bunker” where several tens of individuals were hiding. The follow-up to the action taken by one such “Ordnungsman” [Order Keeping Man] was mostly denunciation of another bunker sheltering the family of the traitor by the Ordnungsman who suffered in the first instance. And thus it went round and round, always to great advantage of the Germans.

Also, the action of pulling out people from the uncovered underground “bunkers” was assigned by the Germans first of all to the Jewish and Ukrainian militias. It never happened that even the cruelest SS-man or Gestapo Dienst would dare to go down to the underground bunker. As it appears, they preferred never to risk their precious lives! But how strong they turned out to be when facing the defenseless, unfortunate ones gathered on the assembly places where they were forced to remain motionless for long hours in sitting position while awaiting deportation and placement in cattle cars – 60 persons in each. Such a transport was on the way for several days, without any food.

The incoming news contributed in great measure to our unease. In the meantime, in the second part of September orders were given for immediate relocation of Jews from 3 little neighboring towns, Budzanow, Janow and Strusow[?] to our locality. Thus from about 3,500 to over 5,000 our community was to be increased. In spite of the only 3-day time allowance, the order was carried out in the period set by the authorities. The inhabitants of these little towns, occupying to a large extent living quarters on their own large or small real estate properties handed down through generations, were forced to leave at once, leaving behind not only the properties but most of their personal belongings, For the time being it was possible for us to individually rent them accommodations with us; the more affluent ones took advantage of it. For the rest, our Judenrat made available buildings of former Jewish institutions, as well as a few places of worships, so that “no one was left on the street”. In spite of some difficulties and lack of comfort, nobody complained knowing what this gathering of the Jewish population of several towns was meant to be. In spite of it, the sight of the number of country wagons loaded with all kinds of most indispensable household items, clothes and linens, and carrying on top groups of men, women, young people and children of all ages and in all conditions was worthy of the brush of a talented artist. The majority of onlookers consisting of the local population had tears in their eyes at the thought of how many of those people, old ones, healthy adolescents and children will lose their lives as victims. One question kept coming up: Why? And what for? Yet, who could have given us an answer?! We could not have been convinced by the allegations made by the Germans blaming the Jews on the one hand for the world’s financial situation leading to the war for their own purposes and, on the other hand, for being responsible for provoking war with the purpose of Communizing all of Europe.

The fact that we no longer had any doubts about what the near future held for our community gave rise to a new period characterized by entire families constantly leaving every night their homes located in the center of town for the homes of friends living on the outskirts.

Since we belonged to the lucky ones outside of towns, every night we hosted several friends and their families from the center of town. As a result of the growing panic, we used to go after midnight together with our guests to nearby woods from where we would return to our homes only early morning. This lasted for a few weeks until one night our “Kriminal Polizei” [Criminal Police] discovered such night gathering in a nearby neighborhood and arrested everyone present together with the home owners accusing them of defying the authorities. It was only after payment of substantial ransom they were released two days later. That occurrence put a stop to the night gatherings with us and considerably increased the number of people hiding with their good Aryan friends where, nevertheless, and for the most part, they still had to pay substantial amounts of money. For a short period of time we also found night shelter with our acquaintances from the neighborhood who were occupying a vacant house. We were not able to take advantage of their hospitality for a longer period of time because of their high and continuously growing demands. Upon a suggestion of our Jewish neighbors who were occupying an apartment half a floor above us in that little house, we joined them in finding shelter in their hiding place in the tiny attic in a little tower with well camouflaged access. We took advantage of that shelter until the transfer to the shortly after created a Jewish neighborhood, in fact even somewhat later.

We were not meant to avail ourselves of the shelter for long since on 28 October the Gestapo decreed immediate creation of a Jewish district. The part of town intended for that purpose consisted of only a

part of Strzelecka street, from No.1 to 402, part of Podzamcze street from No. 1 to 332, and the entire so-called Pokrowka together with two small side streets. A housing commission for assignment of accommodations was called into being by the Judenrat. Having been called upon to be a member of the Commission, I made a plan that same day of the situation of our neighborhood, verifying the exact number of toilets made available to us at which time it became obvious that we would have to place several families in each apartment. Thus, for the first time, several families would have to live together in one room. In order to make living together possible, people were allowed to chose living quarters as well as roommates, which of course made our work easier. We did manage the situation almost without a hitch, so that before expiration of the deadline the entire Jewish population found their "location" in the assigned part of town. The picture of the town during these two days when one saw, converging from all sides, groups of Jews of both sexes, of all ages, heading in one direction, carrying all kinds of bundles and hand luggage, or pushing their belongings on wheelbarrows or hand carriages, will remain in our memory for ever. Because of shortage of accommodations, only the barest household necessities were taken along, simply leaving behind most of the furnishings of the given apartments. Hardly anyone was able to find buyers for the items left behind due to their number and great choice.

All the above problems and hardship could not compare to the fear of eminent action hanging over our heads. Our forebodings soon became reality; only three days after dragging us into the assigned part of town, we received in early morning news of the arrival in town, during the night from November 2nd to 3rd of a train consisting of several tens of empty cars. There was no longer any doubt that on that night one must expect round-ups for the purpose of filling the empty cars. The news which spread like lightning immediately caused the fleeing from this designated section of town into all directions. Whoever had any possibilities to find a temporary shelter fled at once. The haste was caused by rumors that at noon the district would be closed, making it much harder to get out. That, for us, seemed more favorable given that; in anticipation of such events, our two daughters had not yet moved to the new district and were still remaining in our apartment. As a result, we and our former neighbors went there and together we occupied the still existing hiding place where, luckily, we remained all of the next day through the "resettlement action", as the Germans called it.

It did not take long for the next events to take place. On the following day, approximately at 4 a.m., the entire neighborhood was surrounded by the S.S and Gestapo forces arriving from Tarnopol together with the Ukrainian militia called upon to assist. The "Judenrat" and "Ordnungsdienst" was called upon to accompany and serve them with directions regarding locations and existing hiding places.

In spite of their full cooperation, they did not succeed to save everyone, even less all the members of their families even though apparently the entire "Judenrat" and "Ordnungsdienst" as well as their families had been guaranteed assurance of immunity.

From the sound of shootings reaching us, we realized that the action had begun. The shooting lasted non-stop for the whole day: while the people were being brought out of the shelters as well as when they were being taken to the gathering yard. The shots were for attempts at running away, thus to inflict fear.

Who can grasp the horror of the situation and the terror of those victims caught during the day in the yard, sitting almost motionless while awaiting the march and loading onto the waiting cars, the final destination of which was "Death"? I believe that only those remaining still in hiding and in constant danger of discovery and sharing the fate of the others, were able to put themselves in their situation. The same had to be true of all the members of the "Judenrat" and the "Ordnungsplatz" who so suddenly were affected by the loss of their parents, spouses or children. Still, on subsequent interventions and pleas, and considering the willingness to cooperate during the entire action, they were granted release of their spouses, but the children had to remain.. In one instance, a released wife of a militia man was called to leave the yard, she heard a desperate call from her beloved boy, "mommy you are leaving?" She sat down again, taking the

child in her arms and giving up the opportunity to leave. As a result of further pleas by the desolate husband for the release of the wife and child, he was assigned to the transport. The "action" took place as follows: the "band", divided in a number of groups, went from house to house, scrupulously looking everywhere, from attics to cellars, knocking at every suspected part of the walls, floors, ovens, etc. Inside, all the pieces of furniture, utensils, accessories, were moved and emptied of all provisions; they picked up only the better and more valuable objects, trampling on and destroying the less valuable Jewish possessions. Those hordes went in groups, grabbing and destroying everything, never forgetting the main objective, namely to find and pull out from the "mouse traps" the people in hiding. . We heard the commotion at the loading place growing louder as these unfortunate victims were being brought out. We were staying only about 250 meters away from the tracks. During the entire time the train was standing, which lasted until 4 in the morning, one could hear children's constant crying and adult's shouting and lamenting.

It was only at 9 in the morning, having heard from our hosts that some of the people hiding outside of the quarters were coming in, we decided to go in as well. It is hard to imagine and harder to describe the sight we saw on entering our apartment. The entrance door fully open, the tiles and windows smashed, the second door to our and neighboring apartment in the same condition, with most of the windows smashed. In the apartment itself, the beds thrown around, while the bed linens, underwear, dresses, as well as all kinds of items from the drawers, boxes and suitcases thrown around together with pots, glassware, porcelain ware and food supplies, such as flour, barley, salt etc. The crowning of this art of destruction was the spilling of soup prepared for the previous day, several glasses of sour milk as well as smashing of several tens of eggs. In short, a sight worthy to be preserved for future generations. In spite of this chaos, we noticed at once that our big trunk, previously used when going on summer vacations, was missing. Lately it had been used as a closet for storing the rest of our clothes and linens. As it turned out, the trunk, the sight of which caused none other than the head of the Gestapo to lose his temper and express himself by saying: "What the Jews always possess!?", was taken by him, together with all its contents. This alone caused a great loss to us, since most of the provisions were intended to provide some funds for our survival. Lucky for us, thanks to the foresight of my wife and daughters, a certain amount of valuables, together with our furs which were stored with our former neighbor, a Pole, remained at our disposal.

Details of yesterday's unfortunate events received in the meantime, expressed in the number of 1360 persons deported and twenty some killed on the spot, made us forego the thoughts of material losses and instead forced us to plan ahead. In one swoop we lost almost 1/3 of our state (?). In spite of it, the head of this undertaking took issue with the Judenrat for their tardiness which presumably caused the fiasco.

During all that day of the action, the Judenrat kept on their locations buffets generously provided with various meat items, beverages and cigarettes available to arriving guests. In the evening, a dinner was ordered for them at a railroad station restaurant, paid by the Judenrat as well.

Of course, this considerable part of our conglomeration consisted mostly of our close friends. Among them were also our closest neighbors occupying the apartment on the other side of our hall – 3 families also coming from Tarnopol, namely Dr. Kirschhorn[?] with his wife and daughters, pharmacist Polak with his wife and Dr. Friedman{?} with his wife and little son. We were surprised since we were sure that they had left the house as well, having heard from us the news about the oncoming danger. We got the explanation from one of them, who had been stripped of his professional title, namely that of pharmacist. The entire group – all 8 of them – took to the road at dusk, heading for the nearby woods where they had a planned hiding place. While on the road, they were attacked by a considerable group of hoodlums, as a result of which they returned to their apartment, in the hope of leaving again after dark. As a result of reassuring news spread by Judenrat, they gave up the plan to leave, remaining in the apartment where they were caught.

Being still under the impression of this news, and while together with our recently returned co-tenants, we were considering ways of facing this devastation, there suddenly appeared in our doorway an individual in SS uniform, As we soon learned, his mission was to collect the remaining properties belonging to yesterday's deportees; on that occasion our co-tenants were robbed of all their cash and jewelry. Taking advantage of the situation, I and my wife succeeded in disappearing and thus escaping without being subjected to additional robbery.

It took all day to erase the signs of the visit, namely to bring the apartment into some order. However, as early as the next day, we learned about the order to reduce the district by the entire Podranicze[?] together with its side streets. This amounted to over 50% of the lodgings, thus meaning further considerable reduction of the minimum allowed space per person. Having once again been called to the Housing Commission, we were forced to make use of any commercial facility, as well as of the bunk beds system. This was the only way we managed to settle this problem. Of course, once again the majority was forced to leave behind the vacated apartments, or sell for pennies, another part of their furnishings. We were able to secure for ourselves and our co-tenants a joint lodging in an apartment consisting of a large room with a kitchen in a single, well kept one-floor house, almost at the end of town. Thus, early next morning, we brought over our remaining possessions and managed to find room for 2 beds (for 4 people), and for a radio stand, the top of which was being used to store linen while the bottom served as a pantry. This apartment had to accommodate 8 families, namely 28 persons in all. Two other similar houses had to accommodate the same number of people.

In spite of the number of families sharing the apartment with the use of a single kitchen, the atmosphere in the house for the entire time, i.e. 7 months of cohabitation, was harmonious and quiet. Unfortunately, such was not the over-all situation; in many places the situation led to various misunderstandings which sometimes ended in blows.

As soon as we settled in, we decided to undertake preparations for a hiding place. We had to consider a large one that would accommodate all the tenants of the 3 apartments, namely about 80 individuals. We decided to use one of our 2 large basements, 4 x 6 meters in size, with a strong stone ceiling; after making an opening in the brick wall from the entry hall, and fitting in a suitable socle stone in place of the removed small window, an entry spot was made in the floor, 40 x 40cm in size. Properly and tightly fitted flap which opened from inside was to make it considerably more difficult to find us. We placed a bed above the entrance; on raising the straw mattress and moving away the flap in the floor, one could go down to the hiding place on the ladder placed there. In one of the corners, behind a curtain, we placed a "room closet bowl" and prepared a small cask with water, 2 lamps and a few candles. After several trials, we realized that it was a rather comfortable access as well as possibility to accommodate all who needed to make use of it. We anxiously awaited "a premiere" every day.

For now, the shelter rendered inestimable service to most of our men and youths hiding there before the continuous round-ups for labor camps. In spite of searches, the Jewish Order Keeping Service did not find the entry to the hiding place – which kept up our hope that we too will be able to remain there during the expected "actions."

The onset of winter brought typhus and typhoid epidemic to our neighborhood. It was brought mainly by the sick returning from labor camps, released by means of proper payoff. Unfortunately, the majority died soon after, but not before infecting someone of their closest ones. To avoid a sudden spread of these diseases, the Judenrat prepared 2 big isolation rooms for 40 beds. This, however turned out to be insufficient, since the daily influx of the sick usually surpassed the number of 2 or 3 patients leaving this world. The dead were buried in makeshift boxes in a small designated place on a former Jewish cemetery which had already been eliminated last fall and the grounds inseminated. The tombstones and socles were used partly for (illeg.) or for paving backyards and building grounds.

There was only one physician left to practice medicine in order to fight the epidemic, and he was unable to achieve the goal. Out of the 6 Jewish doctors who until recently lived among us only 3 remained, with proper remuneration, for special assignment to neighboring villages - one of them held the position of surgeon in the local hospital for Aryan inhabitants, while the 5th worked in the epidemics hospital for Aryans.

This situation resulted in promptly issued order to avoid the area due to the prevailing epidemic. This order was issued after the visit of the district physician to our to isolation rooms. Barriers were placed on two opposite sides of the area with signs in German and Ukrainian warning about “**Fleckfieber**” (typhoid fever) , continuously patrolled by several members of the Order Keeping Service. Only individuals working outside of the area were given passes to enable them to leave the premises in order to go to work places.

This situation immediately and considerably affected the cost of basic products.. In addition, this order affected all those who, for fear of further camp actions or deportations, continued to sleep outside of the area. Under these conditions, the threat of being caught outside of the area forced a great number of people to give up this way of life.

According to news coming to us about the mass deportations of Jews still taking place in various locations, one could surmise that Hitler, as planned, was carrying out his evil deed of annihilating the entire Jewish population. Having nothing to lose, some people decided to try their luck by going out in the world, mostly without any set destination, once they arranged for some documents proving their Aryan background. Unfortunately, the majority of them was met on the way by hunting dogs which were set up to attack them; others became victims of accidentally meeting acquaintances who did not hesitate to denounce them to German thugs or the Ukrainian militia.

Out of our circle of acquaintances a certain number of persons disappeared but very few managed to hide, while a number of others, mostly younger women and girls, where making preparations in that direction..

In the meantime, news of further successes of the German armies after reaching the outskirts of Stalingrad stopped coming in; there was only news of heavy fighting taking place there. With what joy and hope we received the first news of failures on the Stalingrad front and of the counter offensive undertaken by the Soviets! There was no end to our joy when at the end of January the German newspapers openly wrote about the difficult position of the German army and even of a looming catastrophe, thus calling for a coordination of all the forces in order to avoid the danger. That news kept coming until February, adding to our hope for imminent liberation. Regrettably, the Germans, having gathered huge reserves in spite of great losses, succeeded in holding off the Soviet army, even gaining a victory, namely the recovery of the previously lost city. We suffered a big disappointment, realizing that the possibility of an imminent liberation was not yet in sight.

As we were to realize soon, these events quickly precipitated [unclear word] activities against the Jews. Some people assumed that the SS and Gestapo units, in their determination to remain in their lucrative and secure positions, preferred to initiate further series of murders and robberies of Jews, whom they blamed for their defeat at Stalingrad. Thus, further tens of thousands of Jews met with merciless death.

In the meantime, on a certain January night, a round-up took place suddenly. Totally unexpectedly, a band of “Lager Polizisten” [camp policemen) from Tarnopol, grabbed over 50 men. This attack took place in the darkness of night and with the help of our Order Keeping Service, given that the perpetrators were not familiar with the terrain.

At the same time, I was also one of the arrested ones, taken together with the others to the Judenrat where we were placed in a separate room, under guard. As it turned out, the leaders of the escapade were the head of the camp himself, the famous Rokita, and the highly reputed member of the Judenrat, Grunfeld, who at the same time had the function of Order Keeping Service in Tarnopol; he was a refugee from the west, body and soul dedicated to the Germans. The immediate intervention by the wives led to the release of a greater number of the prisoners. The ransom amount was 3,000 to 4,000 zlotys, thus whichever wife or mother had the necessary cash was able to get the immediate release of the husband or son. I was the only one released without ransom, being the only engineer in the district, needed by the Judenrat for eventual needs of engineering drawings and plans.

Our pleasant guests left that evening taking with them, in addition to 30 prisoners, a more substantial amount of cash obtained for release of additional 20 arrested victims. The next day, another group arrived and, under the pretext of voluntary collection of personal and bed linens, shoes and clothing for use by the camp inmates, robbed the majority of the inhabitants, taking with them several fully loaded wagons of our "voluntarily" contributed belongings.

A few days later, our Judenrat received a telephone call to immediately undertake a collection of all furs owned by Jews of both sexes. Not a shred of fur of any kind should remain in the possession of Jews under penalty of death. All the furs were to be sent to the front. Within the given 3-day period, several sleds loaded to the top with fur coats, stoles, capes, little furs, fur hats and other various fur pieces were sent to a destination in Tarnopol. Of course, a number of furs was hidden by being buried in cellars, or given to Aryan acquaintances for safekeeping; as it turned out, those buried were found rotten, while those in the second group were appropriated by the persons who were to safe keep them.

In the meantime, our to-date hiding place was discovered by the local Order Keeping Service and denounced by one of our closest neighbors. Due to that occurrence, we immediately decided to build a new one for fear that a new deportation "action" could take place. After approving my plan, consisting of dugout under the backyard with a well concealed entrance from the existing hiding place, we went to work at once. For the first few days the work was done by taking turns in the daytime, collecting soil from under the old shelter which was then put through an opening in the wall and thrown out under the cellar stairs. The disposal of the soil was handled at night by several people who took it out to nearby gardens and fields where, in order not to call attention, it was spread out - placing the clay on the lower level and the black mould on top. The digging and the disposal of the soil was a very hard and demanding work which is easy to understand given that it was carried out by people of various ages, who had never before done any physical work. In addition, it was carried out at night by taking extreme caution and without proper tools. In spite of all that, progress was made because everybody, or most, sweated it out and worked above their strength. Once the entrance and a small corridor were completed, the work turned to creating the actual shelter, two meters wide and 1.70m high.

[**Translator's note:** balance of page 42 and half of p. 43 consists of detailed technical description of the methods and materials used to accomplish the task and to make the structure suitable and fit for the purpose it was intended for Translation of the text resumed in the middle of page 43]

The laborious and difficult work lasted two full weeks, thus it was completed in the second half of March, after which, feeling somewhat safer, we awaited further developments. At the same time the trips to the woods stopped completely. Instead, security watch was fortified as of midnight.

Nothing unusual took place in the neighborhood, so that there was relative tranquility.

Thus came April 6, with no signs of approaching danger. That night, as usual around 4 a.m. we were suddenly awakened by a strong motor whir of several cars coming to a halt a short distance from us, i.e. at the entrance to the neighborhood. Realizing at once the meaning of it, we threw on some items of clothing and carrying the rest, we headed in the direction of the shelter where, quickly and orderly, without being

driven, every one hurried to our shelter. Everything went orderly, without a word of complaint or a child's crying. In a few minutes all the people living in the two apartments found themselves in the hiding place. With the help of flash light, we settled down on the prepared benches. There were over 40 persons in our bunker, thus it was filled to capacity. The only ones living in those apartments were two militia men and our co-tenant, a doctor, who was a member of the Judenrat. From the start we heard the noise of constant shooting, ever increasing as it was moving in our direction. This indicated that having surrounded the neighborhood mostly with Ukrainian militia, the divisions of the German hoodlums started their work on both ends of our area at the same time, while scrupulously searching one building after another and bringing all the apprehended individuals who were still alive to the market place. We did not have to wait long, since after 10 to 15 minutes we heard a loud noise of feet of large number of men, running, as well as their conversations; after breaking the entry door they went through the halls and ran through all the rooms. After searching the interior and creating quite a mess, we could hear their heavy steps on the wooden staircase going to the attic as well as to the cellars. Some of them were in the part separated by a stone wall from the cellar of our shelter. They left promptly, not finding anybody. But they did return from the attic with a dozen prisoners, part of the occupants of our 3rd apartment. We heard clearly the pleas for release, as well children crying, all from the unfortunate ones who were caught. They were then marched out on the order of the commanding officer of the division. The calm did not last long, since new divisions kept coming in search of hiding places and the people hiding therein; they kept plundering all the still remaining personal properties. I doubt that anyone could, in his wildest imagination, put himself in the situation we were in for hours under constant death threat. We could have been discovered at any moment which would have meant death to all of us. All that time we had, as they say, death before our eyes, This lasted for almost twenty hours, each of which felt like eternity! Added to that was the fact that for all those hours we stayed almost motionless, tightly packed in a row of bodies, on hard seats and, every once in a while, feeling lack of air. That could only be remedied by removing the tight cover which divided us from the upper cellar shelter, but that could have led to discovery. Thus, in constant uncertainty and concerns, the minutes kept changing into hours, Noon hour passed and, in spite of the fact that a great number of different patrols went though our apartments, each searching and robbing, none succeeded in finding not even our first shelter, which gave us encouragement that perhaps we may survive this judgment day. The fact that our upper shelter was not denounced by our militia meant that none of those who knew cared to denounce us. Unfortunately, this was not the rule – there were cases where members of our Order Keeping Service discovered some well disguised shelters The denunciations took place under death threats or as revenge another “rascal”. Thus we had cases similar to some which occurred at the time of arrests in Tarnopol. While the action was going on, we still had news passed on to us through our ventilation pipes, about the developments, such as deportation of those caught on Plebanowka where our people were murdered on a large plane near a grove and buried in previously prepared mass graves. Soon after we actually found out the veracity of the news which had reached us late evening, namely that all day yesterday the military division of the “Baudienst”, arrived from Tarnopol, was busy digging several huge ditches on the plane under the Plebanowka village. That news could not be verified then because of the late evening hour. Also, deportations by train were expected under pretext of resettlement, not having yet heard about the mass murders of helpless populations. It seems that the authorities were forced to do it by not receiving allotment of trains and escorts. In the meantime, there was a lot of activity in the annihilation yard. The newly brought groups of prisoners were placed in rows from which 6 at a time were led to the ditch and were immediately fired upon from a machine gun placed at distance of a few steps. All went well and quickly – first class organization as usual – without any obstacles. Without exception, all the victims were forced to shed their clothes and shoes. Only a few men reacted by attacking their executioners with their bare hands, which only sped up their death. On the other hand, the women reacted with words, calling the militiamen murderers, bandits, mad dogs, etc. and cursing their Fuhrer. All that made no impression on the perpetrators but made the victims' suffering worse due to additional beating and abuse.

Work lasted non-stop, until late evening, finally leaving the Judenrat with the function of covering the fully filled graves which was carried out by the Jewish militia. During that chore they could hear moans and groans from each of three ditches which indicated that some of the victims were still alive. When in one case they heard a woman's voice asking not to cover her with sand but to take her out, they advised her to remain there at least until darkness. They did take her out from the grave when it got dark. She turned out to be well known to everyone; she was an unusually intelligent, very good looking twenty-some year old woman who was a steady inhabitant of our town. She had been shot in the belly. Unfortunately, our physician-surgeon who was called the next morning did not offer hope to be able to keep her alive. After a few days of suffering, she passed away. The poor girl had received at the end of last year a notice from the consulate in Ankara about the steps undertaken by her husband, permanently residing in Palestine, to receive an emigration permit allowing her to join her husband. As it turned out, such a permit from the German authorities was never obtained and the poor girl, in the prime of her life, had to give up her life. It was close to midnight when we decided to leave our tight spot and take a place in our much more comfortable hiding place in the cellar, where we remained until the morning.

Having returned to our homes early in the morning, we found them in a state well known to us from previous actions. Everything turned upside down, broken, and all the better edibles pilfered. All that no longer upset us, having been through so much and learning about the losses suffered once again by our neighborhood. We lost additional 900 individuals, among them also many of our good friends and often met family members. For a few more days our Order Keeping Service "Ordnungsdienst" kept busy with segregating and putting in order items of clothing remaining after the murdered victims; those items were finally loaded on several wagons and taken to Tarnopol, together with a lot of belongings robbed from the apartments. Soon the inhabitants of our area who were still alive were forced to take on obligations and burdens imposed on them.

No one had any longer illusions about the probable liquidations of those who survived. This gave rise to urgent efforts to find hiding places. A certain group from among our acquaintances decided to hide in the woods and immediately began preparations in that direction. Two groups of about 10 individuals each were alternately involved in the task and worked on it for a longer period of time. On completion of the shelter, those involved sent a wagon full of all kinds of supplies and food items which, nevertheless, never reached its destination. This is how our dedicated so-called close Aryan friends took advantage of the situation by robbing us completely, without pity and without hesitation; when there was no other way to lay hands on all the remaining items given to them for safekeeping, they would hand them over to the authorities.

Our people had to give up the shelter in the woods prepared with so much sweat and dedication, given that in addition to the huge loss suffered as a result of the looting of all the supplies, the person who was in on the secret of the location of the shelter would not have hesitated to denounce them in exchange for additional profit. We also decided to undertake steps leading to the possibility of surviving Hitler! Having reached an agreement with an acquaintance, the owner of a small house with own garden, a yard, a little stable and a small closet, a widow with two small children, we made a decision to make an underground shelter with access from the stable. We intended to model ourselves on the large shelter prepared in the area but measuring only 2.00m in width and 3.00m in length. On the evening of May 2, I went with my older daughter to the designated place and started working on creating access to the emptied stable. We worked together until midnight, after which we slept the rest of the night in the little attic of the small barn, on prepared bedding. Early in the morning we returned to our apartment through roundabout roads. During the next 3 days I worked intensively with my daughter since both of us were already used to that chore, and the awareness that this work alone might perhaps make survival possible gave us the strength. We were making nice progress, to the extent that our landlady, working together with her sister at daily disposal of the soil freshly dug out by us, had a difficult time handling it. On the fifth day, replacing the exhausted daughter, my wife came with me and I worked until midnight at which time we went up to the little attic to sleep. Who could imagine our surprise and fear when on having been awoken from a deep

sleep we noticed in the light of an electric lamp, leaning at our feet, two broad shouldered ruffians, armed with axes and sticks, demanding an explanation from us about our presence there. Having received my reply that, as they could see, we were sleeping, he proceeded without further questions to demand that I empty the pocket of my coat, which I did without hesitation, in the belief that since the contents consisted of only documents and pictures it would be returned to me. But it was not so; without looking at it, but keeping it all, they demanded instead that I throw off my coat. Realizing that we were in danger of being stripped of all our clothing and in addition being mercilessly beaten (I saw the images of some of our people we had met in the woods, often returning barefoot and in their underwear, and badly massacred), without further thinking, I sat up firmly, having the adversary vis-a-vis in a kneeling position at my feet, behind him looming black the opening to the attic, I at once attacked the unsuspecting ruffian with such impetus and directing the blow at his chest with both my fists so that the weight of his body made him fall back and, finding no support, pushed him down head first into the manhole. Before the second ruffian who was kneeling at my wife's feet managed to react, he was met with an attack on him, this time by a joint effort by myself and my wife, and followed in the footsteps of his accomplice. Having thus gotten rid of the perpetrators and taking advantage of two other thugs being downstairs in the stable on guard for their comrades, I grabbed a ladder standing at the manhole and tried to pull it closer to us. The low ceiling of the attic made the move difficult, so that our persecutors managed to grab it and attacked us with their sticks. In spite of getting hit several times our hands did not loosen the hold of the ladder, knowing what the consequences would be. I kept a firm grip on the ladder, moving the upper part away from the opening, but soon a new situation developed. My wife, having been hit in the hat with a stick, covered with blood, fell next to me, losing consciousness. In spite of the noise and loud cries, so far none of the neighbors made any move. They did not either when, as a result of the latest events, I desperately kept calling for help. Luckily, the thugs, obviously concerned with my loud cries expressed in words: "Help! Bandits killed my wife!", backed out and gave up further attacks on us; had they not, I would not have been able to defend myself given that I was trying to bring my wife back to life. When she did regain consciousness after a while, she insisted on going down from the attic in order to go to the landlady's house, which I did not agree to, feeling safer here after having removed the ladder. Thus we stayed, in spite of profuse bleeding from my wife's head and forehead. We remained there until it became sufficiently light to consider going down in order to provide a dressing for my wife's injuries. During all that time, our landlady was being terrorized by one of the hoodlums with threats of death should she attempt to leave the apartment. Having heard my cries "they killed my wife", then the silence, she assumed that the thugs finally succeeded in knocking me off. She was very happy that we were both alive, therefore there was no need to worry about burying our bodies. . We soon found ourselves in her apartment where I was finally able wash my wife's wounds and replace the temporary dressing I had placed on her. As it turned out, in addition to head, forehead and face wounds, she also lost two teeth. This incident affected our plans because the thugs must have noticed the work done on the shelter which of course made it impossible to make use of it. On the other hand, the landlady, having witnessed the events of last night, was also of the opinion that it was not possible to continue the present situation, as a result of it we decided to fill up the dugout entrance and to temporarily regard our agreement no longer valid.

Thus, in one swoop, we lost our only hope to perhaps saving ourselves from the imminent liquidation looming over our town. At the same time, we found out in the morning that the thugs robbed us of all the remaining warm covers, my wife's winter coat and my warm jacket. Since we no longer had any means to go out of the neighborhood for the night, we joined a group of our neighbors and went with them into the woods. We used to get up at midnight and once we gathered we left in a group, about twenty-seven persons, to spend the night deep in the woods, distancing ourselves from our homes at least 5-6 km, and returning home only at dawn. Apathy prevailed among most of the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The activity of the Self Help kept diminishing mostly because of the diminishing number of its workers. The camps were still receiving bread and some additional items 3 times a month. The Judenrat no longer acted as diligently, while it was noticeable that the

“Ordnungsdienst” had experienced reduction of individuals as a result of their running away to hiding places or bunkers. In spite of that, during that period a considerable calm prevailed based on constant reassurances by the Judenrat, supported by statements made by local authorities, to the effect that we may sleep calmly during the month of May. As a result, most of the population, already exhausted physically and mentally, took advantage of these reassurances, even if not quite believing, slept peacefully in their beds.

Losses suffered thus far by us exceeded 60% of our state, since in addition to losses resulting from deportation to Belzec, as well as the slaughter of almost 1000 individuals on Płanowka and epidemics, contributed to the devastation among us. Only about 1900 people remained in the area.

The month of May passed happily, without any changes in our district. In the last days of May rumors were being spread that probably the coming months of June will also remain without any liquidation actions. Nevertheless, we remained cautious and, having reinforced our night guards, we continued sleeping in the apartments. We also tried to get information from Tarnopol, as well as the remaining Jewish enclaves of our area, without counting on a new series of murders right here – which unfortunately proved to be wrong. Instead, once again, on the morning of June 3, we were surprised by strong whir of cars coming to a halt on the corner of the street, that is about 25 steps from our house. We immediately understood that once again we were trapped. All present jumped out of their beds and, while putting on the most essential garments and grabbing some other items, ran to the bunker. Everything went orderly so that within some 10 minutes over 40 persons were in the main bunker which was filled to capacity; as a result the few remaining people found space in the hiding place under the staircase or in the attic. Since several people from a third apartment also came to our bunker, it soon became very tight and uncomfortable. It was impossible for anyone to even dream of getting through to a toilet located in the tight corridor, as a result of which we had to take care of our needs on the spot. Soon after, partly for that reason, and also due to the excessive number of occupants, we began to experience lack of air which made it necessary to lift the entry cover every once in a while, namely with one hour intervals. Even so, we kept feeling lack of air since the ventilation opening was covered with little plates removable from inside by a wire rod. Every time we heard footsteps it became necessary to replace the cover which in turn prevented the fresh air from coming in. As a result, in early morning, a seventy-old man who stayed with us decided to leave and go to another shelter – which was just a little while later. Having found our man there, they took him along after a thorough search of the whole area, without finding our entry spot. The fact that we had left open the entry from the kitchen to the cellar, caused often appearances of patrols which, of course caused us a lot of concern; after all our persecutors stayed in the very hall of our bunker and could have found it at any moment. Even though these frequent visits caused us a lot of nervous tension, bringing us to the limits of endurance, nobody lost control and everyone kept their cool.

The same can be said about the children – among them some 4 and 6-year old ones. I believe this can be attributed to the fact that most of us became apathetic to the blows, while being prepared for the worst. In the condition where everyone was squeezed between two persons, with a limited possibility of moving his or her legs because of people who were sitting at their feet for lack of space on the benches, many long hours had to be spent. We were getting hardly any mail at that time and were unable to know about the progress of the actions outside. 6 o'clock went by and we assumed that the action would have been over, when suddenly we heard a bigger noise in the bunkers located above us. Judging by the noises of some equipment and furniture being moved, we understood that our “guests” were making a search which could resolve in our being discovered. All this took about an hour. It was 7 o'clock when we heard the knocking on our cover. It lasted about an hour. The only thing to do was to open, which in fact it was done by a person sitting nearest to it. Thus, after over 15 hours in such hard conditions, all of us reached the point of having to put our heads under the executioner's knife. At that point a great sorrow overcame me at the thought of having to give up my life and that of my wife's and the two children's who were yearning for life but were unable to do anything about it. At that very tragic moment, while feeling hatred for our persecutors and the entire German nation, we also felt resentment toward England and America, which in

spite of full knowledge of the inhuman events, the systematic murders perpetrated on guiltless Jews in all of Europe, were unable to find means to stop the perpetrators. Wouldn't it have been right to undertake a repression against German citizens living in England and America? We were convinced that applying such measures against the Germans, if only on a minimal scale, would have prevented the bestial murders of hundreds of thousands innocent Jews. Those Germans living abroad secretly acted in many ways in behalf of their Fatherland. Where was the great influence of our brothers overseas who, according to Hitler's assertions, caused this war for which we were blamed?!

Understanding well the falsehood of such allegations, as well as the exaggeration of the presumable international Jewish solidarity to prevail in this matter, we nevertheless believed that our brethren abroad would undertake a protest which would eventually lead to the end of the murders. We did not demand anything else since we saw, and were convinced from the beginning, that sooner or later Hitler would be defeated and then we would bravely return to humanity. That is why we accepted all restrictions regarding housing, slave type treatment and giving up all our possession, all of which we even did with a bit of the so-called "Galgenhumor" (gallows humor ??). It was difficult for us to believe that precise news of what was happening to us was not reaching them and they could not act to save us. Such thoughts and various real life episodes kept going through our minds with great speed while the first of our co-habitants who were sitting near the entrance started to leave. A part of those who were staying in the back of the bunker decided of their free will not to leave and ignored all the shouting and calls for further exit. It was only after about half an hour that one of the women who shared our shelter returned and urged us to leave with the following words: "we are all saved! You can calmly come out and see for yourselves. At the same time another of our co-habitants came with the explanation that the discovery of our bunker happened already after the end of the action, following the departure of the expeditionary group from our town, thus there was no danger facing us. By coincidence the group that uncovered us turned out to be the German-Soviet evacuees from Volga living in local barracks who, actually, not for the first time, took advantage of totally plundering our apartments. Having discovered our bunker, they intended to take us to Plebanowka. We were saved thanks to intervention by the Judenrat (part of text illegible.-Translator).

Having received these explanations we left our stronghold without hesitation, thanking God for this miraculous salvation. Returning to our apartment we still encountered there a prowling band of Germans from upper Volga who looked at us as if we were intruders, and did not bother to stop what they were doing, namely continuing to rob. After a while we managed to get rid of them and were finally able to begin putting the beds in place and start straightening the apartment which was in sad condition, same as after the previous actions. Even though we fasted the whole day, almost nobody thought of food but only of going to bed with pleasure, for a well deserved rest. Out of our former group 4 were missing; they have been placed in a separate hiding place, under the cellar staircase, where they were uncovered. According to further information we received, on that day both the Judenrat as well as the "Ordnungsdienst" suffered considerable losses. The chairman and additional three members of the Judenrat, together with their wives and children went to their eternal rest in the mass graves in Plebanowka. This took place as a result of intervention undertaken by those individual to free their wives and children caught in the uncovered bunkers. At the same time 15 more members of the Ordnungsdienst, with their commander at the head were liquidated. One can imagine the look on the faces of our remaining "Caretakers" who, until now believed that they would be the exception to the end. We were mostly concerned with the latest news, namely, that the Gestapo head, prior to his departure, announced the making of our town "Judenfrei" (free of Jews). This to be carried out in the next few days. No further details were given as to where the remaining town's population was to go. In order to find out, the Judenrat tried to have a phone conversation with the Tarnopol "Obman" (head man) - who was also head of "Geschäftsstelle" (business enterprise) following the mysterious disappearance of Fleischman. He said that the news was exaggerated and that we would be allowed to remain in Trembowla[?] until tomorrow morning. Having received no answer as to where the remaining inhabitants were to move to, we understood that we had been doomed to go to the place of final repose.

The majority lost their heads not knowing what to do in order to escape the plan of Hitler's henchmen. The Tarnopol inhabitants decided to escape that fate by leaving early next morning and try to reach the "Rokity" camp located in Tarnopol. There was an apparent calm in the neighborhood on that day Friday, June 4. The only sign of unusual condition was the reinforced patrols of Germans and, particularly, Ukrainian militia constantly crossing our street.

Midday was over and evening was approaching when, around 5 pm there came news from the Germans that an action will be undertaken that very evening in the expectation of liquidating the remnants of Jews of the area. Not doubting the veracity of this news, people began to move out. The patrolling Ukrainian militia and the German gendarmerie gave passage only to individuals who carried no belongings and turned away all those who did. We too decided to seek temporary shelter outside. With this in mind, my wife managed to go to our former, and only, neighbor, to secure a temporary few-day shelter with her. She took our younger daughter with her. Not waiting for her return, I left 20 minutes later, taking with me my wife's 12-year old nephew who came to us after his mother and his little sister were murdered. While already outside of our area, I bumped into my wife, who having succeeded to get consent from our acquaintance, was going back pick out a few items of linen and some light dresses which she could take out only by wearing them. There was no other way. When we got to our acquaintance, she directed us to a hiding place, which was her pantry 1.00 x 0.80 x 3m high, with a little window; our younger little daughter was there already. The three of us started to wait for the return of my wife and older daughter, who had still remained in our apartment waiting for my wife to join her. Soon I began to worry about them because of the delay. An hour passed when we suddenly heard loud automatic machine gun shots. We immediately understood that the action had begun and that my wife and daughter were in danger for their lives and that we could not do anything for them. Our despair had no limits and kept growing while thinking that our beloved may fall into the hands of the hoodlums.

Long three hours of waiting spent in hardly describable despair, losing all hope, when suddenly my wife appeared, hardly capable on standing on her feet. It turned out that she was shot in her belly. She and the daughter were still in our apartment when the shooting had started. The daughter left the house first, calling the mother to follow. She did, hoping to catch up with her. She did not. She started running ahead, realizing that she was heading for the spot where the shooting was coming from. She almost managed to get through but suddenly a member of the Ukrainian militia noticed her and immediately directed his rifle at her and shot her in the stomach. She ran into the first open yard and dragged herself with the remaining strength up to the open attic where she lost consciousness. When after a while she recovered consciousness, and realizing where she was, she decided to join us, knowing that if she remained in place until daylight she would be lost. She heard some noises and realized that they were coming from the next-door house where the hoodlums were busy pulling people out from a discovered bunker. Collecting all her strength she luckily succeeded to leave the scene and drag herself to our hiding place where she came totally exhausted and covered with blood. While washing her wound it turned out that the bullet had gone through, and after the bandaged was applied my wife did not feel any strong pain, so that we hoped that the intestines were not damaged and that the wound would heal soon. Next morning she was seen by an acquaintance doctor, a Pole, (Dr. Tuleszczuk) who after examining her and applying a proper bandage, confirmed our expectation and only expressed concern for the possibility of an infection. Thanking and praising God for the happy outcome of my wife's incident, we kept relying on the doctor to take care of us and to bring to us our older daughter about whose fate we worried desperately. Sabbath day passed without any news about her, except for the confirmation from our landlady that no one had seen our daughter, neither on the assembly nor the liquidation place on Plebanowka; that gave us hope for her survival.

Next day, Sunday, our landlady and her children went to church. Having remained inside the closed apartment, we allowed ourselves to go out and stretch our numb legs. That afternoon, at 3 p.m. an old neighbor of ours from the place we shared before the creation of the special living area, came to tell us

that our older daughter remains in hiding with our common acquaintances from Zotkwa[?], a Jewish family with Aryan documents, and intended to join us that evening. What had happened was that our daughter realized at the right time that the action had begun in the lower part of our neighborhood, so on leaving the house she went in the other direction and without any incidents reached our friends who lived precisely in that part of town.

Our joy had no limits. Thus our whole family was saved from the claws of our persecutors. We thanked God for showing us exceptional favor and implored Him to provide us further shelter and help. So far my wife remained still bedridden, while we were in our hiding place where, one late evening, our older daughter joined us.

Knowing that we could not remain in place for any length of time, we asked our present protector to go on our behalf to a small town, Mikulince, 12 km away, with a letter to a friend of ours who lived there, pressing him to come to us. Early morning of next day the invitee came on a bicycle. That was the second day of Easter. Our landlady left for church with her children, locking up the apartment, so that we were free to talk everything over with our friend. That is when it turned out that it was not easy to find accommodations for us, that so far there was nothing in sight. Still, he promised to do his utmost in that direction. For 8 months already he had been hiding our daughter's friend, her 2 sisters, a brother-in-law and a child, but in the end he assured us that he would send a carriage for us the next evening. We did not know whether that promise would be kept, since we had only known that person since middle of May, i.e. 2 weeks prior to the events, when he had showed up with a letter for our daughter from her school friend – a friend who was staying with her family under his care. On his following visits end of May we asked him to find us a hiding place, which he had promised to do. Thus our acquaintance was based on those two visits. We clung to his promise like a drowning person clings to a straw.

It was past noon and our guest awaited the return of our landlady in order to return home. Suddenly we hear quick steps followed by opening of the entry door and we see the landlady, standing extremely agitated, demanding that we immediately leave her apartment since she had been confidentially informed that the local gendarmerie would very soon search her neighbor's house, attached to hers, because of the theft of a sewing machine. She was afraid that they would extend the search to her house as well. Once again we were facing death. We were helpless, not knowing what to do. Our guest, witnessing our terrible situation, decided to take our daughter with him, promising to send that very evening a coach to pick us up. As a result, our landlady, on receiving an additional "injection" of cash, finally agreed to let us stay no longer than the following evening.

Paying no attention to the danger of being recognized, our daughter left the apartment in the center of town at noon on a holiday, on a bicycle, together with our guest.. As we learned later, they arrived safely in the grove on the outskirts of the little town where she had to stay alone waiting for our friend's return. He was luckily able to bring her to the hiding place where her friend was staying.

That evening we waited in vain for the coach to pick us up. The wait extended to the following evening. When nothing happened by 10 o'clock, I decided to leave with my younger daughter, to make it possible for my wife, who was still unable to walk, and her nephew, to remain for another day or two. The road, after yesterday's downpour, was soaked and very difficult to walk on, and it was only after a 4-hour march that we reached our destination. Our acquaintance, on having been awoken from his sleep, did not look very pleased at our arrival. Still, he assured us that the coach which had been sent the previous evening was not allowed to enter the town and returned empty. He then took us to a place which, apparently, had already been prepared; we were placed in a big barn filled with a lot of junk and a large supply of straw. When the door was locked, we got a few hours of sleep after which we were to expect the arrival of our older daughter – which would only take place later in the evening. Since it was still daylight, we were able to find shelter in a large toilet (rest room) measuring about 90x90, with a high cross-arched vault and thick stone walls. There was a fitted metal door and barred window facing a castle

yard. This was an old castle's servants' dwelling. It had been turned into a garage during the war, and now into a garbage dump and a shed by its present owner now working on the property as a mechanic and head of the blacksmith workshop.

That day, about 2 p.m. we met our new landlord who brought us a pot of white coffee and a big slice of home-made bread sent by our protector; we ate it with great appetite. The owner of our present shelter made a good impression on us and inspired confidence.

My older daughter joined us late in the evening, so that now we were only still missing my wife and her nephew to complete the family. In spite of having the assurance that this shelter was temporary, that we could stay for only a few days, we did not spare efforts to make ourselves relatively comfortable. We placed a large stack of straw and hay before us and a larger supply of firewood, which covered us completely. The three of us finding ourselves in a fairly good hiding place, having people caring for us, now waited very impatiently and with great anxiety for the arrival of my wife and the boy. In spite of our insistent inquiries and constant reassurances by our protector that efforts were being made, it soon became obvious that he was not doing anything in that direction. A week passed since our arrival, when unexpectedly my wife arrived late at night. Our joy had no limits but was soon replaced by despair when my wife found out that her nephew who had left her to join us 4 days earlier had not arrived yet. We lamented

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...we remained in the darkness, from which next morning we finally managed to drag ourselves out with the help of our landlord and return again to our normal accommodation.

According to received news, the roundup in the little town ended in discovery of 5 persons, Jews, in three different places, who were taken to Tarnow together with their protectors. On the other hand, the roundup in the woods was much "more" successful ending with catching several tens of individual of both sexes and various ages. All these unfortunate ones were killed on the spot, as told by witnesses engaged in digging the graves and burying the corpses. Those caught were dealt with in terrible ways, tortured in a bestial manner prior to being killed – that was to be in retaliation for their presumed losses.

A few days later i.e. 20th of August, late at night, a band of German and Ukrainian militiamen burst into the apartment of our first protector looking for the Jewish family he had been hiding. Even though they did not find anyone, they beat him up badly. That same night other underground places, as well as some business buildings at the Castle near our hiding place were searched, but with no result as well. Next day we received news about the tragic loss of the Reichstein couple from Tarnopol, who were in hiding together with their nephew, Dr. Feinstein from Tremborka[?]. After liquidation of the special area. the Reichsteins occupied a prepared place outside the area, in the spot of their previous bunker. Their only son, who had the function of replacing the "Ordnungsdienst" commandant, was to join them the next day. Having scrupulously fulfilled his duty, was then killed. They were joined by their nephew, who had lost his mother that same day and remained all alone.

The aunt, unable to reconcile with the fact of losing her only son, kept repeating aloud her displeasure at having to spend all the time with her husband's nephew, which all led to frequent disagreements. In order to prevent it, the landlord placed the nephew separately in the cellar with entry through the corridor. After a few days of total isolation, the young man managed to go out, unnoticed, into "God's World" Bitter at the behavior of his aunt, as well as the inability of finding another shelter with some neighbor friends, probably disclosed to one of them the secret of the aunt and uncle's hiding place. As a result of these events, as early as 3 days later, the "Kri-Pol, i.e. Criminal Police, made a search at their landlord's place,

and took away the discovered R. couple. It soon turned out that at the same time they heard about another man, a Jew, hiding there and demanded that the shelter providers hand him over. At that time, the landlords informed the authorities that a Polish couple with a child, according to Aryan documents from Warsaw, had occupied their apartment for a year and that about a month ago, after the departure of the wife with the child, the apartment was occupied by the man who emptied it a few days ago, with the intention of joining his wife.

For now the matter ended with the loss of lives of the R. couple. They were killed on the very next day. In the meantime, the man of interest to Kri-Po, whose wife had to disappear suddenly as a result of her little boy's origin having been accidentally discovered while playing with his playmates, fearing retaliations resulting from the disclosures made by the young man (R.'s nephew), immediately left the apartment, finding shelter with a female friend. Unable to remain there longer, after three days he managed, accompanied by his friend, to board a train leaving late at night. Arrested by the Kri -Po members, the poor man cut his veins on the way to prison. His captors, fearing that his death would be too easy, bandaged his hands and placed him in a prison cell. When after a while they wanted to start the interrogation, it turned out that the unfortunate man hung himself on the window grating with the bandages he had taken off. He feared the interrogation leading to his wife's and son's whereabouts and chose to take his own life rather than to possibly succumb to torture and disclose his dear ones' hiding place.

That news touched us very deeply since the hero of this tragedy, as well as his wife, were well known to us. It was with them that our daughter found a few days' shelter after the liquidation of the special area, as did my wife prior to joining us.

The approaching end of July kept us restless. Due to expectations of the start of the fall campaign at the distillery, my wife and daughter would be forced to abandon their present hiding place without having a replacement. These concerns were the reason why the news received about the events in Tarnopol were soon forgotten.

Our efforts to have our landlord agree to let us return to his place brought no results, which gave us no peace. He claimed that it was impossible presumably because of his mother; the old lady could not manage the work which required constant supply of food for four people..

In the meantime, the fall campaign at the distillery was put off for a while, thus my wife and daughter still remained there.

According to further news, all the Jewish concentrations have been liquidated in the entire Tarnopol district, with the exception of Rokita camp. Also all the forced labor camps were liquidated in an extremely short time. Most of the released inmates ran in all directions, while some went to join their liberators. At the same time, considerable number of well armed partisans appeared in the nearby woods. In the Tarnopol camp, headed by the famous "Rokita", where gradual liquidation had been taking place for a while, only "elite" remained; they had personal relations with the Boss of the camp who offered them parties and concerts in his selected apartments in the ghetto. In anticipation of a final liquidation of the ghetto or their camp, the majority engaged in preparation of underground hiding places where each had to accommodate 100 or more individuals. For the most part, bigger parts of cellars in big buildings, totally separated from the rest of the "world" and possibly with some access to the main sewer, were designated for that purpose. Those were well supplied, had own wells and provisions for several months. Thus, when finally at the end of July the camp liquidation took place, most of them found shelter in those prepared underground "fortresses". That is when the liquidation of those began. Apparently the Germans had been informed about their existence. They ferreted about, tracked for a while, until they realized that most of the places had connection with the local sewers. It was then that they put into use gas

and smoke detonators, thus forcing the poor occupants to leave their holes and then liquidating most of them.

According to newspapers received once in a while, the big Soviet offensive continues and is gaining ground. The comments of German war correspondents are characteristic of the successes of the Red Army. From them we recently learned about the voluntary evacuation of Charkow and Tagaurov with the purpose of leveling the front.

At the same time, the Allies' Western offensive continues. Sicily has been fully cleaned so that the long ago announced creation of the second Western front may be expected; this, together with the continuing big offensive in the West should lead to an imminent defeat of the Germans. In spite of Mussolini's renunciation and the loud calling for peace by the demonstrating population in Milan and other cities, Italy is not yet capitulating. In the Reich something begins to go wrong as appears from the latest news about appointment of the bloodthirsty Gestapo head Himmler to the position of Secretary of the Interior.

Finally the news about Italy's capitulation! This signifies not only the break of the axle which Hitler himself considered unbreakable, but more so the fact that this complete separation must speed up the end of war as well as "freedom of mankind"..

Our landlord shared our hopes and, influenced by them, finally agreed to allow my wife and older daughter to join us in our bunker. We were forced to pay dearly for that agreement - four times the monthly pay for which he agreed to provide us with food, same as we were getting before, which amounted to starvation. In spite of that, how happy we were when finally on the 16th of September, late in the evening, the four of us found ourselves together.

In spite of the fact that we entered a period of hunger which kept increasing as a result of lack of bread which the landlord was to supply as part of the agreement, we remained hopeful because the news, political and from the front were always encouraging. The Germans, continuing to apply the newest so called "elastic strategy", keep returning new terrains to the Soviets. The fights take place in the Smolensk region, in Zaporozh[?], as well as in the area from the turn of Dnieper into Prypec. The German press emphasizes the fact that the German leadership had decided to carry out this time a defensive action in order to save the strength for the offensive to be started in the winter!?! Disregarding prestige, the army will occupy positions in whichever areas that will be convenient. Thus, why looking for adequate terrain, the German armies keep marching victoriously further to the West, while the Soviet armies, according to German press, are unable to keep pace with them.

As appears from the broadcasts of the Soviet radio, in spite of the present evacuation of Kiev by the Germans, the Soviets are not entering the town since they first expect the arrival of a commission with a delegation of the International Red Cross, with the purpose of establishing the horrors of the barbaric acts the Germans perpetrated on the remaining powerless civilian population of the city.

Here things remain the same. Days follow each other in the same way. Every morning we receive food which consists of one-and-a-half liter pot of potatoes and one-liter pot of white coffee, not to mention exceptional days on which we get no food because of some danger. The month of September just passed and today, the 2 of October, we celebrate our New Year, wishing each other to stay alive and meet the next New Year in freedom. Another week passed by without any news except for the fact that yesterday, Saturday the 9th of October we celebrated the Day of Judgment i.e. Day of Atonement, At our request, we received the evening food a day earlier in order to dedicate that day to fasting, Yesterday's day passed by well. We hardly felt the fasting but we spent the long day thinking of and remembering all our dearest and closest ones who in their prime of life, together with their children and grandchildren, lost their lives in such terrible way. All these thoughts greatly affected us.

While reminiscing, other memories came to mind, going back as far as my childhood spent surrounded by siblings and parents. Unfortunately, when I was eleven, a very serious and long one-year illness took my dear mother from us. I have before my eyes various episodes from childhood and school years, not thought about for many years yet now very vivid. Those are followed by years of studies, 1911-1914, with the usual concerns and pleasures of a student; then the outbreak of war in August 1914, induction in the Austrian army – war years – the Russian front – Gorlice – Tarnow – Karpaty[?] – typhus – hospital – cadre - renewed march to the Italian front: Karst[?] – Piava – furlough middle of 1918 in order to graduate after the last semester of studies. Breakdown of Austria – stay in Vienna till end of 1919. Return to Tarnopol – entry of the Red Army in August 1920 and its retreat due to the “Miracle on Vistula” in the early days of October of that year. My wedding on October 30, 1920, birth of a daughter in July 1921, then the second daughter in March 1926. Ten years of employment in a large technical enterprise in Tarnopol. Going on my own in 1931. Further professional work – construction of the first big 3-story modern building. Relinquishing my share and buying a new larger piece of land in 1935 and building another 3-story real estate. Selling it all and buying a new much larger parcel of land at Kopernika street. Construction of a frontal building in 1937. Taking over a 4-room modern apartment and furnishing it – then additional construction in 1938/39 on the same piece of land of another 3-story building – in addition, non-stop and demanding work during twenty years. Nice income from real estate, thus assured livelihood for myself and my offsprings! In the end just one word: “War”, and everything vanished, like a soap bubble. September 1, 1939, outbreak of that awful war. Immediate flight of the Polish government and march-in of the Red Army to our town on September 17. Nationalization of our real estate and properties, representing all the earnings of a twenty-year professional engagement. Departure with the family to Tremborka and stay there until the arrival of the Germans.

In the end, I have reached the final stage of our present. – dedicating my thoughts and reminiscences to all those we lost recently. Lacking a prayer book. I say a prayer for the dead, calling by name, in order, each of the dear ones. The first to appear before me is my older brother, a veterinarian, who having survived hell in Janowski camp, was murdered in the hospital where he was already reconalescing from typhoid fever. I see before me a man in his fifties, full of strength and will to live. The next victims are my sister with my brother-in-law – a pharmacist by profession; both had to give up their lives in that action of August 1942 in Lwow. Then, my younger sister with her husband, her daughter and son-in-law, murdered in Tarnopol. Going over to memories of my wife’s lost siblings, I see before me, in order, her three brothers and 3 sisters, all with their spouses, children and grandchildren! Except for one, three-and-a-half son of one of the 8 nieces, no one else survived. How many more relatives from whom we have not heard yet did we lose?

While bringing up those most painful memories, more than once a question came to mind: should the Germans stay for a long time, or if unexpectedly we too should end in the hands of our persecutors, wouldn’t it not have been better for those who already have it behind them? Of course the natural drive for life negates and pushes away such thoughts about the immediate future.

Finally, this distressful day went by, bringing news of constant advances of the Red Army. Since our whole family is now together the days go by much quicker and, in spite of the fact that we experience shortage of food supplies, we remain hopeful.

Another month passed and it was October 30, day of pleasant memories; a day marking twenty-three years of my life with my beloved wife. We used to celebrate this day in completely different conditions. Today we wish each other to endure in order to witness Hitler’s downfall – to return to humanity. When will our dreams come true?!

Our living situation once again has worsened; apparently, due to difficulties in shopping for food, we no longer receive butter nor eggs, so that our noon meal consists of only a slice of dry, often quite moldy bread, and at the same time our bread ration has been reduced from 2 to 1 and 1/2 kg for 24 hours, for four people. [balance of sentence in minute letters, almost illegible. Translator]

On November 2, the All Saints Day, we are notified of present raid in the village which began a day before on the small number of Jews still hiding in nearby woods. Fearing that in the end there may be a search in town, we again occupy the inside part of our hiding place which had been properly camouflaged. We remain there until the following evening when we are found by our landlord. We learn that in fact the Germans actually searched all the homesteads and households finding nothing. Instead, they uncovered and caught several tens of individuals whom they killed and buried on the spot.

According to the latest radio news, the Soviets aim at surrounding the German army in Crimea, while at the same time they continue their victories on other parts of the front. As a result, on November 7 the radio broadcast reports the cleansing of Crimea and taking hostage seven German divisions, whereas on the 9th – two days later – reporting on the Soviet landing parties blasted in Besarabia.

However, the most cheerful news for us was the one received on November 10, about the order for preparedness issued on the local grange. How impatiently we awaited news on orders for departure of the whole gang. Alas, it was not to happen that soon.

In the meantime, the “Führer”, at the annual party meeting in Munich on November 8, in spite of those obvious defeats, assures his followers that the situation is not bad at all, and that in spite of the “temporary” mishaps, the events of November 1918 will not be repeated, and that the final battle will be decisive in German victory. Thus this was the first time the Führer felt it necessary to assume the role of comforter for his closest collaborators, which in itself is an adequate proof of a critical situation.

The constant drop in temperature affects us very much, in spite of the fact that we are fully dressed for the night, with blankets on top of our clothing. It would not be easy for us to spend the winter in the present conditions. However, from the scarce information from our landlord, it would appear that he is preparing a second underground accommodation for us, where we would not suffer from cold. Thus we anxiously await the outcome of the preparations and do not complain to him about the cold which is beginning to affect us.

As we learned yesterday, two days ago (November 15) a bloody incident took place in the village of Strusow[?] when a group of Germans came from Tarnopol with the intention of arresting the head of the congregation. As he attempted to run away, his sons tried to protect him and killed one of the Germans. When on the following day the town's population took on a menacing position against incoming larger number of Germans, both sides began shooting and the situation turned into a regular fight when a larger division of partisans came from nearby woods. Nine homesteads burned down to the ground during the fight, and many other suffered substantial losses. Finally, the Germans having suffered major losses withdrew from the fighting field. Most of the population sought safety in the nearby woods, but nevertheless there were many casualties, particularly among women and children. For the time being the people were not returning home for fear of retributions by the Germans.

Orders to discontinue schooling and to close down all the schools in our district issued on November 25 were further proof of the front coming closer to us. We all continue to suffer from cold and therefore we sit, or lie down, bundled up in items of our clothing, and wearing gloves as well, but all this is no real protection. It was not until December 10, late in the evening, that we were able to leave our “locum” and move to the underground hiding place prepared for us. Our shelter, 2.00m wide, 165[?] m long and 1,20m

high is located approximately 70-80m from buildings of our landlord, on a precipitous piece of land falling into a river. It dates back to 1920-21 at which time, in order to build the house and the stable it was necessary to use dug out stone. At present it became our living place once it was set in order and with the addition of a small 2-meter long corridor and entrance from under the dung water.

As it turned out, the floor of our living place was about 3 meters below the ground, so that we had above us a ceiling over 1-1/2 meter thick, as a result of which the temperature inside was so warm that we could always remain in our night underwear. That is how we finally got rid of winter.

At the same time, this very small space which could have eventually been sufficient for us alone, it could not be so for 6 persons; we were joined by a young man, 22 years old, and a 19-year old girl who came to stay with us. We were pleased to learn that that we would find two young people in our quarters – we hoped they would cheer up our environment. Unfortunately, the allotted space turned up to be so small that, in order to go to sleep all of us had to lie down at the same time, stretching out our bodies as much as possible. The daytime cohabitation was alright since at least one person would sit at the feet of the others.

Our newest tenants, who were in the Hluboczek labor camp until its liquidation – he as a member of the militia and she, as his wife, working in the kitchen – told us a lot of details about many of our acquaintances, as well as about the conditions prevailing there. Thus time passed faster in their company..

Then came December and with it the New Year. Thus we reached the year 1944. The first days of January brought us further limitations of bread rations. We were now getting only 1 kg of bread for twenty-four hours, i.e. 250 g per person which, of course, contributed to a constant feeling of hunger. Also, the food we were getting was losing its quality and quantity, so that often each of us would receive literally 5 spoons of nourishment for twenty-four hours. This resulted in my finally approaching in this matter the mother of our landlord who told me that, having received no money at all for three months, she was in no position to provide us with better food. We then understood that her son had kept for himself all the payments received for that period, without telling his mother about it. That same evening the landlord suggested that we leave, “go out into God’s world”, finally warning of further shortages in the event of an uprising in the shelter.

In the meantime, heavy fighting continued and in spite of imprecise news we constantly felt the approaching front. In the second half of January our landlord billeted a few Germans who had to make use of a toilet which was placed right above our little corridor from which camouflaged doors led to us. We had to be on constant alert and on the slightest murmur we had to turn off the light and maintain absolute quiet.

Finally, an order of alert for this farm area, issued as early as in November of last year, went into effect and thus began the retreat to the Hungarian border. There was no longer any doubt that our rescuers kept coming closer to us which raised our morale.

February came with steady advance of the Red Army. In spite of constant hunger and no delivery of newspaper, the time passed relatively quickly because it was apparent from the news received from our landlord that the Germans continue on the defense and suffer considerable losses, while the Red Army kept coming closer to us. According to news received in recent days, the Red Army had already reached the Zbrucz line and, according to some versions, already crossed it. This news was quickly confirmed, as well as the fact that the Soviets are approaching Tarnopol. We could already hear at night muted sounds of artillery fire, and that was the best proof. While the moment of liberation was getting closer, our impatience kept growing and every day felt like a century. The fear that after all the terrible events and sufferings something unforeseen may happen to prevent our rescue gave us no peace.. Soon it turned out that our fears had been justified.

End of February was approaching when, one evening, our landlord informed us that at a meeting called for by the head of the congregation, it had been announced to those present that, on orders of the German authorities, he is ordering alert as of next morning for the entire population. Thus all the inhabitants must properly prepare themselves to be ready when called for departure. In addition to livestock, they should take along part of the produce as well as the most essential items of daily use. All those not following this order will be shot on the spot. Although this news could have been very tragic for us, we accepted it calmly since, on the other hand, it was a proof of the approach of the Red Army from which we could only expect freedom. Thus we decided to remain in our hiding place after receiving some provisions from our caretaker. It was then that we found out about our landlord's decision to remain with us after sending away his mother with the livestock and part of the property. Even though our joint situation would not have been enviable, the fact that he was joining us and that undoubtedly he was well acquainted with the terrain lifted our spirits.

Thus passed the month of February without any further orders in the above matter. In the first days of March we got the joyous news about the Soviet army entering Tarnopol and occupying it without a gunshot. Tarnopol, our birth place, where our family, with the exception of the months during World War I, had spent our lives until we were forced to leave in 1940, on orders of the Soviet authorities, following nationalization of our real estate and properties. And now the city was liberated from Hitler's yoke by the victorious Red Army. Thanks to that army the small group of Jews still remaining in hiding was able to come out of the bunkers as free and equal citizens!

Several days passed without more precise news. Based on the sound of gunshots reaching us during the nights ... **[next page of original (85) missing]**

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... from which it was difficult to draw conclusions. Based on this news, in the third week of the battle for Tarnopol, the Soviets are reaching the center of town. The Germans are fiercely fighting for every building to the very end. Pushed out from the lower parts they withdraw to the higher floors, fighting on until their final destruction. During those fights the civilian population suffers tremendous human losses, not to mention material losses and destruction of the town which becomes a heap of rubble.

We can imagine the situation of the small group of Jewish survivors still remaining in hiding. How many among them already lost their shelters and will thereby increase the number of victims of this unfortunate town. This is at present the main subject of our talks and thoughts. Long days are passing without bringing us the impatiently awaiting news of the cessation of fights in Tarnopol.

In the meantime, on March 15, our landlord brings us the news that the Soviets made considerable advances in Wolyn, from where, on leaving Tarnopl on the side, we could soon expect our liberation.

The fights there lasted until the 25th of [illegible month] and on the 28th of March the victorious Russian armies entered our town and gave us back our freedom.

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