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“Notes from the Valley of Death”

Memories written in the Shavli Ghetto (Lithuania)

In the years 1942, 1943, 1944 (Hebrew Calendar Years 5702, 5703, 5704)

Translation Note: This translation is intended to make this diary easier for readers and researchers to discover and use. This is not a polished, final translation. Readers should consult the original text and/or the Hebrew transcription to resolve questions about meaning and interpretation that may not be clear in the translation.

Footnotes reflect the translator's notes and impressions at the time of translation, and may not reflect research conducted by Museum scholars.

Page numbers in this translation do not correspond to page numbers in the original text.

This translation may be revised in the future to reflect reader feedback and suggestions.

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Part A

1. Prior to the Bolsheviks' Arrival to Lithuania (A preface)

It was not so long ago that Lithuanians – whether rural peasants or urban types, from clerks to intellectuals (many themselves the descendants of peasants) behaved with respect toward Jewish physicians or lawyers, holding them in high regard. But those times are gone. These days, very few of those who once benefitted from the help of Jewish physicians and lawyers display any respect for them, or sympathy for their latest misfortune. Most Lithuanian people, even the educated, are hostile now toward all Jews, regardless of their previous social status. Under the malicious influence of the modern Haman [Hitler], they blame the Jews for all global disasters, and so justify laws against us. They think that scorn and annihilation are just rewards for our apparent connections to the Bolsheviks. Thus the Lithuanians became willing servants and appeasers of the modern-day Amalek [Nazi Germany]. The slightest hint was sufficient to trigger a predatory attack on the Lithuanian Jews, with a cruelty that has not been seen in over two thousand years of Jewish history: Innocent people were slaughtered, the elderly and youth, infants and toddlers, pregnant women and mothers. Yes! A horrible cruelty without precedent, carried out coldly, indifferently, as one kills flies, something not seen since the age of the Pharaohs. The Jews were slaughtered with the aid of reckless, unrestrained mobs.

Those who blame Jews for the misdeeds of the Bolsheviks make no distinctions; as far as they are concerned there is no difference between a common Jew and me. No gratitude is shown for my service as a physician in private practice and at the municipal hospital, helping thousands of Lithuanians. Thus my family's experience in recent years reflects the awful and bitter recent fate of the entire Jewish population in Lithuania. Thus I will merge the memories of my personal misfortunes with descriptions of the general persecutions, because they are one and the same, without a doubt.

In this preface to my memories about the bitter destiny of the Jews in Shavli – which for centuries has been a home to Jews in Lithuania – I think it suitable to emphasize my own personal situation in the old days, before the horror came into our lives. This was a time when social status, class and education mattered; we were not all lumped together like a herd of cattle or a “flock of blemished sheep” (Leviticus 22:25), as the leader of the Germans would have it.

For sixteen years I had managed the wards of internal and contagious diseases at the municipal hospital of Shavli, and during that entire time I had been the only Jewish physician among my Christian friends. As such I had the opportunity to see the changes occurring during this relatively short time in the way the Lithuanians in general, and their upper classes people in particular, treated the Jews. Lithuanian physicians hold respectable positions near the top of Lithuanian society, just below priests.

“A universal hate for a universal people” had existed of course, in the old days in Lithuania as well, but the nature of the Lithuanian antisemitism, as recently as sixteen years ago, when I had first taken my position at the hospital, was completely different than the one in those days. Now, thanks to the malicious propaganda flowing constantly like poison from the West, we are viewed as loathsome lepers and filth. Sixteen years ago, I could discuss Jewish-Christian relations – a frequent topic – with the hospital administrator, who later took a key position in the Lithuanian government. He would complain that Jews were reluctant to assimilate, citing mixed marriages he knew of as “very successful” with offspring who “rose beautifully” in Lithuanian society. Once I responded that a nation of higher culture should hardly be expected to assimilate into a nation of lower culture, he was offended. This man, the son of rude villagers who treated people much as his parents had, grunted: “What is Jewish culture? Lice and bedbugs?” I then educated him about the Old Testament, the Talmud and the secular

Jewish literature, and about the great extent of quality and volume of work from Judah Halevi to Dr. Vincas Kudirka and their national poet, the composer of the Lithuanian national anthem and more. Apparently I won the argument: He made no further claims and peace was restored. My position in the hospital was secure, and my salary was the same as those of my Christian colleagues. They were more than polite to me; yet outside the hospital we seldom interacted, perhaps because they knew I was a card-carrying Zionist, and a veteran Jewish nationalist. In fact I made no efforts to befriend them, and always felt there was a barrier between us. Still, inside the institute, we were equal in every respect. Even among the lower-level hospital personnel, my being a Jew went unremarked, at least openly. There was one time when a nurse, bandaging a little child who wouldn't stop crying, attempted to silence him with a popular peasant threat: "Be quiet! A Jew is coming!" I happened to enter the room as she said this, and as I laughed she blushed with embarrassment. Yes! My friends and hospital personnel treated me with as much respect as could be expected.

Over time, antisemitism increased in Lithuania, both in the streets and in official policy. More Jewish signs were tarred even as the Seimas [parliament] eliminated the Jewish Ministry's budget, and thus the last miserable remnant of our autonomy. Among the historical reasons for this growth in antisemitism, a primary one was the ambition of Lithuania's peasants. Previously serfs who gained freedom with their country's political independence, they wished to become fully equal urban citizens, filling all the important positions in a proud, independent state without foreign interference. They saw themselves ready to take over key sectors of industry and commerce, and so they began to restrict "foreign competitors" – Jews – every way they could.

Divisions grew between my colleagues and me regarding Lithuanians and Jews, and particularly about policies that infringed the rights of the latter, rights that had been assured by the Lithuanian constitution. A theme emerged during these conversations, captured in the slogan "Lithuania to the Lithuanians." It is true that this was not said aloud at first, but only hinted; shortly, however, the insinuations were replaced by open, loudly expressed opinions. I remember that one of my friends, a well-known intellectual with a good mind, first embarrassed me a little. He asked me whether the land of our fathers [Palestine] which we are busy building right now, would welcome non-Jews as clerks or in other positions. I answered that it is not the same, for many reasons: Lithuania is not being built and developed right now, and it should not be afraid of small hurdles. It is being "upgraded" and rearranged, and it needs the work of experts, professional men, who are in short supply among the Lithuanians. Moreover, there is a great difference between hesitating to provide employment [in Palestine] – to foreigners such as the Arabs who inhibit and fight us, and who therefore could cause the failure of the country we are building. We have just begun building a new country. This can't be compared with the ambition of some people to destroy the status achieved by [Jewish] professionals, traders and artisans, who have disproportionately helped Lithuania's development, and are its faithful subjects and could bring it tangible benefits. Finally, I talked about the laws of the Torah regarding foreigners, and about the equity that has existed since biblical times between foreigners and citizens of Jewish communities.

And the government started pouring various limiting decrees on the Jews, aimed at the tradesmen, artisans, and in education, which I will spare you the details, for time consideration, for which the list is long. Therefore, I will be focusing on the limitation in the higher education profession: the medicine and the law which I know best. First, most of the doors of the faculty of medicine were locked to Jewish graduates, and to enter those doors became as hard as the parting of the Red Sea. Only outstanding people were entitled to enter the medicine garden as exceptions, and even that thanks to privilege and recommendations of high up influencers. The situation in Lithuania became worse than in Russia during the era of the Tsar. There, at least, the "numerus clausus" existed regarding the Jews; that is to say, upon the admission of students into high schools and universities, the Jews were admitted at a ratio of fifteen to one hundred, while in Lithuania there were no ratios, and the rejections of the Jewish applications to the medicine department were done almost as a wholesale, across the board. And yet the

rejected applicants were required to comply with the holy constitution and to give, at least an external, legal appearance to this scandal! Therefore, there was no material evidence for rejections, but there were more than enough excuses! First a committee was constituted in order to examine the health condition of the medicine candidates. At the head of this committee, stood the famous sadist, the anatomy professor Shzilinskis – a product of the Lithuanian state, like most of its early scholars – an educated man with a smell of sweat rising from all his teachings and wisdom, and upon which a severe ruling had been issued by the ensemble of the Kaunas municipality.¹ During a dispute in the municipality, in which Shzilinskis also participated, the Jew Hadash told him: “My dear professor! This is not a university, here you need to work with your head!” Of course, the health condition of all the Jews who they wanted to prevent from attending, was found weak and unsatisfactory. A story goes about a young man who was banned by the committee from entering the university due to his weak body, and the young man called: “I am surprised! They had not found me weak when I had been a deputy officer in the Lithuanian army, but to study in the university my health condition is not sufficient! What a wonder!” and the committee members were humiliated. This young man, with certain rights, could not be rejected easily, and the committee was punished. The second excuse used to reject young Jewish annoying men from entering the university was a through a thorough examination of the command of the Lithuanian language. Regarding the literary style and the orthography of this ancient language, which had been renewed in recent years, there are still many disputes and uncertainties among the Lithuanian linguists, and it is very easy to find errors even in the works of typical Lithuanian writers. Even more so if one wishes to examine candidates in order to fail them to begin with. When the examination is so harsh, there was no wonder the number of failures was high, even among those Jewish graduates who knew the Lithuanian language extremely well.

Regarding the limitations of the Jews in the medical domain, another strategy by the government was intended to eliminate Jewish specialists, experts in one domain, as surgeons, gynecologists, ophthalmologists and so. In order to do so, an order was given that any physician wanting to acquire the title “specialist” is obligated to work in the proper hospital ward as an assistant – several set years such as: three years for the eye diseases, four years for surgery etc. Seemingly, this demand would be fair and reasonable, however, simultaneously with the issuance of this order, behind the scenes, another order was given, or a conspiracy was made amidst the institutes’ directors, to halt admitting Jewish assistants to the specialty hospital wards [the expert ones, the professional]. Since practical work experience as an assistant in the ear, nose and throat diseases wards, the gynecologic wards and similar, became, as aforementioned, a prerequisite for a specialist title, with the elimination of these positions for Jews, so has the possibility for Jewish physicians to becoming specialists and experts. As far as for the Jewish lawyers, matters were even more cumbersome. Here the limitation did not only pertain to specializations and experts, but of banning Jews from becoming common lawyers. Since even such a title was conditioned on being a “candidate” [resident candidate] position in court for a known period, and the admission of Jewish candidates in courts halted altogether abruptly in a single day.

Due to the limitations and discomforts, the Jews positions of white-collar functions in governmental institutes and municipalities they had been holding until then, have dwindled. Employment rates were low to begin with to the extent that even a little boy was able to count them – and they were slowly and gradually pushed from their positions, in order not to make such an impact. Even more so, every new position was scrutinized, and a Jew would not receive it. The limitations on university admissions, the lack of possibilities to specialize post-graduation; the lack of possibilities to receive a “lawyer” title or any official position – caused higher education, which had been until then highly coveted by Jewish young people, began losing its value in their eyes, and instead was replaced by a desire to leave the country of Lithuania. The country has become like a step mother to them on the backdrop of anti-Semitism there. And to immigrate to their ancestral homeland, or other overseas countries – the old shelters of the Jewish immigrants, for creative and productive work was their aim.

¹ Of the town of Kaunas, the capital of Lithuania between the two world wars.

The atmosphere became harsher even in the hospital, and if before there had been no differences between me and the other Christian physicians, for example regarding compensation, things now took a turn for the worst. It is true that, in time, all our salaries were reduced and became minuscule, however, the surgeons and the personnel delivering babies, started receiving percentages from all services performed, on top of their salary. And in that way, on a monthly basis they received decent amounts, and an honorable salary, while my salary became meager and without any incentives. However, in light of the energetic anti-Semitic propaganda engulfing all Lithuania, I was in a state of doubt and insecurity and did not have the courage to ask for a raise. Even though I single handedly fulfilled few physicians' positions, that is to say: I managed the wards of the internal and contagious diseases, and also was a consultant in the surgeries, delivery, and gynecology wards. Even the Jewish deputy mayor, Pitokovski, an outstanding man (who later ended up as a victim of the evil people of Vilnius), and was in charge of the finance and budget of the municipality, even he was taken by the prominent anti-Semitic effect. And was saying quite often: "Now it is not the right time to pop the question of an addition to the salary of a Jewish physician in the municipal hospital". And so, my Christian colleagues received a good worth for their work every month, as they were receiving the aforementioned percentages to their salary, and I was obligated to be content with my meager salary, and to bear in silence the offence brought to me by this discrimination. It is interesting to note, that my friends did not find the aforementioned disparity as an abnormality. Gradually, a strange attitude developed among them, that the difference was justified, as long as they were willing to put up with a Jewish physician in their municipal hospital, this was fair! And that in spite of the fact that the municipal hospital resided in a building which before the Great War had been the property of the "community" in Shavli, and the municipality, which had inherited the building from the German people, in order to placate the true owners, the community, had agreed to pay "rent" to the latter – an insignificant amount, and it also had agree to appoint a Jewish physician in the hospital, a job which has "fallen unto me in pleasant places" [Psalms 16, 6].

And the new head physician of the hospital, a strict physician, who had Polish origins, and despised and hated the Lithuanians, nevertheless agreed with the Lithuanians when it came to hate the Jews. To be true to the facts, he had no solid principals and approached everything with a grain of salt, "with jest and semi-seriousness", pursuant to the Russian expression. But during the last period, even he adjusted himself and became almost an open anti-Semitic, and most of my friends followed suit quickly: the delivery man at the "S", in spite of the Jewish origin of his wife, and the surgeon T.K. who came from the Tatar people (assumed to arrive to Lithuania in the days of Vytautas Didysis, and later were assimilated among the Lithuanians and the Polish living there). Although our relations in the hospital were as before, polite and friendly, but "the head" began to often use the term "Aryans" as an opposite to the term "Jews", even if the former was related to "with jest and semi-seriousness" more often. There was an event in which a young Jewish physician, a resident in his first year at the hospital, on his way to receive a physician diploma, in our hospital, asked the head physician to grant him the position of the deputy night duty physician. This was a paid position. The head physician answered that "the upper spheres had urged him to grant this position to an Aryan physician". Of course, that this was of his own volition, because there had been no upper spheres, and no one to urge him. He was pranking, but the rejection to give a salary to a "needy" Jew existed and was carried out as a gem stone on the backdrop of the rising of antisemitism in the Lithuanian society.

And my Christian physician friends, during our debates, were no longer sticking to the slogan "Lithuania to the Lithuanians". They were not satisfied with a defensive war against foreigners, "the unnecessary competitors" in Lithuania, but carried forward with momentum, hardly concealing their hatred towards the Jews "who are only after their own interests conquering prestigious commerce and industry sectors important for the spiritual development of Lithuania, so as literature and arts and so on. That the Jews are not interested in all that and they do not help to their development. T.K was especially hateful. His facial expression and last name testament that he was not a pure Lithuanian, therefore making great efforts to show his devotion to the Lithuanian people. Trying to belong and blurring as much as possible his foreign origins. The behavior of this Tatar towards

me had a special nature: internally, inside of the hospital, in spite of our disputes, we were faithful friends, but externally, when encountering me in the company of Christians at a reception or convention, he ignored and made every effort not to say even a word to me. A Lithuanian-French society had existed in Shavli before the Bolsheviks came, and he had been one of its pillars. I once gave a French lecture there and it was very successful and respectful – and despite that, even at the society receptions, he was reluctant to talk to me or to show any signs of friendship. He would only nod his head subtly, as if he has seen a ghost –in order not to be suspected of befriending a Jew, as an adjustment to the new era.

To be short: the atmosphere at the hospital was also changed to the worse, and my previous strong position there had weakened due to the new conditions which began making my breathing more difficult. The public and political antisemitism had a reciprocal influence on one another, and it was not known which one had the upper hand. The Lithuanian press did not stop the shameful propaganda towards the Jews, and even in the official paper, from time to time, articles appeared about the disgrace of all the Jews, mocking them and their malicious hearts: “they rob the others, they suck the vigor out of the Lithuanian country like parasites; they damage the reputation of the Lithuanian women and take advantage of the little peasants girls, which had been innocent until the Jews inflicted upon them and so on and so forth (as a physician who also dealt with women patients I could testify, that maybe one out of thousands of those adult peasants had not tasted the taste of sin – and when they come to town, there is nothing more to spoil... and there is nothing more to say about it)²”.

The extent of hatred and deception in the Lithuanian press could be evidenced by the following fact, which if it was not as sad, might have been amusing. In the summer days, at the peak of the Palanga sea bathing season, the editor of the paper himself took to the pen and wrote a whole article about how the Jews pollute and infect the sea in Palanga. As evidence he gave an example of a Jewish man being caught not washing, a thing Semite people do quite often ...

Along with the hatred articles, various and awkward law proposals began appearing in the press which had served as guiding principles for the legislatures in the Seimas. The common thread in all of these proposals was the aim to destroy the entire Jewish autonomy in Lithuania, which we had been so proud of, in our country (Lithuania), and to eradicate it. It was proposed that the Jews should be obligated to celebrate in all the commerce houses and laboratories [the workshops], all the Christian holidays; it was suggested that the Lithuanian language should be the official language in all schools as well as all accounting books in all institutes. It was proposed to ban the employment of young Christian girls by Jews; among other proposals, one drew the attention of the Jewish population was to allocate a dedicated beach – Plaza, in Palanga; the Jews reacted by threatening of boycotting Palanga. The summer camp owners, under a fear of losses, tried their best to have the proposal withdrawn. To conclude, if we came here to write about all the malicious persecutions by the anti-Semitic people in Lithuania, which repeatedly falsely accused, pondered and turned the question of the Jews, we would not suffice. Although there is one more interesting detail worth mentioning. In Lithuania, along with the severities and the restrictions in the commerce and industry professions, and the limitation in the educational domain, the government also considered the Jewish artisans, and decided to administer practical and theoretical tests, that, if they were to be conducted by the government formula, that the whole Jewish artisanry would have ceased to exist. That would have resulted in tens of thousands of food deprived Jews, starving to death. It is easy to assume to what extent the common people managed to prepare themselves for the language, exams, mathematics, drawing and more. Common people who were poor, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters and the like, who besides the learnings from their childhood and the learning of the Torah, had never had anything to do with these disciplines, and all of their actions concentrated in making ends meet.

² Those square brackets are in the original.

Beside of the decrees which were successful, the authorities also allowed adverse actions against the Jews, which should also be worth mentioning here thereof. After the annexation of the town of Klaipeda to Germany³, many Jews returned to Lithuania, former owners of factories and laboratories. They possessed experience and considerable amount of capital and offered the government to establish similar businesses to the ones they had in Klaipeda. But the government rejected their offers, refusing their licenses. The reason was the same as given by the Queen Yelisaveta Petrovna⁴, loud and clear: “From the enemies of the Christ I do not want any profit and benefit”, and this was the reason given by the Lithuanian government, seemingly due to the constitution, which it used as a guideline regarding Jewish affairs.

The anti-Semitic propaganda, the evil laws and decrees, the adverse attitude towards the Jews seen even at the upper classes of Lithuanian society, took prolific roots here, leaving a prolific impression on the common citizens as well. The air was charged just waiting for the right day to explode. The ground was fertile for pogroms against the Jews! And the preparations for the pogroms began vigorously. Knowledgeable people promised that in the barns [the deposits] of the laboratory [the factory] for meat products “Maistas”, various weapons of mass destruction were ready: axes, knives, iron casts and similar items, in order to use them on the day the Jews would be killed. Of course, there was no lack of volunteers to participate in the pogroms: heading the crowd were robbers and murderers, the workers of the same “Maistas” laboratory were prepared to walk, specialist in killing pigs, cattle, sheep and goats, and their help would be the rest of the factories workers in Shavli, which had mostly established by the Jews providing for them and for their families. In any event often attacks happen to the Jews, especially at night, and so the Jews began fearing and stayed indoors after dark. Even though the representatives of the community complained before the clerks about the atrocities in the town, the complaints went un heeded. The secret police, as costumed, blamed the daring, cheeky Kikes for everything. In one instant which involved a seemingly educated Lithuanian, probably under the influence of “Bacchus”, who insulted one of the pioneer Jews on his way on the main street, in a very rude manner. The friends of the insulted chap pushed the insulter into a back yard and showed him their wrath as rightfully deserved. This hooligan belonged to a kind of a Lithuanian patriotic association. All his friends gathered and came with sticks and weapons to a pioneers’ night ball. Almost all the pioneers, men and women, were wounded. The municipal physician and the clerks tried to cover it all up, as if some school boys were fighting a little back yard fight, especially as they thought that the Jews were the ones starting it all. When it was discovered that almost twenty people were wounded, among them several with serious injuries, the clerks administratively fined the heads of the rioters, as it was hard even for them not to, when everything was in the open now. The funds from the fines was then given to the anti-Semitic members of the town council, the infamous Stankus and Sutas, enemies of Israel, black as crows, which the Bolsheviks later banned and transferred them to the Soviet Union.

And the day of the pogrom had finally arrived. The day of riots, on which the massacre of the Jews was to take place and was set to be June Fifteen in the year of One Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty, a day which would be remembered for a long time. This day was a celebration day, the first day of the week, when all the workers were free from work, and they would be able without any inhibition, to lend hands in plundering and even murder if necessary.

“We cannot rely on miracles” – and Israel is a scattered sheep [Jeremiah 50, 7] among all the beasts and it exists only due to miracles and wonders. It is unbelievable. And the story will be told about the historic wonder whim, rising that day. The day in which the pogroms were intended, and defied. The intentions and thoughts of the villains and haters of Israel were dissuaded by the course of history. A huge miracle happened on that day, June Fifteen, and it became a historical tale with results which will be remembered by all generations to come.

³ Klaipeda – was annexed to the Reich on March 23, 1939.

⁴ The daughter of Great Peter and Catharine I, Russian Empress in 1741-1762.

On that day, at dawn, thunder and noises of wheels and machines were heard on the Tilsit road⁵, until the whole town was excited and fearful. But soon, the tumult became pleasant to the ears of almost all the Jews in Shavli, and many of them saw it as a sweet harmony, as a melody of heaven! It was the noise and the tumult coming from the Russian tanks and cannons appearing by storm and tempest, and as a miracle their timing saved the Jews in Shavli (and the Jews in all of Lithuania) which were expected to be slaughtered, robbed and annihilated. They came in great numbers and flow in a long endless procession to the corner of Joniskis⁶, toward the Latvian border. All our enemies and accusers were silenced and most of the workers who planning to participate in the pogroms became Bolsheviks overnight, trustees of the proletarian dictatorship and believers of equal rights for the workers of all nations, apparently without a difference – and to the Jews, profit and saving! Until the end of times!

Oh! A very expensive price, a price which we could not have foreseen, we have paid for this little saving, and this was not over! Our lives were still hanging before our eyes and we were still tortured [afflicted; exemplified by Psalms 119, 107] and tormented under the nailed sandal of the Germans and by the scuffle of the partners of Amalek, for the blames of the Bolsheviks which are attributed to us.

2. The Bolsheviks in Lithuania

And so, the Bolshevik regime took us over on June Fifteen on the year of One Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty, with its many values and advantages and with as many defects. But who would dare now[= in the ghetto] to have the nerve speaking of the defects of that regime, and to criticize it, when it was inherited by the cursed regime of Hitler. We fell from the top of a roof to the bottom of a well. As if we were exiled from a heaven full of light and joy of life and pushed firmly into an awful hell with endless fear for our lives. Surely, the Bolsheviks regime destroyed the financial state of the merchants, and the men of action which were most of the Jewish community in Lithuania. But nevertheless, it had saved us from the ones who wanted to murder us, and now in our days of worry and rebellion, we remember the role the Jews had in the Bolsheviks regime. The respectable positions we had held, pursuant to our talents, and our spirits fainteth within us [according to Psalms 142, 4] and tears choke our throats. Although it is impossible, to tell now in detail the various ways and all of the major, actually mammoth changes and amendments brought to our country in general and our lives in particular, along with the Bolshevik regime, because the turn of events was so rapid, up to a point we became dizzy and nervous as never before. And many events happened so quickly, that our brains did not have capacities to digest them quickly enough. And so, it is very hard to take all the events into an accurate account and a just assessment, and it is hard to put them into the right order. Even so, I will make an effort and write as much as I can about the details of the Bolshevik regime, which was brought to the life of our town, with moderation and impartiality, while I control my longings for this regime and my sorrow for losing it for the cruel German fist.

The foundation [the basis, Psalms 87, 1] of the Bolshevik regime was equality and justice, but we cannot conceal the truth that its implementation in general, and its application in our town in particular, was to a known extent not just but distortion of justice and wickedness to be folly [Ecclesiastes 7, 25]. On the one hand, the release of the workers from the exploitation of the capitalists, an improvement to their material and moral condition, giving them the control – the proletarian dictatorship – [although many in Russia doubted the nature and the necessity of its implementation – a country with failing industry and capitalism – abrupt change as storm and tempest and without any gradual development – but in any event the intention was desired and the aspiration was understood]⁷, and on the other hand, the false assumption that every bourgeois is evil and incompetent, that it cannot be repaired but can only be destroyed, and setting a method of avenging individuals and their heirs for the

⁵ In the name of the town Tilsit, which, after World War II was called Sovietsk. The road had no name and it crossed the town, from Tilsit to the Latvian border.

⁶ About 40 km north-east of Shavli, on the road to Latvia and Riga, its capital.

⁷ Those square brackets are in the original.

general wrong doings of an entire class, as one of the stages of the ladder of necessary social development. On the one hand, the cancellation of private entrepreneurship which only benefits the individual, removal of the old owners and directors from the stores and the factories, and the expulsion of the old clerks who are indeed experienced and quick in their work, but at the same time very suspicious and haters of the new regime and ready for sabotage – and on the other hand, the “mischievous” government which is not ready for functions and required responsibilities and education, general development and practical experience in particular, and appointments of clerks from the bullies and commoners, eager to be elevated instantly to the highest positions, receiving at the time the authority of the communists apparently with faith and devotion, and thereafter would participate in the pogroms, those who became Bolsheviks overnight and would become Partisans⁸, robbers and murderers – so we have witnessed what had happened. The revolutionary method of the Bolsheviks wishing to uproot in one stroke the whole capitalist order required agility and speed often leading to excessive haste, which often took the form of panic and disorder. According to the formula of the last rulers in the Soviet Union, the proletarian revolution did not have time to wait, it was not allowed to postpone the fulfillment of the ambitions in order to repair the human society. And so, there was no possibility to prepare the proper “professionals”, suitable talent pool in order to implement the ambitions of Marxism, a thing that truly required a lot of time, effort and practical natural talent. Go and learn the things as was said by one jockeying clown: “thousands of years are needed in order to change the nature of humanity, a long development without any law is required in order to create a new heart, a pure heart. Christianity Is also based upon supreme and exalted ideals – and for almost two thousand years, the believers and followers are apparently were not trained, to actually fulfill those ideals, and they easily turn, when needed, to predators, who would suck blood at every turn”. Surely, to these accusations answer the Marxists – and to some extent justifiably, that as long as the private ownership exists, as long as there is a measurement: “mine-mine and yours-yours”, it could easily be turned to the evil figure: “mine-mine yours-mine”, which is based on the exploitation of the other. As long as the term of private property prevailed and was extended not only to individuals but also to nations and countries, no pure ideal could be fulfilled – and so the first condition and the necessary one for the wisdom of mankind, was the cancellation of this distortion. This claim had great truth in it – let us assume that all of it exists and it is valid, and that in the world the wise were not divided and with the cancellation of the term “mine-mine, yours-yours”, a new and better world would be created – let us assume that this is “true”. But the question still remains: without the gradual preparation of “professionals”, of decent people who are experts in their fields, who could implement all the corrections and make them real, who would conduct the speedy revolution. Could the political prisoners answer this question, party privileged ones, that in the short days of the Bolsheviks regime were considered those who were trained in prisons until they became authority members, experts in all the financial professions and in conducting the affairs of society and state? Could the salvation come from empty people like --- Slavich and such, the rulers of Shavli, who had gotten out of prison “to rule”, and the “mania grandiose” [megalomania] came upon them the moment they rose to rule? on the one hand, those people were acting with a sense of superiority, and on the other hand they only had one rule, that the salvation of the world depended only on evil and cruelty towards all other classes, but the working class, and on destroying individuals for the sins of entire generations – and then, what would become of the positive work? In their opinion, apparently, it would have performed itself.

Well, immediately after the Bolsheviks entered Shavli they began, without any hesitations and delay, to establish and fortify their government upon us and to destroy the capitalist order and bourgeois ruling within. First they expelled the Polizia [the police], and the most active secret police employees were arrested; thereafter they shot down the corporations and public institutions that had existed in Shavli until their arrival, with the condition that those who wish to continue to exist would submit a petition for it; they closed the only newspaper

⁸ The way the Lithuanians called those who collaborated with the Germans, and whose part in the annihilation of the Jews in Lithuania was crucial.

published in Shavli; they placed commissars in the factories and removed suspicious persons from their positions. Additionally, they began arresting directors of the political parties from the right, and leaders of bourgeois associations. Along with those, the true opponents of the Bolsheviks who “went off track”, as the state of affairs required, a great deal of suffering was also brought to the Jewish culture – completely unnecessarily, because those who had been following the secular formula were mostly modern people, who easily agreed to adapt, to a certain extent, to the new conditions and requirements. – In this way, for example, the public Jewish library was shot down. “Yiddish” language books were taken in order to establish a new library based on the purity of the proletarian sanctity, and Hebrew language books were removed. It is worth noting, that one of the former teachers of the Jewish gymnasium, who quickly became an active Bolshevik and a servant in the G.P.U⁹, advised to burn the Jewish books – [the new regime often brought destruction to the Jewish spirit, and this fact was not an isolated incident].¹⁰ Besides destroying the public Jewish library, also the Hebrew gymnasium, which had been pride of the community in Shavli, was closed, with its books, its rich library and majestic building; also closed was the exemplary Jewish school, and instead, Yiddish schools were opened. Furthermore, the head of the gymnasium was arrested, well rounded educated man, a social Zionist true and devoted to the Jewish culture and Socialism with all of his heart, and at the same time searches were made in the homes of the heads of the Zionist Federations. All those actions of the Bolsheviks were just a preface, an introduction to what was to come, that is to say, the nationalization of the factories and stores, the confiscation of merchandises and accounts, and also the nationalization of fine dwellings of private ownership. What came afterwards, was the true season of searches, which were conducted mainly in the houses of merchants suspected of hiding merchandise for speculation. Most of the latter were Jews, they were sentenced harshly for little misdemeanors and imprisoned for many years, along with the confiscation of all their possessions. The lives of the bourgeois were also affected, they were avenged without considering the psychological ramification, which should have reduced their sentencing and tilted the hands of justice slightly to their favor.

And the searches and arrests casted terror and fear among the Jewish population. One had been an official Zionist, another had been merchant, a third had been a relative of a merchant suspected of speculation, the fourth had too much sugar, flour and so on, the fifth had hidden gold coins and was afraid the treasure would be found, the sixth had foreign currency and so on and so forth – the short of it was, that except for the old workers and the ones related to the party, insecurity and fear nested in the hearts of almost every man. They began fearing the smallest rustling at night, fearing it was the representatives of the N.K.V.D.¹¹, and most of the Jewish population did not sleep. Nerves were so tense and so overworked, that it was impossible to perform any spiritual or more or less serious task. I myself waited daily to be searched or arrested. As I was the vice chairman of the General Zionists Association in Shavli – the chairman of the “Culture” branch, the director of the Hebrew public library, a member of the patents committee in the Hebrew gymnasium, and externally, also its first director, of which the license “to operate” the gymnasium and manage it had been officially granted in my name – [the reason for which had been the requirement that the gymnasium director had to hold a higher degree, and the actual director had not sufficed receiving a diploma when starting the position in order to operate the gymnasium]¹². To make the story short: I was pretty much well known as a member of the Zionist party, the bourgeois, activist and head of our community; I had been also known as an enthusiast of the Hebrew language and as a man who sometimes had taken to the pen in this language. My public functions were, of course, known to the secret police, and from there, as was costumed, to the N.K.V.D. – what else was there to be needed in order for me to be arrested?

⁹ G.P.U in Russian: Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie; the State Political Administration.

¹⁰ Those square brackets are in the original.

¹¹ N.K.V.D. in Russian: *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*, The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, this is the name of the internal police between 1935 and 1943.

¹² Those square brackets are in the original.

“And that which I was afraid of hath overtaken me”! A very unpleasant surprise unsettled me; Neither search nor arrests were waiting for me, but a different punishment came over me due to “my bourgeois sins”. One morning I was invited to the Municipality. The mayor, the glorious “jewel”, Mr. Linkevicius greeted me with a serious face, almost sad, one might say, and then stabbed me with words sharp as a sword: “I invited you here in order to deliver some unpleasant news, which, of course, I am not responsible for, because its reason does not depend on me: a decision was made to dismiss you from the hospital”. Even if as the days were full of surprises, and I, as aforementioned, I waited for an unpleasant one, which would have affect me in a very personal way, this made a very strong impression on me: sixteen years I had been working at the hospital by the sweat of my brow and with dedication, and as aforementioned, I had single handedly fulfilled several physicians duties – although in the last years I had some help from the “medicine flowers”, the young physicians the university had been sending for the one year practical training before receiving their diploma – but twelve-thirteen years I literally had been working in the hospital without assistants or deputies, and now I was being expelled like an old dog without compensation, as was the costume of the days of the new regime!

Later I learned that the those close to the feeding hand of the communist party in Shavli, were responsible for my dismissal, as among other things, had spread rumors about me being a spy and an informer, which was very profitable then, they alleged that I had been appointed sixteen years ago as the Jewish physician in the municipal hospital, pursuant to the recommendation of the community, just because I had been a member of the Zionist association. As so, our new leaders concluded easily, that now, when the time has come to rid from society all the “rebels of light” and the bourgeois, it was obvious that, the Jewish physician, a faithful member of the “Black Zionist and anti-revolutionist society”, needed to make room for a physician “of their own”, a communist, and if such a physician could not have been be found, then unfortunately, I would have made room for a physician from the left, a lover of the party – and we had this kind of physician in Shavli. Surely, the new candidate did not possess the knowledge and the scientific experience of the previous physician, but why should that have mattered? that would have been solved in time, and the ideal covered all crimes. It is worth noting, that the truth was, that when the municipality had agreed to appoint a Jewish physician as a compensation for the community, for using a building belonging to the latter as the municipal hospital, the community council had decided to put this job upon my shoulders for various reasons and especially due to my involvement in public affairs: I had been the one curing refugees from Russia when they had gotten back to Lithuania, I had been the physician of the orphanage, and not in order to receive an award – I had established the O.Z.E.¹³ branch in Shavli, I had participated as an active member of the community council, I had been among those who had established the municipal Hebrew library. In addition, I had excelled in my Jewish education above all other physicians, up to a point in which the title “the Jewish physician” had been more suitable to me than to my competitor, Dr. V. [an assimilated and a rude man, who had always been cursing by using the famous Russian triple blessing towards the Jews]. And my Zionism had not even been taken into consideration especially that not all the members of the community council were Zionists back then.

Among the aforementioned of those close to the feeding hands, a prominent one was Dr. L. whose hand had been involved in leading to my discharge. It is worth now mentioning few details about that man and his nature, in order to illustrate the type of men who were promoted by the new regime, the one lacking “professionals”, as the foam rises from the water, which ended up becoming the supporting pillars of the party in our town in particular, and in Lithuania in general.

Dr. L. used to associate with the tax’s inspector in Shavli, Mr. Nuseida, head of the Lithuanians nationalists in our town, a complete anti-Semitic and a man with a soul darker than the night. When a bid was announced to the benefit of “The Release Foundation” of the city of Vilnius, Dr. L. volunteered to participate, and his partner

¹³ O.Z.E. in Russian “Obschestvo zdavookhraneniia evreev”, an organization devoted to the promotion of Jewish health, founded in Saint Petersburg in 1912.

was the same anti-Semitic, inspector Nuseida, and both of them pressured especially the Jewish donors, obliging them to make substantial donations, much greater than the ones of the Christian donors, particularly because Jewish merchants feared the inspector – the insatiable leach. During the “Brothers-in-law government” in Lithuania – Smitona the President and his brother-in-law Tubilis the Prime Minister –when the latter visited the town of Shavli, inspector Nuseida was eager to head the banquet organizers in honor of the Prime Minister and his active companions. And in order to seemingly comply with the constitution and give appearance of equality in Lithuania, he invited two-three Jews including his “moshka”, Dr. L., to participate in the banquet – and the latter did not stop bragging about the big honor given to him. During that same time, Dr. L. was very active in the Lithuanian Rifles Association¹⁴ [the riflemen, the “saulyses”, as they were called, and treated them for free and gave them quite a few lessons of “fast aid” [first aid] and so on. In short: a can of worms was trailing behind this Dr. L., especially in the eyes of the Bolsheviks – but the same man had an extreme adaption talent, to location and the changing conditions of life –he was also a gifted speaker, to a great extent. And if there was someone who could seize the moment, an opportunist like no other was Dr. L. he knew how to use every situation to his own advantage and personal gain. On one occasion, circumstances have played to his benefit: he allowed to hide in his home banned literature, which was intended for political prisoners. This great project (!) – which for him came more from lack of any principals, and the need to be liked by all parties and opinions (because he was not a socialist then) – it was then used by him as a proof of his leftist tendency and enabled him to get closer to the Bolsheviks representatives in Shavli. With his soft and slippery tongue, he then stole their minds, and made them believe that all of his past actions, which the representatives did not approve, had been done only to bling the eyes of the darkened souls, and to take their minds off his leftist tendencies. Beside the event with the banned literature, he was able to highlight additional virtues: he had been paying a membership fee to the “MOPR”¹⁵ [the trust fund for the political prisoners and their families]. He had been a “Yiddishist” and far from Zionism (not necessarily against it, pursuant to his lack of principals). Due to all the aforementioned virtues, he succeeded, in time, to join the local communist party and to become one of their most faithful men. That and even more: he had managed that era successfully: in the matters of health and medicine in Shavli - matters of the utmost importance in the Bolshevik world – were handle then by XX [redacted by author]. He was then the sole arbiter in these important matters, and there had been a real need for a consultant in the medicine domain who knew more than the aforementioned “cretin” [moron, bad language] – and so they had received Dr. L. with “open arms”. Those two “tzantere dedahava”¹⁶: XX [redacted by author] and Dr. L. became the guardians of medicine in our town and were the ones deciding everything in these matters. First, they took care of themselves: [two rows redacted by the author] and Dr. L. was appointed to the prestigious and key position as head of the municipal hospital. The position of the director of the municipal health department remained still vacant. None of them wanted it. But, more importantly, they decided to give this position to a Christian physician because of “what would the non-Jews say”, so as not to grant all the prestigious positions to Jews, a certainly important consideration. This position was received by Dr. Jasaitis, “the best non-Jew physician”. A man with a good mind and tongue and a very speedy pen in Lithuanian. Also, he was not openly anti-Semitic. Moreover, frequently, he showed signs of fondness towards his Jewish acquaintances. Surely, he was far from being a serious man and he was hypocritical, but among the Cristian physicians no man was found who was more suited for the position of Head of the Health Department in Shavli (Dr. Jasaitis would also be fondly remembered in the German regime); as the rest of the Lithuanians who had been friends of the Bolsheviks and were forgiven, he also kept his position, and spoke on behalf of six

¹⁴ Saulys, rifleman, a member of the Lithuanian Riflemen Union, “Lietuvos Siauliu Sajunga”, founded in 1919 and all deriving regarding its attitude towards the Jews in Lithuania. Officially, the right of the Jews who were released from the Lithuanian National Army to join the Union, was not banned.

¹⁵ M.O.P.R. In Russian, “Mezhdunarodnoye Obshtchestvo Pomoshtchi Revolutzioneram”, an international organization aiding the revolutionists.

¹⁶ Two golden pipes, two respectful man, and here of course with irony.

Jewish physicians before the Germans, and secured them as laboratory technicians, myself among them, in various medical institutes.

As it was revealed to me later, Dr. L. cleansed and justified himself at my expense before the representatives of the communist party and said: “I doubt it if Dr. Pick is entitled to the robe of the manager of the wards of the internal and contagious diseases in the municipal hospital, since he is a Zionist”. Such statements of flattering and deception were made by him to the heads of the party in order to present false political attitudes and his seeming devotion to the party. Especially that, as aforementioned, he had pretended to have leftist tendencies, “Yiddishist” and anti-Zionist, and what not? his slippery tongue, his flattering and deception. [One more detail to note, which helped quite a lot to the beginning of “his rise” in the ladder, was the fact that Dr. Cohen, the first Minister for Public Health, was “related to him”, his father’s father-in-law, a far eviler man than Dr. L. was. Malicious, arrogant, and corrupt, beyond any doubt in all matters relating to the pocket and the career. He was indeed rapidly dismissed from his honorable position].¹⁷

But let us go back to our businesses! To be fair, I was not interested very much in the question: Who was to blame for my dismissal? All my attention was drawn to the fact itself, that my function as a physician in the municipal hospital in Shavli was over, and that I had to leave the position I fulfilled for more than sixteen years and to go wherever the wind may take me. Surely, I knew and [forever] will know that I am a sinner, a worse criminal, and that I had belonged to the Zionists party, the rebels of light, and “haters of the people”, the title which had been given to us by one of the orators of the Bolshevik party when he had spoken about the Zionists. To make a long story short: after leading an active life for many years, I suddenly had become a “has been”, a man who was lowered from his status, a wrongful man without a present and maybe without a past, people that in the past had quite a stable stature, and the Bolshevik regime pushed them aside [thrusted from one misfortune to another; Psalms 140, 12].

As a prominent example of the bourgeois that was targeted by the Bolsheviks, making them useless and robbing them of their rights, I will share the story of my brother-in-law Z.N. [Zilberman]. As a quick man of action, possessing commercial talent and highly developed entrepreneurship, he had succeeded (with the help of other partners, mainly silent investors) in a matter of years to establish and operate in Shavli a textile factory. As a result of his hard work and persistency, the factory had been a success. It had been blooming as a flower, and prospering, and suddenly, arrived the Bolshevik disaster regime days, with decrees, and restrictions to the bourgeois. My brother-in-law and his partners were, of course, not an exception: the factory was nationalized, his house was confiscated along with his bank account deposits. Furthermore, my brother-in-law was simply expelled from the nationalized factory and he and his family were left without any means. And so days of trouble and tragedy came upon my brother-in-law, especially that his past earnings for hard work and profits from the factory had always been invested back, in order to extend and strengthen its products by purchasing new machinery, and increasing the number of workers, and in the end he lost it all: left without assets and without capital.

Certainly, when I talk about the destiny of my brother-in-law, one can feel a nuance of pity and sadness for a bourgeois. But it should not be concluded from that, that I supported the capitalist regime and sided with all its aspects. I myself do not condone in any way the exploitation of workers to the benefits of the owners. Surely, the latter possesses the initiative, the capital, the means of production. Their hands had provided the guidance, organization, and leadership. But the profits they had received, sometimes had gone beyond good taste, and they had been soaked with the sweat of the workers. Their own compensation for their initiative, they had exaggerated and highlighted the disparity, as they had become rich on the expense of the workers. In one word: the capitalistic order had been created without any doubt on a weak crooked foundation. But on the other hand, to set aside, just like a duster, the entrepreneur from the institution which he had founded and had brought to success – it is pure cruelty and injustice. Cruelty – because the capitalist is, as aforementioned, belong to a full class of people, whose

¹⁷ These square brackets are in the original.

birth had been a necessary outcome of the development of human society and its evolution. And so, it does not deserve vindictive violence. And even if we assumed that the time of the capitalism had passed, and its historical function, which had been important, was no longer valid, the necessary development should have been brought the rightful class to inherit their rights gradually, without abrupt revolutions and awful cataclysms¹⁸, but slowly and gradually. It is a wrongful, to remove a man knowing the intricacies of a factory or a store, details on which he had labored and invested significant amount of time, and was replaced with a someone who could hardly find his own arms and legs, who was given a position solely because he was a member, or at least a supporter of the party. Surely, it was hard sometimes to trust the owners, who certainly among them were people who could have caused damage and sabotage, but if the owners complied and became subservient to the new regime, it would have been best to appoint guardians and keep an eye on them, than expelling them all together. In any event there was no need to take revenge on the capitalists with wrath and furry, not by reason and not by necessity and not by integrity.

I have strayed off the story of my dismissing from the hospital, longer than expected, but as long as we are discussing the distresses of the bourgeois in the Bolsheviks regime, and presenting my brother in law tale as an example, I shall not hold myself back, and provide you with additional details about what happened to him (and to many other bourgeois) in due time. However, the nationalization of the factory and confiscation of my brother in law assets did not empty the cup of poison he had ingested (without taking into consideration the climax of his trouble, his removal [expulsion] and the removal [expulsion] of his family to the U.S.S.R which occurred in the last days of the Bolsheviks regime in Lithuania, and I shall outline it in detail later on). Another trouble had been awaiting all of us – a collective tragedy – which was hurtful and distressful especially for the former home owners. I am relating to the apartments’ trouble which was cast upon us once the Bolsheviks entered our town. The conquerors sought to settle down in our communities for many days to come and perhaps even stay for good, and so they brought along their families: their wives, children. And sometimes even their elderly mothers and mothers-in-law. In addition, along with the Russian army, numerous clerks and pilots arrived and for all houses or at least decent accommodation was needed. Moreover, the leaders of the party and persons of privilege, the former political prisoners, the veteran workers, the “Stakhanovs” [exceptional workers, derived from the name of an exceptional miner] and their families and relatives – all of them needed new apartments more or less spacious and more or less comfortable as a compensation for the old days, when they had wallowed and had rolled in the prison dust, and in the crowded and filthy apartments the workers and citizens could afford. For this purpose, a project for the “crowding” of the people had begun: they had moved people from one apartment to another, adding new tenants over the old ones, housing army clerks and pilots in rooms of citizens’ houses. It is hard to describe the distress and the discomfort that the reduction of houses had brought upon us, especially that many of the new tenants regarded themselves as entitled masters and had begun to restrict the rights of the previous tenants, among them were the rightful owners of the houses, as it had been said: “This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge” [Genesis 19, 9].

Especially awful and bitter had been the destiny of the former home owners, whose assets were confiscated, and were left with a tiny, insubstantial corner of their homes to live in. It seemed to serve as a punishment for the bourgeois for had been living in such luxury and being spoiled by wellbeing and goods. That was also the fate of my brother-in-law: in his three floor house, to him, his wife and their two sons, two small rooms on the third floor were allocated, a part of his former apartment, which had been crowded to begin with, and the rest of the apartment was given to Dr. R., who formerly had lived on the second floor, and was now occupied by privileged workers with special rights.

In order to provide a more complete depiction the apartments ordeal, there is one more point I should point, involving the “crowding” and which was so common that it became a general phenomenon, that is to say:

¹⁸ From Greece, kataclismos – flood

“the war of the women” living in one apartment “as two cats in one sack”. In that way, for example, the kitchen was shared by the wife of my brother-in-law and by Physician L’s wife. Two angry women who could not live under the same roof, and a war rose between them, a bitter war which affected the lives of both families until the Bolsheviks removed, “expelled” my brother-in-law’s family to the U.S.S.R. As aforementioned, such controversies were occurring daily due to the crowding which was typical in the new regime. (By the way, we complained and expressed angry of the crowding, and discomfort but little did we know or suspect that days would come when the crowdedness peaked, and with sorrow and grief would we remember those days in the Bolsheviks regime, which had been far better and satisfying than the ones we live in now at the ghetto. Here we are suffocating due to the crowdedness and complain about the filth and the parasites making our lives bitter. Here we are like salted fish in a barrel, although our bitter enemies apparently wish to reduce our numbers and segregate us – scheme that had been implemented by the former slaves, the Lithuanians, the murderers, indifferent, as a mindless raging bull ramming left and right, as if this is its nature. This cruelty will never be forgotten, and it will stay in our hearts forever, and shall be dwelt within generation to generation [Isaiah 13, 20]). The apartment trouble had affected us too. From our six rooms apartment (except from the kitchen and the bathroom), in which three of the rooms were used for living, and three for the patients (the place I had worked in, the x-ray room and the waiting room), they took one room and housed a pilot there, head of the regiment Tzikin. This fact alone was not so much burden: the room was vacant, because it had been our son’s room, a student in Vilnius University at that time, and our new neighbor was a very pleasant man, with gentle temperament and polite, and we were pleased with him (where is he now? Surely, he lost his life by now, like so many pilots since then – I feel so bad for such a lovely man!)

Our tenant had been forced to leave Shavli and move to Latvia even before the war started, then we were also transferred from our spacious apartment in the second floor to the lower floor at the same house where a total of three rooms were allocated for us and for the patients together. In this apartment there were two more rooms which were allocated to Family G., a pleasant couple, who, in spite of our shared kitchen, we did not fight with even once until we were separated and were transferred into the Trakai¹⁹ side of the ghetto, as they were housed in the Caucasus²⁰ side. I should state here, that the manager of the apartments’ police then was the sadist P., and wining of a new apartment, narrow and crowded, would have involve insulting flattery before this little minded man and following many troubles. Gracefully “by liberal things shall he stand” [Isaiah 32, 8] and give an “order” [reference order] for a new apartment after false promises and repeated deceptions. This is the way he behaved not only with the annoying Jews, but with the Christians as well. His behavior was also due to the lack of initiative and talent needed to fulfill his position appropriately, and due to his sadist nature and the pleasure he took from demonstrating his power and authority, and from causing troubles to those needing him. His actions were mentioned more than once by the Lithuanians, the “robbed Caucasians”, attributing them at the expense of all the Jews, “the servants and pleasers of the evil Bolsheviks and the oppressors of the honest and innocent as sheep people, so to speak”.

Now, after this lengthy side story, “long as an exile”, with the purpose of providing a more complete picture than mere few details about the Bolsheviks regime in our town, I shall return to my personal events of those days, which were filed with alternating sorrow and consolation, continuous swing between despair and hope, as opposed to now, when our world became pitch dark without any spark of light, and a cloud surrounds us from every direction.

In those days, when the mayor informed me of the communist’s decision to dismiss me from my position at the municipal hospital, in the Department of Health in Kaunas was certain Dr. Mickus, who had been for years the director of the hospital in Shavli, he afterward moved to Kaunas and built himself a nice walled home, and

¹⁹ From the name of the street Traku, from the name of the town Trakai, about 20 km west of Vilnius.

²⁰ From the name of the street, which branched out of Vilnius Street, outside of the ghetto, which crossed the ghetto in the middle.

after a while was appointed as the director of the Health Department - a position which rose to a high stature, from its low point in the days of the former directors, and his influence was substantial in Lithuania, not only in medical or pharmaceutical matters. Surely, when the Bolsheviks came into Lithuania he was appointed as the Minister for Public Health, and the position of the director of Health Department was eliminated. But Dr. Mickus, an active resourceful shrewd man, who proved that the director position suited him well, remained in the department pursuant to the order of the Minister as a medicinal consultant, and was considered one of the executive officers. This was despite his revisionists tendencies, being a “conservative”, and despite of, as aforementioned, owning a fine walled home, a grand estate, and growing silver foxes and many other prized animals, a thing that the good doctor Mickus was addicted to in the last years with all of his heart, in a cooperation with the Zoology professor in Kaunas University, Ivanauskis.

Based on all of these aforementioned details, I decided the following day, after hearing about the awful rumors from the mayor, that I will go to Kaunas and try talking to Dr. Mickus, perhaps he would be able to help me and cancel the command of my dismissal, as his influence in the medical matters, was, as aforementioned, still strong even with the Bolsheviks. On the following day, after finishing my work at the hospital, as usual – as I was expected, since I had not received a dismissal letter, and no one was appointed as replacement – I went to the mayor in order to ask his permission for a few days travel to Kaunas in order to try persuading the Minister, Dr. Mickus, against my dismissal, and resolving other matters as well. At the same time, I wanted to know, was a decision had been taken regarding my dismissal – because that would have set me free, and there was no need for permission at all. And I was taken by surprised, that the mayor, when learning the reason for my visit, and heard my request, ordered me to stay put, and continue my work at the hospital as if nothing had happened. Of course, I asked for the reason for this sudden change, which bewildered me very much. But mayor Linkevicius, the cold, strict, hardened heart bureaucrat, did not heed my requests, nor provided any reason for the sudden overnight change of heart. He instead sufficed only in repeating adamantly the order to stay put. Perhaps he thought that it was his job to keep the reason secret – or perhaps he was not very sad to deliver to me the rumors about my dismissal. Now, he was not surprised by the possibility, which had been impossible until a day before, that I would continue my work, and if there was a secret reason, he thought that not so many words should be bothered to be said about a matter he was not very interested in. Different speculations ran through my mind, but I felt as if a huge burden was lifted off my heart. Surely, I was not sure that the status quo would remain, and I was not able to distant myself from concern, that in one fine morning I would again suddenly be dismissed from my position, however, I would have cross that bridge when I get there! Later I learned rumors behind the scenes, that when he visited the Minister, [the mayor] received an order to leave the physicians of the hospital in their position for now, on order not to bring any chaos and disorder in medical matters, as long as amendments were in motion, and were still to be implemented in this matter. And so, the minister order left me at the hospital for four additional months – and after that I was absentmindedly granted with a raise and not a reduction, as I had feared from the start. However, in those four aforementioned months, until my faith was sealed for good, as I will explain later, I was in a state of uncertainty and concern for the day to come, as I remembered my sins: my Zionism and my nationalism, and the question: “what would a new day bring?” was constantly on my mind.

The Bolshevik regime gave great value to the health of the population, and in the U.S.S.R many new amendments were implemented in the medical and health domains. Among the advantages, many of which the Bolsheviks brought, a great value was given to free health care. The availability of free medical advice at various medical institutes, and free hospital utilization for patients – these possibilities were one of the greatest medical principals of the U.S.S.R. The Bolsheviks decided to implement this principle with us as well, and this decision required two other resulting decisions: the expansion of the hospital ward of internal diseases, and the creation of a decent ambulatory center [of outpatient clinics], that is to say an institute in which the patients able to walk and not needing a bed, could receive consultation and treatment. The expansion of the ward of internal diseases and its transfer to a new building, led to the necessity of hiring another permanent physician as my deputy, retaining

me as the department head. Among the leading candidates, was Dr. K., a “doormat” Jew, looked down upon by the Christians, and colleagues, as he was seemingly expert in medicinal herbs prescription, a school rejected by Christian medical practitioners. Additionally, he was a two-faced man, jealous, envious and sneaky by nature, sticking his nose in matters not his, peaking into “what’s cooking in other’s pots”. This minion physician took the liking of the mayor, but I was confident that I would have not been able to co-exist with him under the same roof, and work with him in harmony. Due to the aforementioned reasons I preferred someone else instead: the young physician Br., who had studied under my supervision at the municipal hospital in practical medicine as was required for the physician diploma. He had been more decent and had always been treating me with due respect as his former teacher, and furthermore, he had acknowledged the experience I had, and my professional value. And so, I made efforts to ensure he would be accepted, as I knew that as my deputy, he would have taken my direction and our joint work would have gone smoothly without any disputes. The chief physician who knew about Dr. K.’s nature, helped me and supported Dr. Br. candidacy – our efforts succeeded, and Dr. Br. received the position of the deputy of the head of the ward of internal diseases at the municipal hospital.

However, Dr. Br., a young physician, who indeed succeeded gathering few patients as a private physician, showed lack of experience as a hospital physician, as so there were many who disputed his appointment, and especially Dr. Jasaitis, the head of the Health department in Shavli. Then Dr. Br. began to “court and mow the yard” of the communist party and knock on its doors. He also gained rights thanks to his due tributes for the benefit of this “grey” institute and pretended to be an enthusiast and a follower of the Bolshevik regime. The virtues he pretended to possess, he emphasized as much as possible, and was clever enough to flatter and pat the shoulders of the right persons. All that, along with my efforts and the support of the head physician, who for various reason backed me up, were helpful to Dr. Br. and he was retained in the position. He was also helped quite a bit by Dr. L., who he knew and was acquainted with, who had established himself by that time as the director of the hospital, also in spite of many objections and protests.

As Dr. Br. was feeling that his situation began to be more secure, he started falling short of my expectations. Surely, he accepted my authority at the hospital, but at the same time succeeded entering the communist party in Shavli ahead of me, and together with Dr. L., he too was starting to be considered as an authority of local medical matters. And the question of my position at the hospital was revisited. Dr. Br. concurred that the hospital wards director position should be given “to a comrade who is better than me”, to a physician with leftist tendencies, but he could not agree to my outright dismissal from the hospital– and so the advisors advised that I should remain at the hospital as a radiologist. In this uncertain state, a few months had passed, full of anxiety, doubts and ill thoughts about my destiny in an uncertain future.

The reason for all of that, as it was previously mentioned, was my belonging to the Zionist Organization and dedication to the Hebrew culture. But as a matter of fact, I did not display, not even once, that I was not in line with the new regime. On the contrary, as I compare the attitude of the Bolsheviks towards the Jews to the attitude of the Germans toward us, to a large extent I felt sympathy and fondness towards the Bolsheviks, and my behavior matched my feelings and not even a shadow of a doubt could have been cast upon me. Also, to my positive sentiments towards the Bolsheviks was added the fact that along with their arrival to town, I had the possibility to correspond with my family members in Moscow, and especially with my brother, which was a respectable professor “for keeping the health of the work”. That is to say a professor of professional work-related diseases. The rest of my family members, the sons of my sisters, have also scientific professions: chemists, engineers, and so on. These facts, that the Jews could have obtained such positions in the U.S.S.R, along their rise in the political ladder, at the time when the Lithuanians with failing culture, had were starting to limit our rights and narrow our functions in the scientific, commerce and industry fields, not to mention the evil of the Germans and their zoological [animal] cruelty toward us – this fact alone was enough for me to like the Bolshevik regime and rendering me as its true admirer. But I did not get a chance to display my public admiration to the new regime, as I would have liked to. Surely, I had tried once offering one of the Bolshevik dealers to conduct a

series of hygiene lectures, as I had been a good and experienced lecturer in the matter, and the fact was that the same dealer had heard in the old days, before the Bolsheviks came here, one of my lectures about the subject of hygiene, and had been impressed as a wondered calf of my Russian accent. But then with the change of current, [way of life], my offer was remained un answered. And so, in the eyes of the leaders of the party in Shavli I remained the same Zionist with rightist tendencies as before, and more than once was I offended by them. Especially I was treated with disrespect by the member P., the crazy sadist, who became the chairman of the Professional Organization of the Medicine.

One question should be pondered: how come the reckless P., who had been a mere dentist with a diploma from abroad, succeeded to be elected as chairman of the Professional Organization of Medicine in which, beside the common medical personnel, also had participated physicians, among them several veteran and distinguished figures? The answer is simple: elections in the regular meaning of the term, were not custom then. Due to the fact that the state of dictatorship was evident everywhere, the leaderships of the various professional associations were established on this principal: the heads of the party had consulted among themselves, and had recommended a chairman and board members to their liking for appointment before the assembly members – and the latter would not dare contradicting the leaders recommendations or challenge them. This way, even an eager idiot, megalomaniac, could be elected as the head of our organization.

And regarding the aforementioned distinguished physicians of whom none granted an appointment to the organization board, I would state that the attitude of the chairman and party leaders towards the distinguished bunch, was beyond criticism, as salves ruling the elite. The exception was Dr. Jasaitis to L-N. and Br. who were treated with respect. The rest of the physicians were overlooked and discarded as garlic peels. Surely, most of the Christian physicians were grey clerks, and most of the Jewish physicians were unlike them, in that they were not commoners, and were removed from social matters, and from the needs of the public. But they were also few physicians who had been active in the community, who had contributed substantial time and effort to the Shavli community. Among them had been my own humble distinguished self. However, my community activism, which had been bearing mostly a nationalistic stamp, was regarded a flaw and not a virtue. And everywhere I went, I felt the negative sentiment towards me. And at one event, during a gathering, the wicked chairman refused letting me speak, and when I insisted, leaving him no choice, as soon as I began criticizing the association board, he left the meeting in order to demonstrate his disregard to my statements. Upon his return he immediately began sending me notes so I would end my speech. Especially the chairman made a point insulting me with his demeaning behavior at the beginning of the banquets, a behavior which frankly, I found rather ridiculous not insulting. My deputy, Dr. Br. was always sitting at my side at the assembly hall – Dr. L-N occasionally honored us with his presence as well. As was the custom, at the beginning of the banquet the chairman would invite distinguished persons as note speakers. Among the note speakers were always my two young physician colleagues sitting at my side – L and Br. And I, the senior elderly physician, was left out without any attention. Surely the intention was to emphasize the fact that I was still a suspect of being “bourgeois”. And these frequent occurrences did not insult me, but rather caused me a slight giggle, as I found this whole ceremony ridiculous.

However, one time I found myself genuinely offended by one of the town leaders, and this is how it went: a few days after the mayor informed me of my dismissal, and then about the sudden reversal against the dismissal implementation, I learned that the Hebrew teachers, who were teaching in the Hebrew gymnasium and the Hebrew school, all of them Zionists, agreed to teach from that day forward in Yiddish and to comply with the new requirements of the Bolshevik regime regarding the education of the people – and so they were retained as teachers at the new Yiddish schools. This fact made a considerable impression on me as my own situation was still very uncertain, as the order given by the mayor for the continuation of my work still had not relieved my spirit, and my doubts and hesitations still existed. And so, I thought to myself: surely the education of a new generation in the Bolshevik spirit, as the leaders of the party desired, was a very responsible and valuable job, and it should have been given a consideration of the utmost importance in the Bolsheviks agenda. And yet, they allowed

educators with suspicious past to retain their positions, without even considering the young souls, and the potential evil influence of Zionism and bourgeois upon them. And so the promise of the teachers to teach in Yiddish, and comply with the requirement of the new regime, was sufficient – more even than a physician of internal and contagious diseases, who treats the bodies of the patients and has nothing to do with their political opinions and internal beliefs, unless these could have been considered somehow to be affected by of their physical condition. If that was the case, surely a physician such as me should have stayed put and continued his useful work. This was the idea which I wanted to express to one of the leaders of the party in Shavli and wished to speak with him about the great injustice that had been done to me, through the dismissal, and the potential loss to the institute. Of all the leaders of the party in Shavli, I was especially acquainted with “Comrade” Greenfeld, seemingly a polite young man, who had been a graduate of the local Hebrew gymnasium and who had spent a substantial time in prison due to his association with the Lithuanian Bolsheviks Association. I had examined the physical health of this young man many times, when he had been a student of the Hebrew gymnasium, (twice a year) and the gymnasium physician, and we had engaged in conversations many times. And so, I decided to talk to him and share with him the attitude towards the Hebrew teachers made on me, and the resulting conclusion I had reached regarding the matter. I went to him with affection and respectful reverence in my heart, and on the threshold of the communist party, I respectfully walked towards the guard and politely asked for Comrade Greenfeld and stated that Dr. Pick wanted to speak to him about some matter. The guard came back very quickly, without any hesitation, and with him a short but very clear message: “Comrade Greenfeld said, that in the matters of the hospital you should talk to Dr. L-N.”. At that instant, it became apparent, that the question of my dismissal had been resolved. The matter I wished to discuss was obvious to him. However, by his refusal he “revealed his cards”, that all matters of the hospital had been trusted to Dr. L-N, and that the employees of this institute depended on him. And he was the one deciding our destiny. And so, when I received the answer given by Greenfeld through the guard, I did not insist nor made any additional requests. I instead immediately turned back by reason of my shame [according to Psalms 70, 4], grieving and shamed. A very unpleasant idea bothered me: since I had become a man, no one had ever refused talking to me, not the clerks in Russia, nor the clerks in France neither the clerks in Lithuania, however, the clerk of the new regime had just rejected me and did not even bother to show respect “even for sake of appearance”. “New birds – new songs”.

Regarding the new amendments in favor of free health care, there was one more question left not answered, that is to say: the arrangement of a medical center for the benefit of the “walking” patients. Although near the municipality there had been, in the old days, a medical office, in which a few hours a day, the poor people had been examined for free. This office had been managed by a German physician, born in Lithuania, too weak to heal patients, but strong enough to drink wine. He had received this position thanks to his friendship and comradery with the last Minister WL. When the Bolsheviks entered our town, the little office was closed, as the work done there was careless, and, as aforementioned, due to the ambition of the Bolsheviks to grand free medical aid to the ones needing it. Generously, a main polyclinic with various wards was opened, wards which were managed by physicians more or less qualified, who knew what they were doing. The polyclinic was arranged and organized in a proper building but “the main point was missing”: a head manager was needed to orchestrate all the work in the polyclinic and its various wards, and the representatives of the party and their advisors, along with the head of the Health department, struggled and weighted possibilities in order to find a proper manager: Additionally, in the medical domain, there were no “professionals” ready. The former manager of the office, the drunk German physician, was out of the question; the rest of the Christian physicians, almost all of them were clerks and held various positions, and they were home owners and suspects of hating the Bolsheviks. And as far as for the Jewish physicians, there were me, Dr. L. and Dr. Br., already holding positions, and the rest of our colleagues were without any spine, without clear and set principals, and without interest in political and public questions. The equality between the Christian and Jewish physicians when it came to the position of the polyclinic manager – a position with responsibility requiring proven experience, to be accustomed to work in a medical

environment, and possess initiative – was such, that it did not suit anyone of them – they were needed only as “advising physicians” in the various wards, and nothing more. Between the available physicians, the ones without positions, an exception was one Jewish physician, Dr. D., a talented man, a decent orator, a good theoretical (although not practical) physician and with a tendency for science. This physician deserved a decent position, especially that he had always been considered as a man with leftist tendencies, and lover of the Yiddish language. What else did he have? To be honest, this physician was “adopted” to take my place in the hospital, and all his days he had prayed for such a position, until I constantly felt his hostility towards me, a hostility which was derived from his jealousy of my position in the hospital. It is befitting to admit that this physician was a righteous man, with solid ethic principals, and he had never agreed that I should be removed from my position for him to take it. One could only assume that due to his decision not to deprive me of my position, and his stubbornness to treat me with great justice, I was not removed from the position I filled in the hospital. Dr. Jasaitis suggested to Dr. D. to take the position of the polyclinic manager, but he was reluctant. He was afraid to take upon himself a position which required of him to act as a governor, and commander, an officer, and organizer, and so he turned down the offer. The party representatives and Dr. Jasaitis were in a tough situation, because other than Dr. D., the only physician worthy of this position [cape, job], rejected the offer, no other decent candidate was left.

One day, Dr. Jasaitis telephoned me and asked if I would have been willing to accept the position of the polyclinic manager. I did not know anything about the rejection of Dr. D. and so I did not pretend to reject or to hesitate taking a position rejected by another physician, as it was polite to do; and I answered him right away, with all of my heart, that I am very interested in the position, and that, if I was not so busy at the hospital, I would have gladly accepted the position of manager of the central polyclinic. However, the offer made my heart skip, for few reasons: first, I was very excited that the Bolsheviks had finally agreed to hand me a position of responsibility, in a prestigious public institute, as the offer was made by them; second, I was hoping that this position would have allowed me to exchange strength with knowledge, after the many years of hard work in the hospital. My positive answer was accepted with satisfaction, and so the combination [trick] had begun: shortly thereafter, Dr. D. and I were invited together to the health department in Shavli, and the head of the department, Dr. Jasaitis, as was accustomed during the dictatorship period, informed me in an absolute tone, leaving no room for appeal, that I was appointed as the manager of the central polyclinic, and Dr. D. was appointed to be the manager of the wards of the internal and contagious diseases in the municipal hospital, that is to say, to replace me. We both were very happy: Dr. D. received at last the position which he had inspired to from the day he had become physician, as he was sure and certain that he would be able to perform so to speak scientific work there, and he believed that the treatment in the hospital could have really made a difference, without a doubt, and that it could have been “examined and tested”, and I, as aforementioned, was happy that the party representative trusted me with such an honorable and key position, as managing almost all the ambulatory section of medicine in town, and especially that the salary was higher than the one I had been earning in the hospital, and the work would have surely been much easier than managing two wards and providing consultation at the remaining ones.

Shortly after, it became clear that we both reeled in visions [according to Isaiah 28, 7] and we faced a great deal of disappointment. The healing work in the hospital was surely more productive and consistent, patients could be examined several times slowly and with the appropriate attention, and one could see the transformation, and the condition improvement. A great value could also be attributed to the possibility of using test results, and laboratory which could be found in any decent hospital. But, in fact only a young and inexperienced physician could have assumed that there was no better than hospital treatment, as opposed to sometimes the home atmosphere. The environment of the patient’s relatives, their care and supervision, are far better than in the hospital, and a high-risk patient which has no healing prospects at home, he, by most accounts, would not find it in the hospital. However, if the head of the institute is a famous professor or an expert physician, an outstanding one, the destiny of many patients could be altered for the better – but if a young and inexperienced physician is the only authority, the last arbiter in the hospital, then he would face many disappointments, and frequently would

face difficulty, discomfort and annoying and disturbing burdensome feelings. In these conditions, who would remember the scientific work? The mundane daily work consumes all the free time, demands all the attention. And the ambition of Dr. D. for scientific work remained in vain [for nothing, according to Job 21, 34] and the medical press did not publish not even one article – written by him.

And my downfall was even bitterer, for my hope to find an easier job at the polyclinic, and relaxation from the sixteen and a half years in the hospital, was lost and turned into a bitter disappointment. I felt through a tail spin, which threw me as a ball and bounced me all around. The work in the polyclinic expanded to such an extent, that I could have not expected it. In the polyclinic as aforementioned were wards for almost every respectable medical profession and also a decent laboratory. A large dentist clinic was also arranged within, and moreover, two ambulatory service facilities from the town surrounding were also attached to it. And all this required management and supervision. Furthermore, I was obligated to arrange the night shifts for the physicians, and the nurses – a difficult and complexed task, which involved the need to “act as president among others” and to bitterly treat the ones refusing to work at night, perhaps once or twice a month. Also, I had to be the chairman of the committee deciding whether to send patients from the professional organizations members, to sanatoriums and various medical facilities in Lithuania and the U.S.S.R, serve as the acting chairman of the committee examining the health condition of the “drivers” and the ones who wish to obtain a driving license; I was also obligated to examine the patients subject to employment dismissal; and finally I examined potential mental patients, candidates to be sent to Kalvarija²¹ and the patients who were drafted to serve in the army.

The work in the polyclinic, as could be deduced by the aforementioned details, was substantial and diverse – and I was addicted to this work with all of my heart and soul, and fulfilled my duties and everything thrown at me, with dedication and energy. To the extent that all the visitors to this institution were pleased – and there were plenty of visitors: often the representatives of the local party and honorable guests from Kaunas, Vilnius and even the U.S.S.R had visited the polyclinic.

But my success had a very high price. In the first days of the month of January (the year of 1941), when it was very cold outside, and I went outside one day and my entire body was covered in sweat due to the hard work, and a dispute I had with one of the physicians, whose behavior in the polyclinic did not bring light and respect to the institution (a Russian physician who had wooed the nurses with a questionable warmth), I caught a cold, and an infection stroke the nerves of my left foot and right hand, and forced me to bedrest. My tortures and pain were so tremendous, that I had bitten my lips and squawked my teeth in order not to scream. Many long weeks I did not sleep because of my pain – increased by every move I made, and I could not sit, and could not lie down. This disease confined me to my bed for six weeks: three weeks I lied on my bedrest at home, and three weeks I lied at a hospital in Vilnius, where I received the “short flows [waves]” until the peak of my disease had passed – however the remains of this disease had disturbed me for a long time, although not severely. And I should state, that until now, the disease has not fully released me. And from time to time, I still feel pain and weakness in the organs affected then – a remainder of the days that, despite my disease, were far better than these! Now the death is all around us and darkness shall engulf us [overshadow us, according to Psalms 139, 11] – and then! Such bright hopes amused us and filled our entire beings!

It is also worth stating, that to the physical pains of my disease, were compounded horrible mental torments. I believe that the prisoner should not be allowed to release himself from prison, similarly, a physician should not engage in self-treatment. A physician is prone to mis-diagnose his own disease, as he tends to be harsher, and when searching his knowledge, tends to find the most severe and rare diagnoses. There is a neurological disease originating from spinal malfunction and is accompanied by blood diminution and lack of saline acid in the stomach. This disease is called “Meailitis Funicularis” and it is harsh and incurable disease. A person inflicted by this disease is most likely considered terminal. Due to saline acid deficiency in my stomach

²¹ Name of the town in which the mental hospital for the healing of the mind was, about 70 km south-west from Kaunas.

for many years, and analysis [the examination] of my blood count had shown that the most important component – the hemoglobin – had been found in an insufficient level, and less than it should have been, and so I had already possessed the symptoms of the aforementioned disease. And now, a neural “organic” disorder has been added. And so, I’ve concluded that I’ve been taken with a terminal disease, and only had few more years to live. Furthermore, I was convinced that until my imminent death, approaching on an oncoming wheel barrow, I was to be handicapped and lack the capacity to work, rendering me “invalid”. And this calamity occurred of all things merely two months after finally achieving success, receiving a position with great honor and glory, and a decent salary. This realization crushed me and disrupted my soul in many ways, and when I thought of my ill wife and young son, who would be left out without support and source of income, I secretly spilled many tears.

In Vilnius I learned that my diagnosis had been wrong, which brought me joy, and my condition turned for the better, gauntness was evident on my face, and also the Polish professor and his colleague, the neurologist treating me, lifted my spirit as they told me that we were only dealing with nerves inflammation. However, the mistake I had made had left deep scars on my heart, which had been an addition to the troubles and distresses brought upon me and my wife’s family in the days to come, in the short period when the Bolsheviks ruled us. And still as I speak about the troubles of the times of the Bolsheviks, I can hardly restrain myself from repeating hundred and one times, that those troubles were nothing and null compared to the physical and mental atrocities we suffered during the era of the new Amalek. But the truth of the matter was that the troubles and distresses of the times of the Bolsheviks were sufficient to depress the spirits of many men [are of a contrite spirit, Psalms 34, 19] and had unsettled their spirits even before the German period which was much more awful and unlike any other, bearers of the disgrace of wishing to uproot an entire nation with no exceptions, to our extinction [Leviticus 22, 25] seemingly for our blood.

The All Mighty has given justice to many of our nation, when the Bolsheviks lacked “professionals”, and so they were forced to turn to as many people, even those suspected of being bourgeois, or the least who had not been considered one of their own to begin with. I experienced this first hand on my own flesh: at first they had sought my dismissal from my work at the hospital due to the Zionism I had been associated with, but eventually ended up with a much higher position, one which was more honorable and prestigious: the management of the entire ambulatory medicine in Shavli! I had no doubt that Dr. Jasaitis had recommended me before the leaders of the party and Dr. L-N. was forced to accept, when finding out that there was no suitable man to manage the polyclinic, and then even my deputy, Dr. Br., had stated that my attitude towards the Bolsheviks had been positive in many ways. Especially due to my brothers and the rest of my family members at the U.S.S.R, but whereas all of those factors might have been sufficient in prior days to compensate for my sins, the shortage of professionals provided the first push needed in order to gain the attention for an unfit man as myself.

And the communist representatives in Shavli had come to terms with my appointment in time. Matters reached such an extent, that when the questions of health care in Shavli, and of the required amendments in the field were brought before the communist party, I was also invited, along with Dr. Jasaitis, L-N. and the Jewel P., to the meeting concerning the matter. And there I had the opportunity to meet the “Heads of the clones” of Shavli: Soloviov, the first and the most important, a very nice and pleasant man, with a strong sense of peace and justice pursuant to the old order, not to the new one of the day; Jurgis, a man with a rough face, very unpleasant, but also an honest man and very well educated, had been a political prisoner for many years and a fanatical member of the party; Slevicius – “a product” of Shavli – a scion of a despicable family, a political prisoner for seven years – a talented man who had reinvented himself in prison: he had learned the Lithuanian language and more – but nevertheless had some of his father in him, a rough man, an idiot insolent man. Among the meeting attendees was also present the newly appointed mayor, Ulpis, and his deputy, men of little value – and there were a few more of whom I do not remember. As a result of my participation at the meeting, I was convinced of the faulty implementation of the new regime, which had been executed in a haste, and had been lacking men prepared for the job. Surely in my case they did not make a wrong decision, and I had been a respectable man, and I had been

fulfilling my duties as aforementioned with faith and devotion, but the possibility to fail was there, and frankly, in one instant a faulty decision had occurred, when a candidate to the Seimas [the Parliament] had been trusted by the party, was found to be a provocateur [undercover agent], hired by the Tsar police²². It is interesting to note that I had met Soloviov several times. Since I had met him he had been always fond of me, especially during the concert of the musical school, in which after the first intermission we stayed together, he invited me to sit with him and with the headmaster of the school near the stage, and they were both amazed at my “understandings” of music.

The party honored me one time with a special mission: together with an investigator of the N.K.V.D., I had to travel to Joninskis²³ to terminate the confiscation of the “cabinet” [work office] and the x-ray office of Dr. Vittikunas, who was imprisoned there, and afterwards was sent to Russia as hater of the new regime (he had been working for the army, of fascist regimen “the Iron Wolf [Gelezinis Vilkas]). It is not the place or time to detail herein of this termination and the ways in which the investigator tortured the physician’s wife as a cat tortures a mouse. Swiftly – so swiftly this glorious era had passed, and we were left to hang out and dry under the spiked sandal of evil.

3. My son’s admittance to the Lithuanian University

I even like the torments of the Bolshevik period in our town, as if I find solace in analyzing and listing the details of the troubles brought to us by the Bolsheviks. I emphasize the negative aspects of their regime, and detail it. But as I emphasize the shadows, the brightness of their virtues comes to light, and the positive aspects of the Bolsheviks regime is highlighted – as the disadvantages are numerous, the advantages are countless, as opposed to the German regime, which is all dark, even though the Bolsheviks regime is not wholly innocent.

Aside from the physical and mental suffering brought to me by my neural disease and the fake and false diagnosis, and also due to my dismissal from the hospital, which left deep-deep and long while, traces upon me which depressed me immeasurably, additional strike had landed upon me in the days of the Bolsheviks, and even if it hadn’t lasted long while, and its painful consequences passed swiftly, at that time it shook my heart so badly, that even when the storm had passed, within me there were still annoying and bothersome remnants, and an unpleasant memory, long lasting. I am referring to the rejection of my son’s application to the University of Vilnius. Because my son had not had tendencies toward the medical domain, and his heart had not followed his father’s steps. He had decided to study and learn the teachings that had appealed to him from his time in the gymnasium. That is to say, history and literature he was very fond of. And so, he applied to be admitted to the liberal arts faculty of the University in Vilnius, at the History Department, in which he desired to study, disregarding career and a life conditions, which he was just starting, eighteen years of age at the time. In the old regime, the “Smetonan anti-Semite”²⁴, as it had been called then, the admittance of Jews to the medical faculty had been limited as much as possible, and because of the fact that lawyers had been required to work at the court of law for three years, the door to the Justice Department had also been closed to the Jews – but pertaining all other departments of the university, no particular wealth had been awaiting for them, and that the career of those who graduated from these departments had not been worthy of jealousy and competition among the citizens – and so there had been no limitations. And so, an application such as my son’s had not been rejected in the old regime. But now, in the new regime which brought freedom and equity, justice and law, they turned down the young man seeking to learn, without any career considerations, and rejected his application to the university. Why? For they found out that he was a son of a had been bourgeois, and so his destiny was like that of many other young men, sons of suspected had been bourgeois, who were left outside the higher education schools because of that. And again, we see the

²² Of the Caesar, in the days before the communist revolution.

²³ See comment 6.

²⁴ After the name of the ruling president [Antanas Smetona] from the end of 1926 until the middle of June 1940.

familiar method, to avenge the past and torture the sons. The university insisted on its position, that a physician is a bourgeois, son of bourgeois, son of rich parents who had had the money to educate their son and provide higher education for him. And when I received the news that my son's application to admit the university had been rejected, my heart shrank with pain, and as if a pricking brier [Ezekiel 28, 24] was put into it, and the torments of my heart were unbearable. This fact was particularly painful, as a full year without any work was already lost to my son, after he had graduated from the gymnasium. He had sacrificed this year to the benefit of all, although it must be said that "all" had not asked him for this sacrifice, and one could assume that it was completely useless. The propagandists of the "Hashomer Hatzair" had recruited him, making him their "representative". He had exiled from one place to another, establishing branches and centers, from which propaganda had been delivered to the youth, to abandon higher education, scientific careers, and instead emigrate to our ancestral land, and build it. This propaganda had been useless, since my son had wasted his time and talents for an entire year and turned away education. Because the truth was, that if there had been a possibility then to emigrate to our ancestral land, the frightened youth would have hurried and had left swiftly the country which had started already to limit the steps of its Jews – which had been the state of affairs, and no propaganda had been needed. We should admit to the truth, that despite the state and anger of my wife, due to my son leaving his studies, I myself had not been annoyed with anger about the matter. I had thought that he was still young and undecided. I had wanted him to have experience in life, and to become more or less independent, to support himself, and for that a year could have been spent. Also, I had been sure he was going to "see the light", that the idleness would have become a burden and he was to go back to his studies. And as I had assumed, it happened: after a period, he did not want to travel anymore, and began studying again with all of his heart. This happened also due to the changes occurring in the conditions of life, and the state of matters. When the Bolsheviks arrived, the idea to immigrate to our ancestral land was rejected without a possibility of implementation. And so, with the beginning of the school year my son submitted his university application – and suddenly - what a drag! [trouble, Malachi 1, 13], the application was rejected! My son was then at great risk from being taken away from schooling for the rest of life, if he were to lose another year and a half, then he would have been obligated to join the army, which meant another two years without science and studies, and after a pause of more than four years, he would have lost the momentum for studying – a loss which would have not come back. And I, myself, my biggest desire, had been to provide life conditions for my son, as a scientist, or at least as one having mental craft [in the humanities domain] as he had wished for himself. And even if he had chosen a domain in a profession that does not guarantee a bright future from a material perspective, but at least he would have excelled, and succeeded in his heart desire, something which would sure have been due to his talents and diligence, even then he would have seen the light in life, surely one who excels in any profession and is a little more than mediocre, is always happy and fulfilled.

That had been the thread of my thoughts in those first days, and the disappointment brought a total despair, and I looked upon the rejection of my son as a disaster, a tragedy. How far is now is that thread of thoughts from the bitter reality! Now, due to the events that had happened in our world, our psych has changed so much! We learn a good lesson from history. On the one hand, we had learned that an independence of a small country is meaningless. And that any breeze could bring it down to the ground. On the other hand, we had learned that there is one thing remaining forever, and would not lose its value, that is to say: integration in your birth place, the permanent settlement of land, in the days of the Bolsheviks and now, in the days of the evil the citizens had been given consideration and would be considered. For the most part, the Lithuanian citizens have stayed put where they were, and have not been robbed of their land. And the land you are born in, so much as forgives a sin! All of those who failed and had followed the Bolsheviks and had taken various active positions with them, were forgiven even by the evil ones, and received absolution and atonement due to the reason that they had been viewed as being misled by the Bolsheviks, coerced and forced. That was the way the citizens of the country were treated, the main population which sits on its land. Indeed, the way the Germans treated us was different even in the land of our

fathers, but one could assume, that if we had a homeland, matters would not have gone as far with the Germans, and in a case of a conflict with us, then the ones sitting under “their vine and their fig” would have surely stayed put, because even the conquerors are not interested in a completely ruined conquest, so the enemy would have exploited it as much as possible.

Surely so! A nation with a homeland is over blessed! A mere loaf of bread and crafts, especially working the land in the homeland, are far better than a scientific profession and wealth in exile, in foreign countries in which we are foreigners, unwanted, unnecessary, and all of our deeds and creations are like a spider’s web, of which the slightest wind blows off. Those truths are naive and very banal, but during our cursed times of mental crisis, they are derived from the depth of our hurting souls, with their simplicity and nakedness. It is indeed so sad that our son had not emigrated to Israel when he had the chance to do so. Surely, the departure of my son would have been hard on us, especially on my sick wife, but during these times in numerous occasions, we have known separations from him quite a few times and especially that the separation sometimes involved danger of loss and extinction, and we borne it in silence.

The rector of the University in Vilnius was the professor Michael Birziska [his first name: Vaclovas]²⁵ (he still holds the same position today). He had been famous for being an honest man, a Lithuanian patriot which could not be swayed, an idealist to a fault. I had some touching points with him which could have been used as “ice breakers” and reasons to address him. He, like the rest of his two brothers, professor as well, had graduated from his elementary studying from the Gymnasium in Shavli, from which I had also graduated. His young brother was acquainted with my young brother, who was also a professor in Moscow. Even more so, his father had been a physician in the town of Vieksniai²⁶, near Shavli, and not once he had invited me to visit his patients – consultations – and once when he had been terminally ill, I had examined him myself. Due to this all aforementioned details, I decided to travel to Vilnius and talk to the rector and persuade him in person regarding the admission of my son into the university.

In my heart of hearts, I had a strong hope that my visit with this gentle and pleasant man would be fruitful, but little did I know that the execution of my planned visit would have caused me so much trouble and much distress. I had to wait for four days before I was accepted into an interview with the rector. And during the long anticipation, despite my strong hope and confidence that I would succeed in my mission, I was still distressed by doubts and hesitations regarding the prospects of a good outcome. And all of these, along with being impatience, caused so much despair to my heart, that I fell ill in those four days due to the long waiting.

I had celebrated a secular new year, and at the first day of the Holiday, which was a Friday, I came to Vilnius with the hope that the rector would see me first thing in the next morning, Saturday, one of the days in which he accepted visitors with various requests into his chamber. And I was very much surprised when the guard told me that the rector traveled to Kaunas and that he would only be back on Monday. My work in the polyclinic was very demanding then and also the staying in Vilnius for a several consecutive days caused unpleasantness and discomfort, since in those days an order had been given from the Minister of Health office, which had forbidden physicians from leaving their positions, and to be missing from their work place without an approval from the Minister, a job filled then by Dr. Cohen, a strict and meticulous man, and if by accident I would have met him in Vilnius, I would surely have “met my faith” [be punished] and he would be fussy with me to the smallest details, as he was far from being a kind and forgiving man. But I had hoped that would not be the case, and that I would not have the pleasure and honor to meet him in Vilnius, and so I distracted myself from the businesses of the polyclinic and I was forced to stay in Vilnius until Monday.

The impression that the city of Vilnius had given me, in which I had spent the past two years of my life, is a matter by itself and this is not the suitable place to talk about it; in general I can say that as far as its appearance,

²⁵ 1884-1956, bibliographer and historian, Dean of the Law Faculty in Kaunas since 1923 and afterwards also in Vilnius of 1940-1941.

²⁶ About 65 km north-west to Shavli.

the changes were for the best, but its internal life had not developed in line with its exterior form. I would say that during my three days stay in Vilnius, I had visited my former student, Chaim Morgenstein, who forty years ago I had lived with as his teacher and educator. The difference was humongous and matters here turned to the worst! Instead of the spacious apartment before, the richness and luxury, the whole family lived now in two marrow rooms, with a small kitchen allocated to them in their big brick house which had been nationalized. Signs of poverty and decrease were everywhere. The father had died, the mother – a good woman and full of life in the past, was now old and sick – my senior student, who had never had initiative or courage, remained unmarried with no profession to provide for himself. His little brother was the one who took on the family business when the father died, was also left now without a job, and the complex and misfortunate “family businesses” came upon him; the pathetic situation of this family who had been so successful in the old days, was reduced substantially, after the nationalization of their home and sawmill which had provided for them in the last year – all of this spoiled my soul and was like an addition to my poor heart due to my “son’s trouble”.

There is one more detail which does not belong here but it bothered me so much and so I will write it here in short. When I came to visit the Morgenstein family, I met one of the sisters in the family who in the old days, forty years ago, I had almost fell in love with, and I had wooed her quite much; then she had been a beautiful and fresh young lady, eighteen years old, cheerful and full of life, now she became “cow of the Bashan”, a fat woman with no interests. I looked back on the long period which had passed, I made accounts with myself; I realized that I, too, was old and I did not achieve even half of my dreams – and my heart sored.

My heart sored even more as I saw how my son, who was thirsty for knowledge and yearning for the teachings, was left out of the university. We walked around town and met some of his friends who, as the sons of proletarians, were already admitted to the university and begun attending the professors’ classes. My soul was tortured as I saw his attention and his jealousy as he was listening to the content of some of the lectures his friends attended. Those painful and annoying moment I will not forget any time soon.

On Monday morning I woke up early and went to the rector’s office. I gave my card to the servant so he would give it to the rector, and I remained in the corridor to wait for my turn along with others. A few hours had passed, and we were in the same situation as the rector was not even in his office. And so, it was noon: the servant called the rector’s house and received an answer that the rector is yet to be back from Kaunas, that an important matter held him there until the following day, on which he was to return home to Vilnius. My despair grew even more, also as I spent the last three days in Vilnius without permission as aforementioned, and my absence from the polyclinic for a long time could have caused various and unpleasant complications. And so, I decided to go back home at least for one day and then return to Vilnius on Tuesday night in order to come and see the rector on Wednesday morning. And so, I left my troubled son in Vilnius and I returned to Shavli with a broken spirit. There I had a meeting with Dr. Jasaitis, head of the health department, I explained to him the reason for my absence, I organized the urgent matters in the polyclinic and on Tuesday night I went back to Vilnius. My intention was to have a long and detailed talk with the rector; I played the conversation and its contents in my mind first, I had all my certificates and articles with me, articles which were published in the Lithuanian language as I thought they would have been useful to me – and on Wednesday morning I finally arrived to the rector’s office armed with everything I took with me from Shavli, so I will would have had the ability to emphasize my virtues and to brag before a man who did not know me, a man who was holding the destiny and the future of my son in his hands, as I believed then.

The rector received my visit immediately and with kind words. This was since the rector saw himself as the son of Shavli and from my card he understood that a man bearing a meaningful position in this town wants to see him. I have to say that the rector received my card from his guard on Tuesday when he came back from Kaunas, I, as aforementioned was in Shavli then, and could not be in his office that day, so he asked guard for me. As an answer to my expression of amazement and complaint regarding the rejections of my son’s application to the University of Vilnius, the rector said that about eight hundred applications were submitted to the liberal

arts department of the university, whereas only three hundred spots were available, and they could not receive more than three hundred new students into the department. In those conditions every request was scrutinized very thoroughly, the origin of the candidates had to be examined in order to accept first only the sons of true proletarians. Even more so, on the acceptance committee, out of necessity, representatives of the communist party of Vilnius, participate, and they have more or less detailed dossiers of the applicants; this information was received from many towns and surely, from Shavli as well. We should state – the rector added – that the Jews are pedant and they are being precise about their brothers from their nation more than about others. The rector took the liberty to mention details which “were revealed only to a few”, and among others he mentioned that he had learned that regarding some, if he would try to intervene and state his opinions, this could jeopardize the university. And as far as the request of my son he said that first he was rejected due to information held by the communist party that I belonged to a suspicious party (“Yes, I was a member of the Zionist Organization in Shavli”, I said). And second, because the member of the communist party saw that in the questionnaire my son submitted with his request, that I, his father, had graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, and so immediately the request was put aside with the thought that, if I had went to such a distant place such as Paris in order to study, while in the neighboring country, in Germany, there are fine schools and faculties, it had been because my origins are from a rich, bourgeois family, and surely I could afford myself to spend my learning years pleasantly in the famous city which had required great deal of money for accommodation. I then felt obliged telling the rector about my history as follows.

I was born into a family with many sons (seven sons) of a Jewish “teacher” and a baker, a family of very poor people. The education I had received when I was a child and a young boy had been traditional Jewish in the full sense of the word: in Heders (teaching rooms) and Talmudic colleges, and according to the wishes of my father, a religious Jew of the old generation, I was intended to be a Rabbi in Israel and so I filled myself with Talmud and rabbinical literature. However, the wind of education and the free spirit began also to enter the Talmudic colleges, the old fortresses of education and life pursuant to the old formula, and so I also began to think about secular education, even if later than the others, and after a while I succeeded and received a teacher certificate for beginners’ school. This certificate gave me the opportunity to receive a position in the Talmudic college of Shavli. In this school I had worked for six years, and during that time I had worked very hard in order to receive my matriculation certificate. And so, I had taken all the tests required by the gymnasium in Shavli several times and after I received a certificate to four departments, and one for six departments, I finally had succeeded and received the coveted matriculation certificate. Apart from my hard work in the Talmudic college, I had studied very hard for my exams. An evidence to my studiousness and my hard work after I finishing my work at the college was the fact that for my knowledge of the Russian language and its literature I had received the grade five²⁷, despite of the fact that I had been learning by myself and came as an outsider to the examination – an external – and despite of the fact that the Russian teacher Archnagilaski (“Dimitri” said the rector as I was telling my story, as he had been his teacher too) had not shown – I have to say the truth – much love for the Jews, “Philosemitism”. After I had received my matriculation certificate, I had left my position in the Talmudic college and I began teaching privately, as this kind of work had earned a much higher salary than the one I had received at the college or the one I would have received in an elementary school or a public school (“One of my students – I said pleasantly – was the daughter of Count Zobov from Ginkunai”²⁸, a good friend of the rector). Two more years I had been forced to remain in Shavli, to save money from my private teachings in order to have a certain amount of money, granting me the opportunity to fulfill my dream to go abroad and enter there a higher education faculty. As my efforts to enter the university in Russia, at the times of the Tsar remained fruitless [faithlessness, according to Job 21, 34]. After two years of working as I private teacher I had managed to save enough money

²⁷ The grades were from 1 to 5, when 5 was the higher, excellent.

²⁸ An estate, a village on the north-east part of Shavli, whose owners were from the Russian aristocracy. The family members were later integrated in the Lithuanian society.

and traveled to Paris, where one of my married sisters lived, who was not able to support me whatsoever, and I began my life as a poor student, in the full sense of the word. Two years I enjoyed with much miserliness, the money I had saved, and when the money in my pocket was spent, I knew how it was to be even poorer and I had lived the poverty of a student in a foreign country with no material support. And so, I began teaching privately in Paris as well. I taught some the Latin language and others I taught the first course of the Faculty of Medicine, the notoriously hard and difficult “P.S.N.”, especially for foreigners. My little brother, who was a friend of the rector’s little brother, had graduated from the medical studies in Dorpat [Tartu in Estonia], and settled in Novoalexandrovsk; and the world war took him to the U.S.S. – there he found suitable conditions of studying and became a famous professor of “Work hygiene”. And I, after finishing my studies at the university in Paris, I came back to my birth country, to Lithuania. Here of course I have remained as a simple physician, but I have made many efforts not to remain a “prescriptions writer” alone: from time to time I deal with various scientific questions and I publish articles in different magazines. The quality of my printed articles was proven, for example, by the letter of the editor of the monthly “Kultura”, Radvilas to me, after he had read in the monthly “Medicine” my article “The Jews and the medicine”. He wrote to me that he found in the article many interesting facts, even for readers who are not physicians. And so he asked me to write for the monthly “Kultura” an article about the same topic as aforementioned, that is to say: “The medicine in the holy scriptures”. I have done so, and my article was published in two “Kultura” magazines. By the way, due to this article I was invited to a literary assembly with the educational Commissar Venclova, because one of the magazines which included my article “The medicine in the holy scriptures” also included one of his articles. I “exploited” the indulgence of the rector and his attention to my story so much, and showed him my matriculation certificate, the letter of Korsakas=Radvilas, the “Kultura” magazines and a collection of my articles in the Lithuanian language which were published in “Medicine”. After the rector looked at all of the documents, I brought with me from Shavli, documents which had proven that my story was true, I apologized before him that I had allowed myself to misuse his generous attention, and I told him I was going to finish my long talk in a few minutes. Surely, I did not want to be seen as a nagging Jew, but the destiny of my son stood before my eyes and forced me to go out of my way and emphasize the injustice, especially that all was done with the permission of the rector who was interested in my story, and had listened to it with attention. It is interesting to state, that during our long talk, I had been thinking about the impatience of those who waited outside of the rector’s door in the hallway. And so, I continued my story, short as much as possible and with omissions. “Now, I said” I am an old physician, sick, without wealth, such that I was not able to build myself an apartment on the land I had owned in Shavli for ten years. Surely, I see a good remuneration for my work, but my wife is very sick, and her sickness requires often travels abroad and to medical centers, which is costly. My only hope was that our son would continue the tradition in our family and would work diligently on the studies he had liked from his times in gymnasium, that is to say: the history and the languages, in which he had succeeded and had been an excellent student. At last, I told the rector that his father invited me quite a few times to his town in order to consult with me, and that one of these times I had dinner in his parents’ house, and I had talked to his mother about her sons. I finished my long talk with the information that I had healed his father before his death, and with a request that he should do whatever he could for the good of my son “in the name of the past and present”. The conversation, to which the rector was very attentive, had a big influence on him, and he advise me to submit a request myself, in which I should include all the details I had told him about. I hurried and fulfilled his advice and on the same day I went home hopeful, and confident that the matter would resolve itself. And as my heart had hoped, it happened: after a few days I received the good news that my son was admitted to the university, and our happiness knew no boundaries. We did not wait [waiteth anxiously, according to Micah 1, 12] and did not sense that bitter, awful days were to come. And that we would become a contaminated filth, scum of the earth, banished not only from schools and faculties, but from “human society” altogether, and all its cultural exploits. My dismissal and the rejection of my son, two misfortunes that were cancelled, and did not bring any bad consequences, still left a painful impression deep in my heart, an impression which would not be forgotten

soon, and their memory was not erased even by the worse misfortunes of the Germans. Add to that the consequence of my illness, and with that the picture of my hearts' and body's sorrows is complete. And so, the number of those walking hunched with bowed heads was great, and remainder survivors under the burden of troubles that had begun at the times of Bolsheviks and at the conclusion would be even greater, and who would be there to straighten them?

The Jews, of whom participation in the commerce and industry of Lithuania had been very substantial, had suffered of course from the Bolsheviks regime, shoulder to shoulder with all of Lithuania's citizens. A "cup of troubles" had been poured upon them, of nationalization, confiscation, arrest, "emptying" [evacuation, expulsion]; the trouble of the apartments crowding had also been passed upon them, and the restrictions. The nationalists among us suffered as we saw the persecutions and the attitude towards the Jewish culture: the closure of Jewish schools, the removal of the Jewish books from libraries, the arrests of the leaders of the nationalistic parties and much more – I was also faced with having to destroy the book manuscript I had written in Hebrew, as I feared it would have been found in my possession – a sin without absolution, as the Hebrew language, in the eyes of the members of the Yevseksiya²⁹, had been considered as soaked with anti-revolutionary spirit, ingrained with fanatic religious devotion(!) and bears the mark of nobility and anti-democracy(!) Even more, the content of my book depicts the "Bund"³⁰ members in a positive light and he is full of love for Zionism, and that had been banned across the board. The short of it was: we suffered a lot as Jews and as nationalists at the hands of the Bolshevik regime, and yet we held all of our discomfort back, and restrained ourselves in light of all the blows, and silently bore the destruction of our material condition and Jewish culture. All was forgiven; All of which as if they had derived will from us, as if we had known and bore witnesses [according to Jeremiah 29, 24], that without the Bolsheviks, then we would have already turned to feeding [according to Lamentations 4, 10] of the two local predators, and doormats of our western neighbor's boots, the one we feel so much now. In the days of the Bolsheviks despite all of the unpleasant matters and distress, at least we had not faced the danger of killing and loss by murderers so cruel, that it had been unheard of: with indifference and apathy, calculated and methodical. On the contrary, many of us had "rose" and had attained high positions with decent salaries. Even more than so, we had all felt Human. As persons with human dignity, as citizens with full rights, once had been found free of the crime of bourgeois and speculation, then to our sons, the doors of schools and colleges had been opened, and many of them had received a decent support. And so, we surely preferred the Bolsheviks regime better than the Lithuanians and the Germans, although we had suffered, as aforementioned, more than the Lithuanian population, even more than the estates owners and the rich farmers – "the fists"³¹, that is to say that they had been left with 30 hectares [300 dunam] of land and the required structures, as opposed to wealthy Jews who had been freed from their assets and had been presented as empty vessels. And still, we had been silent, and many of us had been happy, and justifiably so. For which as opposed to the era of trouble and admonishment preceding that, we had been in heaven then.

4. On the eve of war

The end of the Bolshevik regime had been looming, the wide Lithuanians boulevards and streets had been standing in ignorance of how numbered the days of that government had been. However, at the higher spheres it had been already known that the war between the U.S.S.R and Germany was nearing and so the leaders had hinted their subjects to prepare for the grave events to come, possibly within days. First, they hinted that it was advisable

²⁹ The Jewish section – Yevseksiya Sektia – in the communist party which absolutely rejected the Hebrew language and everything deriving from it.

³⁰ "Bund", from the Yiddish: Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund un Rusland in Litah, Poyln - The General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, officially established in 1897.

³¹ A translation for "Kulaks", from Russian.

to take preventive steps, to banish the danger of the fifth column, that is to say persons suspected of potentially joining the enemy of Bolsheviks, in the event of “declaration of war”. The purpose was justified and necessary, but the familiar phenomenon re-occurred: lack of suitable and competent people in order to implement the required actions in an appropriate and orderly fashion. However, what had the ragtag and bobtail done? And how they fulfilled this mission? On the morning of June fourteen [1941] at the house of the communist party, all the active members and their escorts assembled, as night robbers in a villains’ cave, and they summoned a number of red soldiers, pairing each member [of the party] with a red soldier [in pairs]. At that moment, the alien cruelty of the Bolsheviks, and unnecessary misdeeds reached a climax in the city: in the middle of the night, those pairs scattered all over town and burst into the houses of former bourgeois Jews, and the houses of Christians suspected of counterrevolution, and they arrested all the merchants, grocers, and clerks who had been removed from their former positions, them and their families, and if the head of households were not found, family members were rounded up: women and children, and all of them were taken by cargo carriages intended for horses and cattle, which had been prepared at the station. On these carriages they locked men and women, young males with young females, educated and polite alike, obligated to use holes at the center of the carriages as toilets, without any privacy, in front of one another in the carriage. Such a humiliation and rage! The Bolsheviks had allowed the prisoners to take only few belongings, and the rest had been locked up at the emptied [exiled] houses along with the furniture, houseware, and kitchenware. A list had been seemingly compiled, and a seal had been placed on the door, until the contents was added to the government treasury.

Among the families arrested at that night of indignation [wrath generator of disturbances, according to Job 21, 30], were the family of our brother-in-law Zilberman. Our own brother-in-law who had been exiled from his factory, “The Shavlian Textile”, was working in Kaunas as a common worker. Remaining at the house were his wife, my wife’s sister, Pola, a beautiful and adorning woman, a glamorous fashion freak, “brought up in scarlet” [according to Lamentations 4, 5]; her older son, a talented young man, who as a son of bourgeois had not been admitted into the university and instead entered the Trade Institute – a shelter for all of the rejected sons of bourgeois – along with her younger son, an excellent student at the Hebrew Gymnasium. On the fifth hour of the night, the three of them were awakened from their sleep and Bengiss, the brother-in-law of Slavich, one of the most prominent Bolsheviks in Shavli, and a red soldier entered their home and they were all arrested without being given a reason for the arrest. They had thought they were being sent to prison for being bourgeois and deserving all punishment, and so they had taken nothing with them, and left their house dressed in summer garments and empty handed. The messengers found 3000 Rubles with Pola and gave her 1000. The rest, they kept to themselves, which the old Tsar police had not been allowed to do during the old days, but what had been forbidden for the drunken bribe takers clerks of the Tsar, was allowed for the representatives of the Bolsheviks in Lithuania. Hooligans³² who may have changed their skin but not their nature, especially when delivering judgment and punishment to the bourgeois. Of this calamity we had informed my brother-in-law on the same day. He hurried back from Kaunas and turned himself to the Bolsheviks’ headquarters, where they gracefully granted his request to be transferred to the same carriage as his wife and two sons. The nights were cold then, and the prisoners were shivering in the cattle carriages, and the guards had treated them as horrible dangerous criminals, not allowing them warm garments; Even food and water were hardly allowed. Then my courageous resourceful wife, came to life and started “to shake worlds”. She ran from clerk to clerk, visited Soloviov, the head of the communist party, an honest and pleasant man; Matzkivich, the head of the N.K.V.D., an evil and wicked man; Mayor Ulpis, a man with tall physics and very little spirit and value. She tried persuading them to let her grab warm clothes from her sister’s house, boots, duvets and blankets for protection from cold nights, and supply needed for a long cold journey, since she had heard that there were being sent to Siberia. My wife had succeeded receiving the requested permission from all the clerks, but everything was hinged on the final authority – the deputy mayor

³² An Irish surname which was altered for a thug, ruffian and similar.

Kopilov, a rough and cold-hearted man, and his sadist assistant P., the “small minded man”, who had been jumping from one discipline to another. But this final arbiter ruled that the Zilberman family had “lived enough in luxury” and so he allowed for the whole family of four souls only one coat, one duvet and one blanket. And the tears of my wife and her pleadings were in vein, until we were forced to give them a portion of our own belongings, clandestinely, through the window of the carriage. This type of cruelty towards innocent people, among them were dangerous contra-revolutionists as Alexander Lipkin and sons, Zalmanovich, Shlapobirski, Riznik, Laserovich³³ and many more, people who had been as far from politics as the east is far from the west. This stupor and excess cruelty distanced many hearts from the Bolsheviks, hearts who had previously sympathized and even loved them. This cruelty demonstrated once more the distortion and the wickedness to be folly [according to Ecclesiastes 7, 25] in which the representatives of the party intended to implement the wishes and orders of their superiors. But they promised in secret, to the humble of the comrades members³⁴ that it had been mostly in order to remove the dangerous Lithuanians: the estate owners, the officers and the “fists” [Kulaks], the farmers, “owners of the rich entities”, and they had indeed removed many of them, but because of the concern of “what would the non-Jews say?”, and the cry of the Lithuanian people if the Jews would have been left untouched. So, for the seeming balance – they had also arrested Jews. But to this I have two answers: in order to maintain the balance wouldn’t a smaller number of arrested Jews been enough, and second, why was everything implemented with such rage, and evil vengeance? The prohibition to take warm clothes, which were later robbed by the Partisans [the Lithuanian organization which in the following months murdered the Jews in Lithuania] and by the guarding [of the houses] along with the other belongings of the prisoners. The “excellent security” of the cattle carriages with attitude adequate for serious criminals, and the arrests of the women and children – all of these had been surely unnecessary. Indeed, there is a grain of truth to the assumption of the purpose for the Jews arrests for the seeming balance. But at in the end there was no use to this balancing act. It had not been possible to foresee the future, but the outcome they had failed to see was horrible. After leaving our country, they brought disaster and tragedy upon the heads of the Jews, to an extent never seen ever since. After all was done, when the Germans appeared, the Lithuanian attributed the “emptying” [exile] of their brothers and the destruction of so many families to the fault of the Jews which they had considered as Bolsheviks. This fact awoken and aroused the old hatred towards the Jews which had existed in the heart of the Lithuanians, similar to other nations who had considered us aliens and unnecessary competitors. This hatred burst into the flames of hell, in the hearts of the savages with no culture, and hundreds of thousands of souls in Israel died before their prime and fallen at the hands of the vile, in the awful and bitter days which came afterwards. It is worth noting, that the mayor Linkevicius, always evil and cruel, became a devoted bitter enemy of the Jews after the Bolsheviks had exiled his wife and daughter, when he had been away from his own house. This had been the finale of the Bolsheviks in town, with its savagery and pointless wickedness, which had been our hurdle, and no living thing bearing witness would forget. This was the last chapter of the Bolsheviks sequences in Lithuania, a country had been filled with light and darkness, positive and negative, justice and distortion of justice, and from which the evil, which had peaked in the days of the Germans, had come and had given the Lithuanians an excuse to avenge us.

The final account of the Bolsheviks government in Lithuania rises thoughts of sorrow uttermost to contain [according to Ezekiel 23, 33]. Indeed, if they had not left Lithuania in such a hurry, then surely the account would have been positive and “active”: full rights, honorable positions, participation in the cultural life, even if one-sided, the education of our sons and more, even if this had been one-sided, all of those are examples of a positive phenomenon which would have tilted the balance sheet into the positive side, but when the Bolsheviks had been forced out of here, and they had left us in our sorrow, the final results of the Bolsheviks government in Lithuania had been terrible and terrifying for the Jews, results never to be seen. To conclude, for this government, “its

³³ These and others were shop and factory owners in Shavli and its surroundings.

³⁴ A description of the leaders of the Communist Party, in which they referred to one another as “Comrade”, And here the meaning “humble” is for the Jewish leaders of the party.

shadow had been greater than its wrath” [according to Suka 1, 1]; there had been a spark of freedom and liberty which was dimmed quickly, and the foundation was laid for the horrible massacre which done afterwards to the Jews in Lithuania. In any case those misdeeds of the Bolsheviks, which are attributed to [with] the Jews, had paved the way for the Lithuanians to turn their country into our valley of death, and to add to our “book of tears” pages filled with blood, which had never been seen in all of our miserable history, which had always been full of lamentations, and moaning, and woe [according to Ezekiel 2, 10]. Surely, from the day we had been exiled from our country, we received from our hard and evil masters nothing but good grief – but if in each generation they seek to extinguish us, and we had always been scapegoats for all of the word’s troubles, and whereas in all of the days of our lengthy exile, the mothers moaning voices in Israel had not stopped, as they cry like our mother Rachel, for their sons brought to their deaths as lambs for no reason at all – and yet there had been no era with evil as this, and bitter times, as this era, without a slight loophole of escape, had never been seen in all of our history already so full of calamities.

In the old days there had been three shields against calamities:

- A) The faith. It had given strength to the weary and courage for the tortured and oppressed, to mount the pyres of the inquisition and to die in the name of God. It gave a tremendous power to bear and silently suffer all of the troubles and calamities, and to wait for better days in this world, and salvation in the next one. These days, most of us and our sons have lost the precious qualities of the faith. Nowadays many who had faith in the past are in the state of Elisha ben Abuyah, as he had seen the cheeky tongue of the translator in the mouth of a pig.³⁵
- B) The emigration. Our forefathers had lived by the well-known rule of which: “the one who is not content in their place, shall move to another [according to the Megila 75, 72] and they would emigrate in their multitudes from the country in which they had not been happy to another country. From the decrees and killings in Germany during the Middle Ages they had escaped to Poland and Lithuania; the exiles of Spain had found a shelter in North Africa and Turkey. In the last century the victims of the pogroms in Russia had escaped by their thousands to America and to [South] Africa. Now, the entire world has closed upon us and we have no escape or shelter.
- C) Destruction. In the old days, in order to save their lives, many Jews would convert their religion seemingly or permanently. There is a tradition that says that even our Rabbi Maimon and his son, the Rambam while he was a boy, had adopted the Islam religion for a short period of time, in order to save themselves from the ones seeking their souls. It is also said that they had admitted that the order of our wise men: “punishable by death offenses” apply only to stars worshiping, zodiac signs and the likes, and not to a religion based on one God such as Islam. Now, the value of this medication has been lost completely. Nowadays, the religious persecution is based on the deputy officer ruling[Hitler, Damn him] who had determined that the theory of Chamberlain and his assistants of whole and defected races, the superior and the inferior, holds true, and that the source of defect is in the blood of the Jewish people, which are naturally crooked and liars, and due to their blood and race they cannot be any different. And so, they cannot be repaired, but destroyed completely from under the skies, or pursuant to the Lithuanian formula: the bullets of the Partisans and the riffle men³⁶, those soon to be wild predators.

Now the shields have evaporated and passed faded, and so our era is badly characterized, and it is worse than any other era we had previously known.

And the Bolsheviks, as if nothing had happened, they have forgotten that just a short while ago they were forced to leave Lithuania in a haste as fleeing a battle. They continued their mammoth projects as if nothing had

³⁵ He had said: “A mouth which produced pearls smote dirt!!” Itza Vehata, Kidushin 39.

³⁶ “The partisans”: an underground armed group who was at first against the Communist regime and murderers of Jews later. “The Riffle men” from Lithuanian – singular: saulys. Members of the National regiments per their sayings and partners for the Jews murders pursuant to their deeds. See comment 14.

happened and prepared an even wider list of the revolution enemies, who were also intended to be sent out of Shavli and its surroundings, as their friends who had already been sent to the U.S.S.R on June seventeenth. The Famous Slavich had said that the bourgeois had to be exterminated “as a man sweepeth away dung” [1 Kings 14, 10], and that it was allowed treating them as wondering dogs. And this ruling was something that he and his friends were intending to fulfill to the fullest. People familiar with the details reported that the new list contained among others suspects, almost all the of physicians in Shavli except Dr. Jasaitis, Dr. Yivanivski, Dr. Levin, Brumberg and maybe Dr. Directorovich. The scandal of the first “emptying” [exile] of the bourgeois and the enemies of the revolution, which had been a sudden one, was not enough for the Comrades³⁷ in Shavli and they were not satisfied. They wished to exterminate all of the bourgeois, their souls were not content [according to Isaiah 56, 11]. But they did not have sufficient time to implement their evil plan, nor time to enjoy the properties of those who had been “emptied” [exiled], which had become bounty to the Partisans and the guards. And perhaps it is a shame that the second “emptying” [exile] had not occurred, because surely the conditions of the Jews who were led to the forests and the endless ice of Siberia were far better than the ones we suffered. Surely, they suffer without any doubt from the cold and the hunger, and part of them even from fear of bombing, and the young were surely drafted, but despicable humiliation and terrorizing death from the murderers surrounding us and wishing to exterminate us continuously, is not something they are experiencing.

5. The beginning of the war

The events in Shavli on the first four days of the war, before the Germans came, describe the mood in the party and the mood of the population under the backdrop of the beginning of the war.

One of the negative aspects of the Bolsheviks regime, was the unnecessary official “print”: “memos” with orders, instructions, demands, which had washed all the institutes almost every day. Adding to that the statistic questionnaires, the good advices and the various rules in writing and print, it would be easy to understand that the various institutes were literally “drowning in paper”. Occasionally, the various orders and instructions had not been suitable for the actual conditions in our institutes and so doubts and uncertainties followed, requiring clarifications and explications. In light of those doubts and various questions which needed solutions, and in light of the desire to look into the orders that had already existed at the medical institutes of the U.S.S., Jasaitis, Head of the Health Department in Shavli, had decided to go to Moscow and stay there for ten days. In light of the absence of Dr. Jasaitis from Shavli, he had left Dr. L. to fill his place.

On the twenty second day of June, on the first day of the week, in the morning, an order had been received from Dr. L. that all the physicians working in the central polyclinic and in the ambulatory centers surrounded the town – the branches of the polyclinic – needed to gather at the polyclinic. After a while, when all the physicians gathered at the place where they were told, Dr. L. arrived along with the deputy of the Commandant [commander] of the town, both alert and angry in a slightly festive manner, they announced, that a war between the U.S.S.R and Germany had started and that, there had already been six aerial attacks, with several wounded men. As the manager of the polyclinic I tried to say that there was no need to leave all the physicians there, and that the town would have remained without the much-needed medical services. And then, a thing which had not expected happened. Dr. L. said that this was a time of emergency, and that all we needed was military discipline. He acted as a military general and ordered that nothing was to be said and shouted: “I am commanding: and that is that!” In that he was demonstrating his assertiveness, especially in front of the commander’s deputy. The decisiveness military tone and unnecessary hastiness made me laugh, hand in mouth, and right there and then, I decided to remain serious, not depriving this chameleon from his authority, nor to annoy him in the presence of the military clerk. And indeed, after a few hours Dr. L. retreated. Having noticed my remark, he then ordered the unneeded

³⁷ The author assumes, that the ruling in the aforementioned things was very much saved to the local party members.

physician to leave the polyclinic. He was so worked out which demonstrated that the beginning of the war had already made him confused and bogged down. Indeed, even he, one of the allegedly best leaders, had not been ready or qualified for his position, he too was a calif of the hour, and was to be among the firsts panic and run away, as per the Yiddish idiom” as extremely as necessary”.

And Dr. Jasaitis started preparing to return home. On the day the war started he had already been in Latvia managing to cross the border of Lithuania and returning to his homeland. A homeland grants atonement to her sons, helping them forget the suspicions past, for when are dealing with a citizen, a son knowing to adjust to the spur of the moment [a word in due season, according to Isaiah 50, 4] and to adapt to the moment’s requirements. The attitude of Jasaitis towards the Bolsheviks and his wooing towards them had been erased in an instant, and he rose to fame again, his old position awaited him. As if as nothing had happened, as a loyal son to his country, and all that he had done, he had done in its name and on its behalf. Yes! The homeland country! What great value to the public in general, and to the individual in particular!

And the war broke with all its might at the German – Lithuanian front. To our relief, the town of Shavli had not been part of the front, but occasional bombs had also fallen here, and heart shaking gunshots had been sounding. Several houses had caught fire, and their habitants had been wounded, some of them seriously from shrapnel’s and their lives had been in danger. Wounded were sent to the hospital, and the ones we could treat had received treatment and bandages in the polyclinic. The war had brought terror and fear upon the Jewish population right from the first day: as if we had felt that something very awful was going to happen, and many of us had prepared to leave and seek shelter, especially in the villages and towns near the Latvian border. Even the leaders of the communist party had “worn their anxieties” and had begun worrying about their precious lives. But the destiny of others, who had not been party members, was of no interest to them. For the possibility of a Russian retreated, they had made no contingency rescue for them.

On that one evening, the canon sounds and bombardments around the surroundings of the town had amplified. Almost all the Jewish citizens, most anxious and nervous, hurried and gathered in the spacious basement of the trade institute, and also in the basement of the polyclinic. Most of them came with pillows and duvets in order to be as comfortable as possible. The crowdedness was great, the air was stuffy, the fear which came upon all of us was terrible and every gunshot brought shivering and terror [trembling, according to Psalms 48, 7].

On the second day, a rumor was circling that the Germans had conquered Taurage³⁸, which had been burnt to the ground, and that they were near Kleme³⁹, which had also been burnt by the Russians, and that the Russians had retreated from all fronts. I then decided to try and talk to Soloviov, the main leader of the Bolsheviks in Shavli, an honest and educated man, and to hear his opinion about the possibility of empty [exile] of the Jewish officers who were under great danger, if the Germans entered town. I went to the party’s headquarters, but my hope to see Soloviov had remained empty. The guard was instructed to let only holders of the party’s certificates in, and no one else. When going to the party’s headquarters, I had finally understood how the honorable comrades had been concerned to ensure their precious lives, and the destinies of the other officers working in various institutes of the new regime, was insignificant to them. When I returned from the party’s headquarters in vain, I noticed near the house a big bus full as a cage with the servants of the party and their families, and another cargo bus, probably for the belongings of the escapees. I took a few steps towards the direction of Dvaro⁴⁰ Street and corner of Ausros⁴¹ Street, and there was a big car parked, and next by were Dr. L. and P. and also Petrauskas, the director of the finance department. And when I went down to talk to them, the first two “jewels” hurried and entered into the car. P., as usual, did not pay any attention to me, the damn Zionist and it was as if he did not see

³⁸ About 30 km from the German border near Tilsit. Also, Taurig in the mouths of its Jews.

³⁹ About 60 km north from Taurage.

⁴⁰ In Lithuanian: street – Gatve, of the Dvaro estate.

⁴¹ The boulevard of dawn: Ausros; this street and the one before him were in the center of town.

me, and Dr. L. honored me with a handshake and when I asked about the fate of the polyclinic he answered, that the physicians may go home, and while he was talking, the door of the car closed and – God speed! And I stayed in the middle of the road wondering: those are your leaders, the Bolshevik party in Shavli! It was as a captain to be first to flee his ship, in the face of a storm “and the rest of the passengers were left to the grace of God”. However, at the border, the good Dr. L. apparently received his punishment for hurrying so much to flee from the battle, when the extent of danger was yet to be clear, and he was forced to return to Shavli. In the evening he had suddenly called the polyclinic and learned that we did not obey his orders, and as long as no official announcement had been made, we continued to fulfill our positions, and the work in the polyclinic went on.

And so, the furry of the Germans was drawing nearer, the population of Shavli and especially, of course, the Jews. On the second day, the panic of fleeing town began. “The comrades” escaped towards Janiski⁴² as they hoped to enter the U.S.S.R through Latvia, and the other people who feared from the bombs escaped to the towns and villages around Shavli. Many women and children joined the Bolsheviks families and left town together. On the third day, the military hospital also left our town, and took Dr. Rakuzin and his family along. The escapees suffered great fears, as the aerial attacks of the Germans on trains and other means of transportation were relentless, and many of the refugees had died during the escape. The train rails had been damaged at various locations, and the danger was great – but the escape from town did not halt, as there was no other choice: the Germans came nearer and nearer and so did the fear. The ejection [evacuation] was not organized and methodical, and everyone was for themselves. But most of the escape went towards Latvia, following the “comrades”, as aforementioned, had not cared for anyone but themselves, and left for pray even people who had been devoted to them with all of their hearts and souls. There were no tickets left for them, like the manager of the Batas [shoes] factory and for the manager of “The Shavlian Textile” factory. The latter turned on the third day to the commandant [commander] of town and asked him for the possibility to leave town, as he had held a prestigious position. And his son, a political prisoner for many years, had been a member of the Bolsheviks Center in Lithuania, and so they were surely facing death. Many people came together with Mr. T-S, the manager of The Shavlian Textile, myself included, as the fear from the Germans had urged me, and I surely would not have left town without knowing anything about the fate of my son who had been left in Vilnius without means. But as the Russian say: “a question is not a crime; an attempt is not a felony”. I at least had wanted to know, if it was possible to escape. Also, a strange thought went through my mind: the journey from here to Vilnius is impossible, maybe it would be better to go to Latvia and from there to enter Vilnius – as they say: “by a bypass [like a man who is walking around in a roundabout manner] to the bath house” – and to look for our only son for whom the concern made us lose our sleep. The town commandant [commander] was confused, and he sent us along with a military man to the station commander [of the rail station]. The latter had promised to give us an answer in the evening about the possibility to leave Shavli, because for now, there was no train, and the tracks were broken. In the evening T-S had called and said that had he received a clear answer from the commander: “there is no need to leave town – help had come and there was no danger – sit and relax”. The consolation and relaxation which were granted us by the commander, and which afterwards were found to be false and without any basis, were evidence for the confusion and chaos in which the Bolsheviks had been at that time, regarding information and in general. But there was even a greater evidence. Since going out of the house had been forbidden after the eight hour in the evening, Dr. L., who had reappeared again before us a man of importance, promised that he would issue a special permit for me, which would state that as a physician, I had the right to walk at night. On the third day the third day I was retained as the polyclinic official afternoon director, along another physician, helping as an auxiliary surgeon for the wounded, when required – and we both waited for the promised permit. The evening was approaching, and the eighth hour passed. We had yet to receive the permit and were trapped at the polyclinic without the possibility of leaving. We made several calls and found out that Dr. L. was in a meeting with the

⁴² It was the shortest road from Shavli to Riga, the Latvian capital, less than 150 km.

remaining town members of the communist party, which had surely been devising a new way to skip town, and deciding of the best timing for such escape.

Thirsty and hungry, we started calling relentlessly for the permit, in order to be able to leave the polyclinic and go home. Half an hour after midnight Dr. L. finally arrived, and in his hands, various intricate licenses: they had been granted with a (substantial) ceremonial bureaucracy and were given to us with great gravity: they had been signed by the head of the town guards, under condition that we returned them in the following morning. Little did the leaders know or sensed, that in the morning they would be far-far away from Shavli. In the hands of Dr. L. were also several licenses for the municipal hospital physicians. Dr. L. went there, and I escorted him until we reached my house. During our walk I ask him if, in the meeting of the “comrades” they had talked about the emptying [exile] of the Jewish physicians from Shavli. Dr. L. admitted that they had not discussed the matter of various clerks leaving Shavli at all, that is to say that there had been no probability of implementing such a thing. And so, in time of danger, whoever has legs should run, as the French say: “anyone who can should save himself”.

At night the whole city was shaking from gun shots; the Germans bombed continuously the retreating Russian soldiers. A fear of death engulfed the whole population. The bombs were probably deployed some distance from the town, but their awful echoing was so great as if it was happening in town. Our neighbors along with Dr. B and the lawyer G. and their families laid down on the floor of our hallway and stayed there all night. We also moved from the bedroom to the dining room and laid on a shelf further from the windows. That was the way we all behaved, with a childish naivety without any logic and wisdom – all of this was an evidence to the great fear we all experienced.

On the fourth morning, after a sleepless night I woke up, and I went to the party’s headquarters. This time, I intended to make an extra effort in order to see Soloviov and talk to him about the fate of the polyclinic. But, as I walked towards the headquarters, a glim picture appeared before my eyes: all of the doors were widely open without any guards, and anyone could have entered as he they pleased. I stood a few moments astounded and wordless, until one guard came to me, a man I had known for many years, as I had treated his family once, and he, amazed too, told me that he had no idea what had happened there the night before, before he arrived. To my request he let me enter to the holiest of places. The office belonging to Soloviov, an office not anyone could enter. The office was ready and organized as if it had been waiting for its owner: on the table there was a shining printing machine, a telephone, writing instruments, books, and in the closet one could clearly see the books of Lenin and Stalin and various propaganda books in the Russian language. The guard then showed me the stairs leading to the basement of the central heating, and the stairs were in disarray with packages and suitcases. Those objects were surely left behind due to lack of space or because of time to take them. Therefore, the retreat had been apparently hasty and abrupt, for which many documents had been left undestroyed, papers which later fell in the hands of the Lithuanian police and brought great sorrow on the heads of many persons; as aforementioned, they had also left behind many people who had been loyal to them with their heart and souls, and by that destined them to tortures by the hands of the evils. That was a sobering lesson, especially the condition to return the permits in the morning, permits signed by the head of the town guards, how faulty had been the information and the organization of the Bolsheviks in Lithuania, as they had not known what was going to happen in the coming hour or two.

And that was how the Bolshevik chapter in Shavli (and also in the other Lithuanian towns) ended, and the writing of the most horrible chapter of our history, history already filled with mourning and sorrow of exiles and tortures, martyrs and forced conversions – was to begin, being filled with horrible stories to a freighting extent not known to us before. To recap, the end of the Bolsheviks regime was comprised from the ones attempting to run away, and had returned in bitter disappointment to Shavli after not being allowed to cross the border to Latvia – and those who had succeeded to cross the border, had not succeed entering the U.S.S.R, unless they had been members of the communist party. During their escapes, many horrible things had happened, and their lives had been hanging on a thread many times, and upon their return, they found out that they had been robbed from all of

their possessions, and their homes were left as empty vessels. This had been the destiny of some of the escapees, but most of them had remained in Latvia and had lived and died there through oppression of evil and sorrow [Psalms 107, 39] in the concentration camps. It is worth mentioning that many of the Lithuanians, naive common villagers, when freed from the authority of the Bolsheviks, had started exposing their claws and jaws: they had ceased selling food to the refugees and, for example, at the town of Lygumai⁴³, the “rulers”, perhaps at their own volition, had driven out all of the Jews there, in a half of hour. It is hard to ignore the contrast: Between the return of the Jewish refugees to loss and extermination to the return of Jasaitis to his homeland, prestige and wealth. The dandyism of Jasaitis with the Bolsheviks had been forgotten and forgiven, as opposed to most of the refugees who had been traders and doers, who suffered much due to their opposition of the Bolsheviks, were then tortured in great pain as Bolsheviks, or as their followers and admirers. And so all of the Jews got trapped in an ever changing vicious circle, reducing, us and suffocating our souls: the persecutions, vindictive proceedings and eliminations of human rights, caused increased sympathetic feelings within the Jews for the Bolsheviks, who had not differentiated [put a division, according to Exodus 8, 19] between the Jews and other nationals, and had granted the Jews full human and civil rights and had also secured their lives – and those sympathetic feelings for the Bolsheviks, drew vengeance from their haters and so forth. And as much as the extreme persecutions of the Haman of our times had brought objections from the Jews of America, as a reward for those objections, new persecutions were enacted, even more horrible than before. That had been the vicious [or the magic] cycle trapping the Jews without an escape or a haven.

6. The entrance of the Germans to Shavli

On the twenty second day of the month of June, the war was announced and on the twenty sixth day, at sunset we suddenly saw through our window the Germans walking on the sidewalk! That is what we saw – and our hearts darkened! Not only that we were fearful of them as we knew how they had treated the Jews and what they had done to our brothers in Germany and Poland, but our despair grew even more in light of the fact that along with the German entrance to our town, one of the last remaining glorious hopes of the Jews dissipated. And our hearts were all saddened, as one mourning a loved one dying in their prime. We had toyed with the idea that the Amalek finally would have finally gotten what they had deserved from the Russians, and when “a war would be called”, a necessary result in light of all the events, they would have been surely beaten by the glorious invincible Red Army, there had been nothing like it in the entire world, as depicted by the great army and folk songs of the Bolsheviks, songs to which we had believed with all of our hearts. And suddenly, such a disappointment! The process of our gloomy desperate thoughts, went as following: “twenty three years the Russians had prepared for a defensive, and even offensive war, they had lived penniless, naked, barefoot and hungry, they had confiscated properties whose value could not be evaluated; and all of these had surely been spent to protect their homeland and to arm it. And all of this had been done conspicuously, while issuing threats to those daring to touch the U.S.S.R. We wanted to believe, we had trusted the Bolsheviks, we had hoped to find in them shelter and protection from of the “lunatic” oppressor, the one with the psychosis that the Jews were to be blamed for everything. We had amused our hearts with pleasant hopes, and what a weariness is it [Malachi 1, 13]! Everything faded as quickly as a dream; the cheeky ones, the ones bragging of virtues not their own, ran from the battle as rabbits, and the bravery of the world’s finest and most superior pilots, dried and became void [abomination, according to Isaiah 41, 24] immediately upon the first confrontation. Our eyes were shut, and our hearts shrunk as we came to the realization that there was no stopping of the tyrant who had conquered entire Western Europe, and who was soon win in the east too. And when we were lost – that was it, as we feared that in the near future, he would fulfill his evil plan to wipe the memory of all the Jews in Europe. Our despair knew no boundary or limit! Until today

⁴³ Lygum, in the mouths of the Jews, about 30 km north-east from Shavli.

we have able to understand the retreat of the Russian from the Baltics: had it been a war tactics in order to blind the eyes of the enemy, or we had not been prepared sufficiently to face the enormous enemy – whatever the reason had been, the U.S.S.R later demonstrated, that it was not as frail as the little kingdoms disintegrating as houses of cards in the wind when encountering the Germans. Its superseded France who had backslidden due to wealth and luxury, and utilized anachronistic “lost in time”, war tactics and defense means already evolved elsewhere in modern war. Even more so, the Soviet Union later showed an exceptional bravery, one which very much justified the bragging of the Bolsheviks. Whatever it was, at the end of the war, the memory of the Russian heroes will remain in the history of the war for all generations to come. (Those words I am copying from the draft in the eighth month of the war [January 1942], and until then neither Leningrad⁴⁴ nor Moscow were conquered. Their [The Germans] victories were great over the Jewish front: the extermination of the Jews in Europe continued relentlessly).

The Germans occupied Lithuania, and Amalek found in the Lithuanian people a partner like no other out of the countries destroyed under their feet before. As freed kings-slaves (“a slave who is king” on a small scale), rude and savage by nature, lacking culture, lagging and incompetent in trade and industry, jealous of the Jews who had been enjoying the fruits in their work, especially after declaring their independence; the wild beast had been sleeping among them, with its teeth and claws being felt always by us, was fully awoken, and hurried by the conquerors side, who had hated us with all their hearts, and so the Lithuanians began to annihilate us, and they were happy to get rid of the foreign and unnecessary competition in a single blow [in one stroke]. And so entire communities were exterminated under the sky of Lithuania with indifference, and gradually, orderly and legally, fifty-fifty people, sixty-sixty, in one day or in a few days, elderly and young, women and children, fathers in front of their sons, children in front of their fathers, and the hands of the murderers did not shake, and their eyes were wide open and vivid. And we, who remained alive – for now – and were under the furry of Amalek and his partners, our fate was so awful and bitter! As if being burnt on a very low flame! The admonishment curse: “And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee” [according to Deuteronomy 28, 66] fulfilled itself upon us. As if we had been stripped out of our lives and “it was hanging by a thread”; as if our souls had left our bodies turned in stews in the pots at the hands of the maker: if they wished, they ended our lives, and if they wanted, they groped and turned our souls and tortured us as they pleased. And so, our bodies were abandoned, our properties and work became dirt under the pressuring and squashing German boot, and a target for the evil Lithuanian riffle and fist. However, in vain I add words and poetic phrases in order to describe the feelings in my aching heart. My pen cannot describe even one of the thousands insults and humiliations came down like rain upon our heads continuously, one of the thousands of dangers we faced at every given moment, and the tortures they invented in order to make our lives bitter at every minute of every day. For all of this an artist is required, for all of this a poet is required, as the poet of “Masha Nemirov” [Chaim Nachman Bialik] in order to describe our troubles; the orders which had been given to humiliate us and turn us to dirt, the orders which had been given to extinguish all our strength with hunger and hard work, the orders which had been given to present us as empty vessels without property, or sources of income; the blows and the strokes which people had received without differentiation of age and level of education ; the hard work, “black work” under a ruler who did not understand people who had never experienced “physical” work. Who would describe all the troubles we had encountered and distresses which washed us and in which we are drowning, without any refuge or shelter? Who in the history of things would judge the stabbings of the swords upon us from the Lithuanians, along with the Germans, in order that all of that would not be forgotten, in order for our grandchildren to cry for our anguish [according to Jeremiah 8, 21] in later days when they would be happy and would tell about the new “exodus” and new miracles and wonders, which if we would not see, at least would be seen by our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

⁴⁴ Today the city is called again after its founder, Peter, known as the Great, Sankt-Petersburg.

As the official manager of the polyclinic, I pondered two courses of action: should I go to the polyclinic and hand over my responsibilities to the replacement management appointed by the new rulers, or should I wait and see how matters unfold. The answer to my dilemma came without delay: on the second day after the Germans occupied Shavli, on the 27th day of the month of June [1941], the old physician V-K. came to me with urgency and fear and told me that the Germans had taken over the halls of the polyclinic in order to arrange an ambulatory service there without taking anyone into consideration, and that the chief physician, the German had told him to leave the place along with the nurse L-T., as they were Jews. After him I received a visit from Dr. B-N. who told me that when visiting the polyclinic, the chief German physician came to him and when he had told the physician he was a Jew, the physician had ordered him “to go forth as quickly as possible and disappear”. After this kind of “welcoming” for Jewish physicians, I thought it would have been useless to try and talk to the chief German physician and I stayed at home. This was the end of my position as the director of the polyclinic after more than six months, and I was left as the rest of the Jews who had been driven out of their positions and without and means of making a living. Even worse: we were left almost without food and provisions, as the Lithuanians fulfilled the official order even before it had been given and had already refused to sell food to the Jews. In general, as the Germans came, a frightening change had come upon the Lithuanians and their attitude towards the Jews: they had rose their heads and even the expression of their faces changed: they were happy and joyful to see the Germans, as most of them were property owners, and they had hoped that the Germans would give them back their properties which had been nationalized by the Bolsheviks, along with the independence of their country which had also been taken by the latter. And as they tried to please the new masters and to find favors with them, and as the Jews were associated to[with] the Bolsheviks, a hatred had been growing in the hearts of the vile persons towards the Jews as a burning fire, and this hatred received a crude and evil nature suited for savages, for the uneducated people, and there was no one there to stop them, on the contrary, they were encouraged to implement their dirty deeds. I should state that even the educated among them, the so called intelligent, the ones we had known for a long time, were in the same state of mind, and it was hard to find any remains of sympathy. Everyone rejoiced at our downfall, everyone thought that the Jews deserved to be punished. And so, the old historic moments began to repeat themselves, in which everyone called: “the best of the gentiles to the killings”. Although later on many of the elite Lithuanians found the German cruelty towards the Jews was too extreme, and some traces of emphasized with the Jews started appearing, there was a consensus that the Jews deserve some kind of punishment, even if lighter.

On the same day, the chief German physician demonstrated what kind of deeds an educated German was cable [able] of towards a Jew, even though[he] was almost equal to him, a colleague. As he did the little thing [according to Isaiah 7, 13] and drove out all the Jews from the polyclinic, he did not stop there: he sent a military man together with nurse Galvanauska to the expert dentist, V-K., one of those who had been driven out by him, and the man was ordered to come and work all day in the polyclinic, perform “black work”: to clean the street and the sidewalk, to pump water, repair the doorstep of the yard of the Lithuanian gymnasium across the polyclinic and the like, in the company of other young Jews who were found on the streets and forced to do the same work. Perhaps the assumption was true, that V-K had gone to the chief physician and had begged him to give him some work, and by doing so he had burdened [the Germans] with his speech, his look and typical gestures. Because when V-K had wanted something, nothing could have stopped him, and he would have not overruled any trick in order to achieve his goal. And so, as the chief physician remembered the little, annoying, strange Jew, the one who had bothered him with his insistent pleadings to give him work, he ordered to bring him to work: “there you go – work; to clean the street and pump some water”. Despite of that, the chief German physician had been wrong to humiliate to such an offensive extent this man, who had belonged to the group of medical professionals. It was not a wonder that our western neighbors [Germans] had elected as leader the bitter enemy of the Jews, the horrible and evil one, if among them we could find such intelligent people, and not in low numbers, and perhaps there had

been even the majority. These things seem so innocent and naive compared to the way we were later treated by them, as flies and fleas.

The twenty seven day of the month of June had been relatively calm, like the calm before a storm; At that time, they dealt only with the extermination of the Bolshevisms: removal from office, arrests of suspicious people, confiscating the homes of the ones who left Shavli, the party member who had escaped to Latvia and to the U.S.S.R, and the homes of common Jews who had escaped for their lives along their families to nearby town and villages to survive bombings— many of them, as aforementioned, came back and found their homes empty, without furniture or houseware, or any items of value.

And on the twenty-eight day on the month of June, started the real evil events. Our drowning in the great abyss, and no one to save us! The pit had shut her mouth upon us [according to Psalms 69, 16] and had swallowed us alive, but maybe we would be saved, by a miracle? As long as we still had breath in our bodies, we had to maintain even the slightest sliver of hope, one we kept deep in our hearts. Our nation is experienced in pogroms, and also in miracles. Indeed the time we live in are evil, as aforementioned, and unique in its evilness, with nothing equal to it in all of our history which had been painted with our blood, but also our salvation could come unexpected, and the defeat of our arch enemies could also be unique, as long as endurance would not fail us under the burden of the calamities, and distresses which are heavy to bare.

Part B

7. The tales of the malicious deeds

A. The looting and robbery

The Bolsheviks had nationalized the entire Lithuanian land, the vast structures, the factories and the merchant houses, they had confiscated the safe boxes, the deposits, the goods, they had decreased the apartments, had arrested the suspects and the speculators, had removed the bourgeois together with the estate owners and the “fists” [Kulaks]⁴⁵, considered dangerous by them. In one word: our souls had been satiated with sorrow and distress even in the times of the Bolsheviks – but the latter not only hadn’t segregated the Jews, nor had they persecuted them very much, but we had received full rights and prestigious positions among other things. Also, the properties of the middle class had been left alone, and even more so, the properties of the poor, and even the properties of the rich had been sometimes left untouched, unless the owners had been on suspects’ lists. And to such an extent did matters changed to the worse for the Jews when the Germans entered our town! The Lithuanian Partisans⁴⁶ became stormy and rowdy, and first grabbed the properties and the hard work of the Jews, and not as thieves or robbers at night who wish to hide their actions, they simply robbed and crushed, achieving all without the slightest effort, in the light of the sun, in the open. They wandered around the streets of the town, sometimes together with the Germans soldiers, entered the homes of the Jews and behaved as if they were the owners. As aforementioned, they first looted the properties of the escapees and the ones who were “emptied” [exiled by the Russians]. After that they hardly missed any Jewish home, and any missed Jewish homes not visited by them, was a rare exception. However, the behavior of the Lithuanians- the robberies, was, well-known to be to the discontent of the Germans. And in one event few Partisans and armed police officers arrested a number of Jews with belongings they forced them to carry. And when they arrived the prison house, the Germans officers attacked the Partisans and the police officers and beat them up, and the prisoners were set free along with their belongings. Apparently, they resented the fact that the robbers acted on their own without asking for permission. And as a result, the Germans had issued an order forbidding robbery, and requiring that every robbery should be reported to the German police, and only the properties and the belongings of the escapees and emptied houses did they transfer to the Partisans’ center. But even so, the disposition of the Jews was so desperate, and the depression was so deep, that none of us even thought about rising against the robbers, who did not stop the robberies. None of us thought to go and complaint before the Germans. One of the reasons for the order was surely that the Lithuanians left nothing of the properties of the Jews, except the froth, as aforementioned, and their leaders, who were far too independent would take possession of all. As far as for the Jews, surely it was revealed and known that the situation was such that there was no justice, and no judge, and that sooner or later the Germans themselves would begin the looting and the extermination, and not only our properties, but also our lives would be ownerless.

In one of those horrible days few Germans entered our house and asked for mattresses: we gave them the mattress from our son’s bed, which we had repaired for our neighbor Tzikin, the pilot, and we suggested that they went to the house of our brother-in-law, Zilberman, who as aforementioned, had been sent along with his family to the U.S.S.R, and on his doors the Bolsheviks had put a seal. Those Germans were pleasant people, and we thought that under their wings and thanks to them we could also enter and take few things from the house. We

⁴⁵ Written as a sort of a revolutionary term: that is to say: not only the wealthy farmer who relied of exploiting work but also the trader and the moneylender who exploited the ones who work the land.

⁴⁶ As a formal organization they were called “the Lithuanian Activist Front” – Lietuviu Aktivistu Frontas: their first groups gathered in the fall of 1940, driven by their opposition to Lithuania to be included in the Soviet Union. They were helped and backed by the Abwehr, the espionage services in the German army. When the Germans entered Lithuania, their true essence was revealed: they were the ones who specialized in killing Jews.

found the door already open, maybe by some other Germans or by the guard, an awful woman, who immediately befriended the Partisans [the murderers of all the Jews in Lithuania]. We gave the Germans a good mattress and various other things, and them, who happened to be good and honest people, allowed us to take as much as we wanted from the things which had once belonged to our brother-in-law. Unfortunately, my wife and I only took few things from all the “assets” which my wife’s sister and her family had left behind, due to the following misfortune. I left my wife behind so she could organize the remaining things as much as possible, and I took a suitcase full of dresses and I came home. As I entered my house, at the bedroom, I found four robbers, with Partisans’ ribbons on their arms⁴⁷, half witted, apparently from the near villages, who had not known me, and in their hand a “paper” [“document”] who allegedly granting them the right to take from the Jews five “full” suits, that is to say, our gowns, pajamas, and slippers were considered full suites in their eyes, for which the Partisans had no proper clothes. And since had not been home, they opened our closet themselves and choose three of my newest suits (one of which I only wore at the tailor’s when he measured me) and the new suit which belonged to my son. Also, they took seven shirts, ten pairs of socks and three pairs of shoes. When I entered the bedroom, all was already packed with the help of a rope they brought with them, and the robbers, half witted, pretended to obey the law, pursuant to the permission they had; and the head of the hooligans dared even to leave me with a pretend voucher, stating that they had taken four full suits from Dr. Levin (we had talked with them about the escapee Dr. Levin and so it was obviously wrong). However, why did they take four suits? That is to say that several items they had already brought from somewhere else, and a whole suit, that is according to their opinion as aforementioned with shirts and socks and shoes. Surely as for the shirts and the socks they insisted, was wrong, and as an addition to the suits they had already taken, more of those and less shoes, as they did not find any more shoes. But still, if they were a little bit wrong, I could live with that, as I was afraid to negotiate with them, because four large young strong men can make me afraid. And secondly, I was afraid that would open a beautiful little leather suitcase, which had been full of silver and gold jewelry belonging to us and our brother-in-law, which had been standing in the corner on the floor, and which drew the attention of one of the robbers, but due to my card which had been stapled to the suitcase, he probably concluded that it contained drugs, and that was for the better! The robbers left our house with the German salute [the hand rising for Hitler], as the intelligent who believed in H. [Hitler, Damn him] – and I had lost some clothes and belongings, which I would not be able to replace or to find in a long time, and which, if I had them now, I could have lived from their remuneration for a period of six months. Therefore, due to this incident, which had taken a lot of my time and my mental state, and as the evening drew closer, I did not go back to the house of my brother-in-law in order to continue and save his belongings. And on the next day the Partisans hurried and came, apparently called upon by the aforementioned guard, and they took many coats, dresses, linens, rugs, duvets, tools, houseware from around the house and kitchen ware, and so on and so forth – the belongings of rich people – a lot of luggage! A big part of the bounty was received, knowingly and secretly, “whether someone knew or did not know”, by the female guard, which later opened a shop in her house in order to sell her part in the bounty. And in that way, almost of the houses of the Jews were facing destruction by the Lithuanians and Germans who came along, or who “worked” alone on their own.

On the night of the thirtieth day, six people entered: five Lithuanians and one German, to the house of Dr. R-K., the former tenant of our brother-in-law, and took from him a pocket watch, a table clock, one fountain pen, 18 rubles and some of the clothes belonging to the sons of my brother-in-law, clothes which his wife had hidden in the closet. After that, as promised when they entered, they took him to the prison house. It is easy to guess the state in which this weak man was in, a man who had been often afraid even without a solid reason. With his sick legs and with weak knees from the fear to be shot (as he told later) he went with them until they have reached Daruis-Girenas⁴⁸ Street. There, they met an officer who ordered them to release Dr. R. for the moment. When I

⁴⁷ The ribbons were straps of cloth, usually white, with or without the initials of the seal of their authorities.

⁴⁸ Darius and Girenas, two Lithuanian pilots who flown from the USA to Lithuania [without any stops, in the competitive spirit of the Thirties] and were brought down – as the story went in Lithuania – in German territory.

think about this event, I believe it all was a tragicomedy of some simple robbers, who were willing to “dirty their hands” for the amount of eighteen rubles and some light property, and that the officer was also one of the “players” who pretended to be part of the authorities, and the meeting was arranged. This fake arrest really frightened Dr. R. and he, of course, did not try to protest or to later complain as he thought he had escaped from near death. I goes without saying that I cannot describe and detail all the robberies which took place, not even a small portion of them, because, as I said before, there was almost not one Jewish home in which the robbers had not entered, and not only once, but several times: “That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten” [Joel 1, 4]. Dr. R. was again visited by the robbers and they took the only table and three chairs from his dining room. The robbers did not pay attention to the fact that, without these pieces of furniture, their owners will not be able to live a normal and regular lives. However, what did they care about the normal and regular lives of the Jews? The robbers came to our place several times too: as aforementioned, we were first visited by the mattress’s seekers, then came the suits takers, then some Germans appeared and they were first and demanded that we and our neighbor Gitz should give them our radios, before those had been confiscated from all Jews. One of them wanted to take also one of our few suitcases, but an elderly German told him that they needed to remain “decent” (there are some like those left in the old generation). On the fourth time Lithuanians came along with few Germans and took one of our two beds along with its mattress. And on the fifth time, before we had left our house to the ghetto, we experienced the climax of the robberies and looting as the inspection committee for the items allowed to physicians in the ghetto (as I will later tell you).

Substantial loot was found by the Germans and the Partisans at the houses which had once belonged to Dr. Brumberg and Dr. Swich, who succeeded escaping to the U.S.S.R, as they had participated in a committee examining army recruits, and for that they were granted permissions to enter the U.S.S.R. Those two physicians and their wives too, had been earning fine salaries: one had been a dentist and the other one, a pharmacist, had earned fine salary as well, and the earnings had been spent on clothes, provisions and medical supply. And so, their pantries, closets and basements were full of various goods, and the medical supply at their offices could have lasted for at least a few good years. For example, Dr. Swich had provisions of cast and bandages which would have lasted almost ten years. Very scares and valuable supplies in our time. Also, in his house they found clothes and fabrics, and the Germans who were present during the property confiscation said that, judging from the quantities, one might assume the good physician had been a speculator and not a physician. Apart from these items they also found all various food provisions in the houses of these physicians. All of these were looted by the Lithuanians and the Germans. And the literature and medical supplies were transferred to the polyclinic deposit, which had swallowed the “treasures”, that immeasurable wealth, of the Jewish physicians (and I will tell you more about it below); and the polyclinic deposit was also built with the help of the House contents of Dr. Levin, who also had earned a good salary, and had a rich library and various medical machines, and he, as one of the pillars of the Bolsheviks community in Shavli, had escaped to the U.S.S.R along with his family and had left abundance of wealth at home. Yes! There had been many Jews who had been earning good salaries and had nice houses, nice things, and cultural lives. And then, suddenly, the storm came and uprooted everything. And yet again it was proven to us that all of our deeds in foreign countries had been like spider’s webs.

B. The hardship and the forced labor

This is of the one sharp decree of which blade became blunt lately, which had originally seemed awful and horrible. Jews had been haunted like dogs on the streets, and their homes had been broken into; and with scolding, threats and blows they had been forced to hard physical labor, to perform loathed labors for free and even without food. “The parasite Jews, always living of the backs of the people and who suck the essence of lives from the good citizens, are finally forced to pay with their sweat for the right to sit in this country and breathe its air, and

for the right to live in it even as a dog and a crow”. It was awful to see the horror in which the Jews lived, when the “kidnapers” turn out to take people to work. Whoever could would have hidden in the most distant rooms, in the attics and under the beds, in order to escape from the coarseness and the evil of the takers, the criminal fist and the whip. Unless these conditions had occurred, the Jews would have not avoided hard work, and in our houses, we had all become woodchoppers, and water drawers, and our wives had become cooks and janitors. Also, here, at first, the workers were not sure, if after the labor they would have returned to their homes, or to the prison house. I remember when we had still lived in our house, two Partisans had come into our house and had sent me and our neighbor, who had lived down the hall, to take broom and sweep the streets and similar works. I had told them that I was a physician and that my work was more honorable than sweeping the streets, so they had let me go. After that matters gotten a little better. The Germans began seeing the benefits of the Jewish work and so their attitude became a little more human, and the Jewish workers got used to their jobs and even began earning a salary, a small one, even less than a half compared with the salaries of the Christians, but the fact was, that now they received compensation for their work, and not everything was for free. And so now the habitants of the ghetto work at the city hall, the hospitals, at the various institutes as woodcutters, at the aerodrome⁴⁹, at the mines of the country, on the floors of the town streets as “black” workers. And various expert and skilled labors such as watchmakers, hat makers, tanners, tailors, glove makers and similar jobs in workshops, which they were allowed to arrange in town under the close supervision of pure Germans, in their home offices. In all of these places the Jews work willingly, as the positions give them some level of security that they would not be moved to other locations outside of Shavli. Here they are already organized in the ghetto and in their various work places, and so they do not face calamities in the near future. As opposed to idlers who are always in danger from the Germans and the Lithuanians, which generally leave the remaining survivors alive, as ghosts, because they need their labor, especially the labor of skilled workers, which are not to be found among the Lithuanian citizens. There is one other important privilege, to which everyone is aspiring, to receive a job outside of the ghetto, for the possibility of obtaining variety of foods they are able to sneak into the ghetto, where the hunger is great even for bread, and more even so for meat, butter and so on and so forth.

Because of the security the jobs provide and the aforementioned advantage, an advantage of which I will talk about in details later, many honorable women lately made fictive [fake] contracts with their Christian acquaintances to work for them as servants. It is worth noting that some of them actually worked as servants, and their husbands saw that as a normal thing: for the rights they receive due to their fake job, why not make it a real service, an actual job, even if they work without a salary? Surely the Jews are now abandoned, and many of the educated Lithuanians agree to that, that their Jewish acquaintances serve them as true servants. This kind of work out of good will and without a salary was banned recently as the deceit was discovered, and due to the heightened strictness, which the Germans began enforcing on Jews – a fact that brought an order that starting from the eight hour in the morning, and until the fourth hour in the afternoon no Jew should be found and seen in town.

It is worth noting and commend the deeds of Dr. Jasaitis on behalf a known number of Jewish physicians. He took a great effort to receive a permit from the district commissar for six Jewish physicians, to work as “laboratory staff” in the various institutes in town. To treat Aryan patients was strictly forbidden, but as far as working in the laboratory, the commissar was more lenient, and permitted. I was one of these lab technicians, and I should state that Jasaitis had been always fond of me, he had been the one appointing me to the director of the central polyclinic. Surely it is hard to assume that his fondness of Jewish physicians was his only reason to receive the permit from the Commissar⁵⁰. Carious complex factors were at play and caused Jasaitis to implement this project. Jasaitis had been known as an honest man who had treated Jews well in general; in this tendency he was surely influenced by his “leftist” wife, daughter of a known “leftist” in the past (Advocate Lukauskis), who had

⁴⁹ The airport, the military, about six km, south-east from the center of Shavli.

⁵⁰ The Gebietskommissar, the “district commissar” mentioned above.

belonged to the Lithuanian elite, the ones handling of the opinion that the Germans have gone too far [that is to say, exaggerated] with the Jews, and that the latter are punished more severely than their sins deserve, even if it is assumed they have sinned. One could also assume that Jasaitis is a wise man foreseeing the future, and who is not certain that the Germans would win the war. And perhaps he would need recommendations from the Jews in due time; and if, and when the day of judgement would come, the days of recompense [according to Hosea 9, 7] he would be able to claim that he had labored and had advocated on behalf of the Jews. However, the analysis of the reasoning and factors is useless: it is a fact that in that troubled time, a man had paid his debt and had tried to benefit the Jews, in a time when most of our former friends had been afraid even to be courteous to us. His deed warrants a special attention, as a former officer of the Bolshevik regime, he is not short of being suspicious already, and yet he went to the German authorities in order to plead with them on behalf of the Jews, despite the danger of being a suspect of being a Jewish advocate, a matter that could have brought him to his end? And yet he did what he did. Perhaps because of this reason he had stood halfway and had not advocated that we would get paid for our work and had done this deed only at the very end, as we did not receive even the lowest salary for our work. Maybe because of this reason he had not fought with the required vigor against the evil Linkevicius, the mayor who had opposed the idea of compensating us, citing that such an expense had not been accounted for in the municipal budget. In any case, there we were, six physicians starting their unpaid work, and running around ruining our shoes in vain, and still content to an extent, because of the factors mentioned above: the freedom from the forced labor in the aerodrome and the likes. and the possibility of obtaining supplies in town. A concern of all the occupants of the ghetto now who are doomed to degeneration due to malnutrition.

And the jealousy of our friends, the rest of the Jewish physicians, is full to the uttermost [Ezekiel 23, 32]! Surely, we had tried to arrange an ambulatory in the ghetto, a shelter for the physicians who did not have a job in town. But the “pedigree” of the ambulatory work in the ghetto was lesser than those of the institutes in town. And thus a job in the latter could not provide as a sufficient shield against the Germans attempt one day to take the physicians to different positions, or to take them away entirely “outside of the camp” as had been the case in Kaunas where they had killed several physicians, and even more, thus the ambulatory work in the ghetto could not be relied upon, and would not save them on the day of wrath and fury. The matter was that the workers in the ghetto had no opportunities to go into town and return with contrabands [selected goods] bread, butter, meat and other basic and cheaper vegetables from town, compared to the ghetto where these goods were bought from speculators (as I will detail below). And the jealousy of the physicians grew especially now, as we began to receive small remuneration for our work due to the request of the work police, that every Jewish worker must receive compensation equal to a portion of a Christian salary, and not work for free. Regarding the attitude Dr. Jasaitis had towards me, it is worth noting, that it had always been a positive one, as he had known me as the director of the wards of the internal and contagious diseases at the municipal hospital for sixteen and a half years, (a short time of those years he had worked there under my supervision as a lab technician), and as a “successful lecturer” in the medical society and as a known author of medical articles; however, after his return from Moscow this attitude had become even more positive, as in Moscow he had learned about my brother – a famous professor there – (who had not been in Moscow then as he had been in a scientific delegation to Central Asia, where the miners had suffered from “Silicosis”⁵¹, a disease under his expertise: the health of the workers), and beside that he delivered me warm regards from my old friend with whom I had studied in Paris, Dr. Tanievski, as we had both “prepared” ourselves to the anatomy examinations and had become trusted friends – and now he was the substitute manager of a hospital named after the famous “Botkin” in Moscow. Those two details may come to my advantage in due time.

The tale of Jenishkely:

⁵¹ Silicosis, a disease popular among miners and mine workers, who inhale into their lungs more than allowable cliff dust.

Regarding our forced work, a disaster occurred that forced us to rest for two weeks. Our only son had not been a doer, to say the least. He took after my fathers of the Talmudic colleges – and also from the fathers of my wife – sluggish people – of known passive nature. Recently he has not succeed finding a proper work as many of his friends has around town, and so he has chosen the hard work to the aid of those moving to the ghetto. He has been busy in this work for few weeks, almost from the day in which he, by a miracle, returned from Vilnius and until we moved into the ghetto; when I got out of prison – I will provide the details further on – our soul was full sated [Psalms 123, 4] from disturbances and distress until we had no strength in us, and our turn came to enter the ghetto. Nine consecutive days we wondered and moved without finding a comfortable home to rest in (after my tortures in the prison house) and a shelter for our belongings which rolled under the bare sky and in a foreign wood barn, where some indecent people consumed them completely. I was sleeping in the house of Zilberman the teacher. The seventh in the room. My wife “spent her time” in the Yezuber home, relatives of her, where it was extremely crowded – and our son lived with some of his friends. Even in those times our son did not succeed in finding work, and was dragging after us, waiting in order to help us organizing our soon to be home which was near the administration of the ghetto, and with the transfer of our belongings which were scattered everywhere, into this home, which was promised to us every day now, but no avail. At last, some people not related to our police, who had put very little efforts into finding homes for the physicians due to an incident that took place (I will detail about it later on). A home suitable, which had been occupied by nasty nobodies from Taurage, who had been offered another home, perhaps even more comfortable, but not suitable for a physician due to its plain hallway. After various tales and a very long negotiation, we managed to receive this home for a compensation amounted to two hundred rubles (and a cup of butter!) despite of the opposition from the previous female tenant’s son, who attempted to exploit and blackmail us. Plenty of sorrow had been brought to us later on by this jewel, and as an evil person he had revenged us in a disgusting manner. And the tale unfolded as following: Teddy, our son, finally had brought to an end our “wondering” from one place to another, to our new home, and on the following day, he intended to go into town and ask for work, or at least work at the repairs of the road and sidewalks. And at the time, cops and Partisans came into the ghetto in order to find workers who would be relocated to the surroundings of the city of Jenishkely [Joniskelis]⁵², because from there to Zeimeli [Zeimelis]⁵³ the train tracks had needed repair. It is obvious that I, and especially my wife preferred that our son would have worked in town, nearby, where he would have been able to return home every day, to eat and sleep, and he would have been under our supervision; and so we were happy when the police skipped our “plain” house, which inferior to all the other houses, but our happiness was cut short! Suddenly, the villain who had wanted to exploit us for the house of his mother appeared, accompanied with a police man, and pointed at our son as a young man who was qualified to work, and the policeman added his name to the list of the workers destined to leave to Jenishkely. The separation was very hard, especially after the horrible tortures we suffered, since at the beginning of the war our son had been arrested in Vilnius, and we had not known of his whereabouts for a long time. We found a little comfort in the promise of the authorities that the work in Jenishkely would only last for five days, and so when our son left, he did not take enough cloths and underwear, and did not equip himself with items he may need, because, what are five days? The five days had passes, ten days had passed, and no sound and no answer! The representatives admitted that the work may take even two months! My wife, who had been sick due the various events and troubles of her family, and our own troubles, was not able to contain her sorrow, and her illness became fatal. Our troubles were multiplied [according to Isaiah 15, 9] by the fact that some of the workers in Jenishkely were able to send news about their situation, and complain in the notes they sent their relatives about the hard work and the bad conditions, and from our son shut thou up the vision [according to Daniel 8, 26]. Many concerns bother us which kept the sleep away from our eyes: perhaps he was sick, perhaps he was transferred to a different

⁵² Joniskelis, in the mouths of its Jews, about 60 km north-east to Shavli.

⁵³ Usually Zeimeli, in the mouths of its Jews, about 30 km from Joniskelis, north to the border with Latvia.

location, perhaps he was treated badly by the “manager”. Also, he did not have enough clothes and underwear and the amount of money he took with him was so little. The representatives stated then, that on the first day (5/X) [1941] they are waiting for some of the workers who went to Jenishkely to return and bring back with them items for everyone for a longer period of time. The perspective was that all of those who were in Jenishkely would remain there for a long time, which was very sad. We thought it was a disaster to stay away from our son for such a long period of time, and without knowing anything about his state, and especially that we had already suffered and were distressed once when he had remained in Vilnius, and then the worries for his wellbeing and his fate had almost drove us crazy. Surely, all of our lives now are filled with endless worries which put our endurance, and our patience, to the test every day. We are being put to the trial every day, and we do not know when we would stop, or when we would not be able to control and restrain ourselves, until we “explode”.

And suddenly a miracle we did not see coming happened! The Germans had decided to start some works in the aerodrome [airport] square and needed workers to do so. They brought their demand to the Lithuanians, and those were forced to bring back all the Jews who were sent to Jenishkely. Surely without this demand, the workers in Jenishkely would have stayed there for a very long time, and perhaps they would have not returned at all. The conditions there were even worse than at the prison house. Thirteen days they lied down in sorrow [according to Isaiah 50, 11] on straw scattered on the floor of a destroyed house, which had been full of mold. Fifteen, twenty in one room. The well was far from the house, and so water was an expensive “commodity”, and they had not washed their faces or hands. For a few days there were no woods to make fire, and so they had suffered from the cold. There were not enough underwear and even if there was, there was no privacy to change, and to keep the clothes they took off. To make a long story short, the hygiene conditions were very poor, the food was in a scant measure that is abominable [Micha 6, 10] and the work was hard, and there was much of it, they would have surely not been able to endure it for a long time. And suddenly after thirteen days they brought back all the people they sent to Jenishkely, and they returned to Shavli. It is worth noting that they were first brought to the aerodrome, and from there they were sent home, with the condition that they would return to the aerodrome square every day to work. And so our only son came home safe and sound, with the only items missing, two leather gloves which the Partisans took from his pocket, and my beautiful pocket knife which I had received as a gift from the drugs laboratory “Germa Pha” and which had I given to my son when he had left for Jenishkely. This pocket knife was taken by the Partisans demanding a tax as the workers left Jenishkely: they were forced to give them all the watches and pocket knives, and from one worker they even took a new leather jacket. These were their farewells from the workers, and how they thanked them for their work. Together with all the men who came back from Jenishkely was, as aforementioned, my son – and our eyes were lightened! Our son worked after that in the aerodrome. The distance walking and the hard work wearied our son very much; and so, we tried to find an administrative position for him. Our efforts were successful, and he received a position of a policeman in the ghetto, that is to say keeping the order. Surely this position requires strictness, threats, “bitter throwing”, insults, and our idealist son is not able to “force the conscience” of people, and so he is not happy with his position, but we are very happy: our son is with us, and many times during the day he comes home, and his work, as we can see it, is not very hard. He worked as a carrier, as a worker in Jenishkely, as a worker in the aerodrome. It turns out that now he has the privilege of resting a bit. But he seeks real work and is not satisfied with the policeman work.

C. The arrests

This calamity had already existed as a leprosy plague in the body of the Jewish population even in the days of the Bolsheviks. The best of our people from the Zionist parties and from the press had been arrested;

respectable traders had been arrested, their failure had been the gratification from their safe deposits or goods that had been confiscated; they had arrested suspects of speculation, suspects of contra-revolution along with many Christians, that had actually been dark [reactionary persons], who had rushed, for example, to cause pogroms to the Jews; The Bolsheviks had arrested and exiled to the U.S.S.R people that they had deemed dangerous. They had followed their own method: the enemies of the revolution had been deserving to be arrested and removed from the population, “and society in general”. But the search after these enemies had required some degree of investigation, intelligence gathering, deliberation, not necessarily legal per se, - but at least investigation and intelligence gathering for the needs of that hour, of some kind, among the leaders. This was not the case regarding the arrests of the Jews by the Germans and their collaborators, or their serving minions, the Lithuanian Partisans. Surely, they too had a method, but their method did not require any investigation or intelligence gathering. It was as crude as could be: any Jew deserved to be eliminated, and if that was not possible, at least arrested to an imprisonment involving tortures of the body and soul, which served as prefaces for the oncoming annihilation, either naturally, or by the hands of the murderers. And so, as soon as the Germans appeared, the hunting of the Jews had begun, on the streets and in the houses and everywhere else for that matter, without any age differences, starting at fifteen years of age, and ending with the elderly. And all had been sent prison houses after unbearable tortures, as a cat torturing a mouse trapped in his claws. The Germans arrived Shavli, as aforementioned, on the twenty sixth day in the month of June, around dusk. On the twenty seventh and twenty eighth the arrests were still isolated, incidental, but starting from the twenty ninth, the arrests had become common. It is estimated that about one thousand people were arrested in Shavli, elderly and youth. On the twenty eighth day of the month of June, a Saturday, I saw on the sidewalk by our house Rabbi [Avraham-Yitzhak] Nachumovski who was dressed up, with Saturday’s garments, surrounded with policemen and Partisans [pro-Nazis, the murderers of the Jews] who were leading him of course to the prison house. On the same day, as it had been later reported, the chief Rabbi [Rabbi Arie] Bakset [Bashket], the son-in-law of Rabbi [Isaac] Rabinovitch, and the son of Rabbi Nachumovski were also arrested, the latter had been a young ill man, with signs of pulmonary tuberculosis. Probably the murderers had chosen the day of the Sabbath on purpose, as there was no better way to mentally torture the symbols of the ultra-orthodox Jewry, the ones who are so afraid of the lord, but forcing them to desecrate the Sabbath. On the thirtieth of the month of June – a tumultuous hour; days of plague and calamity on which many arrests were made – the Germans gathered eighty Jews on the yard of the department store which had formerly belonged to the Shogam brothers, and they lined everybody in one line with their faces to the wall, and after torturing them to satiation, terrorizing them to death, as if they were going to shoot them, they were led to the prison house. A small portion of the prisoners, whom various institutes spoke on their behalves, were freed, but the majority remained in prison. And who can tell and who can speak [according to Psalms 73, 15] about the tortures of the mind and body of the prisoners under the tyranny of the Germans and the Lithuanians who had taken so much pleasure from the possibility of humiliating to the ground, the Jewish prisoners, to reduce them as much as they had desired, and beat them up for the smallest matter, and for nothing for that matter, without signaling not even the most educated among them, physicians and lawyers, etc. Who could one speak of the hard work under the threatening whips and fists of the heartless, of the food which was given so scarcely, causing degeneration and which could [only barely] continue support of life and growth; the sleep in the iron bed without any mattress, or on a wooden planks hard as a stone; the sleep on the cold floor in such crowding, that if one turned around to the other side, all of the others had been obligated to do the same. Add to that the oppressive military discipline which depresses the soul, the horrible humiliations, reserved only for the Jews, such as the forced chore of cleaning the feces houses [toilets], which on the first days had been forced to this loathsome chore [according to 1 Samuel 15, 9] with their bare hands. And who was forced to do so? People of white-collar professions: lawyers, pharmacists, school principals, even one physician who had found his way there incomprehensively. It is assumed, that when they had entered the house of Dr. Gitz and had ordered him for forced labor, he had been confused, and had not opened his mouth to tell them he was a physician, as I had done

when they had tried sending me to work; he had followed the “kidnappers” as lamb taken to the slaughter house, and after the work, they led him to the prisoners’ house. There he surely by nature began to argue, but it was too late, with a Yeshiva style, and with the gestures of the typical Jew, and so he had been taken to their pits [according to Lamentations 4, 20] with no escape or shelter.

Beside of the aforementioned humiliation, the Germans forced the prisoners to do various types of exercises – a clever invention to entertained themselves and to make fun of the ridiculous Jews and the movements of the ridiculous elderly Jews, who had never attempted exercise – besides that they would command the prisoners to sing folk Jewish songs to them, before they went to sleep, after an entire day of gruesome work, which had exhausted the body. These unimaginable tortures had depressed the soul. To fulfill what had been said: “For there they had led us captive and had asked of us words of song, and our tormentors had asked of us mirth, Sing us one of the songs of Zion”, and also: “he that singeth songs to a heavy heart” [Proverbs 25, 20]. In the prison house they had also tortured Rabbi Bakset and his son-in-law and Rabbi Nachumovski: the had put them along with several vile people, something that had not been hard to find between the tormented and depressed prisoners; after they had disheveled their beards and the hair on their head, and had prepared them for pictures – “delicacies” and decent material for “The Stormer”⁵⁴ – and they had taken their pictures, front and back, and had done their best that the pictures would turn out as caricatures⁵⁵, ever more ridiculous, so the Germans could laugh their hearts out and say: “these are the teachers of Israel, the Talmudic frauds and the con men; these evils are the leaders of the spiritual Jews!”

After the humiliation and shame, the calamities and the insults engulfing the Jewish prisoners for several weeks, all of them were led out of Shavli to a very secret location which was frightening, threatening due to its secrecy. Where were they led? Are they still alive? Were they led to work in Prussia, in the Klaipeda district, in the surroundings of Trakai?⁵⁶ Those were the rumors we heard then. The mute secret is surrounded by fog – and the discoveries of various assumptions and rumors about their place of labor, without any trace of clear information about that place, had risen a terrifying suspicion, and bitter doubts in one’s heart. Yes! Many living widows and many living orphans, many bereaved fathers who have remained, and their souls have been yearning for so long to receive some information, even insignificant, about the fate of their providers or their son. However, it is possible that the yearning and the waiting in vain are far better than the naked truth of this matter. But the assumption that the prisoners who had vanished from the prison house in Shavli had been led to another place of labor is unfounded to begin with: Rabbi Bakset who had been old and sick, the weak Rabbi Nachumovski and his son with the tuberculosis had not been capable of any kind of physical work, and they had surely gotten rid of unnecessary mouths, and due to the fact that the destroyer had been allowed to annihilate, sabotage, he would not distinguish between a young Jew and an elderly Jew, and his hand would not be offered to one prisoner over another. Yes! If we mourn the ones who had left and had not returned, our mourning would not be in vain.⁵⁷ And who were all those prisoners? Surely the best of us were among them: the public business men, the educated, the lawyers, middle aged people, entrepreneurs and men of deeds. In addition, the Jewish community in Shavli had been reduced and dwindled to a large extent, almost by half. And from the nine thousand Jews who had been in Shavli before the war, only five thousand were left, and the others had escaped, “emptied” [“exiled”], died before their time, like most of our brothers in Lithuania, who had become our Valley of Death, and had been defeated without being guilty in any way. Woe for us that we had given up on the salvation of the Lord of Israel who had gone bankrupt and had been beaten on all fronts. There is no precedent in all of our cursed history for our current

⁵⁴ Der Sturmer, an anti-Semitic animated weekly newspaper which was edited by Julius Streicher. Its circulation rose from several thousands to half a million copies before World War II.

⁵⁵ One of those pictures had been saved and printed in the pictures appendix of the book “The Jews in Lithuania”, Volume D, published by the publishing House of the Association of the Lithuanians Jews in Israel, Tel Aviv 5744.

⁵⁶ A town at a distance of approximately 25 km west, a little south from Vilnius.

⁵⁷ They were executed in the forest Kuzai, about 15 km west of Shavli.

calamities and tortures, and there had not one who would avenge our vengeance neither in heaven nor on earth, even the Americans do not pay an eye for an eye to the Germans who are in America for our troubles and outdistresses. For us there is no justice and no judge.

D. My arrest

My arrest was of a special nature. I was not among those Jewish citizens of Shavli who were haunted like wild animals and were thrown into the prison house, just because they were Jews had fallen into the hands of the vile. I was a sinner, a man with a severe crime, so severe, that only the prison could have atoned. I am the man that hath pledged my heart [according to Jeremiah 30, 21] and had told the “king of Jews” Stankus⁵⁸ sharp words and I had tried teaching him ethic regarding his strict attitude towards the Jews. Hard words I had told him, and he placed me in prison: apparently the story of Ahab and Micaiah ben Yamala – a comparison, from a pure theoretic point, because if he is the “king of Jews”, as he is called by the Christians, I have no pretention to be a prophet, but if my actions had been arrogant, I am entitled to think that my arrest was to a known extent a punishment for the desire to do something for the good of the people, and for my attempt to fight, on a small scale, like Don Quixote in his times, with windmills.

A sad day, ready for troubles, was that day, the fifth of the month of September [1941]. The sad news about the fate our brothers in Kleme⁵⁹ and the death of the cousin of my wife Biria (I will detail further on), the illness of my wife which worsened due to this information, my deeply moved spirit and my angry nerves from all the tale, the worries, the fears and the lack of mental rest; the method of the Germans to always bitter our lives and invent decrees and tortures for us on each and every day; all of these are sufficient as background for the incident that had occurred that day.

On the day I have mentioned, before I entered the office of the clerk in charge of the matters of the Jews: a young man, thin and slim, his height short, with a face of a gypsy; he was sitting at his desk discouraged, perhaps drunk, as he was used to, maybe tired of the sleepless night he had had, a thing which he had been used to as well. As costumed, he did not look in the eyes of the person he was talking to, did not invite the person to sit down, and despite the fact that he had known me well (I am very sure I had treated one of his children at the hospital once) and I had visited him several times at his office, still he treated me with the indifference he treated all of his visitors, apparently with the purpose of demonstrating his authority, and ruling, or perhaps because the Jew is an “outcast”. I went to him with a request to allow a certain Reba who had already been in the ghetto, who had been working as our servant, to exit the gates of the ghetto for several hours every day in order to do the necessary house works for us, and I gave him the reason that my wife was very ill, and was lying in bed. “There is no need to” – answered Stankus “as you will be moving into the ghetto too soon”. So be it! I said, “But for now we are still living in town, and I have no possibility to cook for myself and even more so, I do not have the possibility to serve my sick wife and to attend to her”. “There is no need!” he grumbled with Lithuanian stubbornness and he waved his hand to show me that the visit was over. Very angry and full of wrath which I did my best to restrain as much as possible, I said to him with seeming ease, as much as my irritated nerves allowed me to: “This unnecessary strictness, what is it good for? Let us assume that three quarters of the Jews in Lithuania would be exterminated, surely one quarter would be left (I had thought then that I had exaggerated, unfortunately I had been wrong) and with this quarter surely the Lithuanians would need to be around and face them. I do not know how it would be with the Germans, but the Lithuanians still would need the living Jews”. As he heard those things, which I did not even finish saying, the “Minister” [appointee] jumped from his chair as he had been bitten by a

⁵⁸ The appointee on behalf of the new municipal Lithuanian government on the matters of the Jews.

⁵⁹ Kleme, in the mouths of its Jews. In the last week of August the Lithuanians finished and murdered the rest of the community.

snake and pounded his fist so forcefully on the table, that the ink and other items on the table began to dance. “So, you are threatening me” – he shouted with rage. “Police clerk” he added, “come here and write a protocol [report] of the threats!” I began to say that I had no intention to threaten him that I simply stated that the Lithuanians and the Jews would sit together once more; but he did not listen to my explanation and repeated his request to the police clerk, who had been in the next room and entered the office, in order to fill the report. The clerk ordered me to go with him to his desk and there he wrote the protocol based on the things I said, and he shrugged when he heard the words: “the Lithuanian would need to live with the remaining Jews”, Stankus considered it as a threat and an offence. I explained my meaning to the clerk, the meaning Stankus had not wanted to hear and I had been interrupted in the middle, that is to say, that I think that the strict attitude towards the Jews is unnecessary, in any conditions, even if we assumed that the Germans, a developed nation, would not need the Jews, but the Lithuanians, who for now are lagging and have little knowledge in trade or industry domains, would still need the talents of the Jews remaining after the war was over.

After the police clerk had finished editing the unclear [protocol], he called Stankus from his office in order to be told what to do with me, but in the meantime, Stankus had left his office. And so, the clerk told me I was free to go. I returned home, and my soul was bent down to the dust [according to Psalms 44, 26] from anger and despair without any boundary. My heart told me that I had put myself in great jeopardy, one which would bring me trouble. I did not mention a word to my ill wife and concealed everything from her. But I told my son about what had happened, and we both remained in a deep embarrassment which burdened us to our last bone. In those days a permit was considered to grant permission to expert physicians allowing them to keep their clinics in town, under the condition that they would sleep in the ghetto. I, myself was among the physicians hoping to receive such permit, having a proper radiology office, and I was promised by Stankus in person, confidently, that I was sure to receive this permit. The prospects of receiving the permit had seemed to be so near implementation, due to the fact that neither Stankus nor we, had foreseen that the Nuremberg⁶⁰ Laws would come into effect and fast, laws forbidding Jewish physicians from treating Christians. We had not believed that it was possible for the laws to be implemented in Lithuania as well. And so, we had hoped to receive the desired permit, for which Stankus had been the sole arbiter. “Now” – I thought – “all my hard work in order to receive the permit would be in vain, Since I had caused Stankus so much rage. Now all hope was lost for me to keep my office in town, and so we would need to prepare to move to the ghetto.” As long as my office was in town, I assumed that they would not touch my library, as I was allowed to keep it as long as my office was in town. Now, that matters turned to the worse due to the aforementioned, and my hopes had been shattered, I decided immediately to begin my preparations for the trip to the ghetto, starting with the organization of the library which contained books in six languages⁶¹, and it was impossible taking them all with me. And so, I had started selecting the more interesting books, the ones I would need in the future. Suddenly the door bell sounded noisily, and as the door was opened, the clerk who had composed the Indictment came in, and asked me to go with him. I immediately understood that I was facing a great calamity, but I restrained myself in order not to alarm my ill wife. I glanced at her quickly and giggled pretentiously, and without a word I left with the clerk. Outside, an automobile had been waiting for me with an additional clerk and a driver policeman. I took the seat I was shown to, next to the clerk with the report, and we began driving from my home via Venclausko Street to Tilzes Street towards Jenishkely [the direction was north]⁶². I asked where we were going, and the clerk answered: “To Stankus at the German Security Police”. My soul was trembling within like a bird who had been caught in a snare. Surely, there is no need to weight words about my state of mind then, which was quite obvious, and especially when the clerk ordered me

⁶⁰ The German Reichstag accepted on September 15, 1935 a law “for the protection of the German blood and the German honor”, intended against the Jews.

⁶¹ Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, French, German and Lithuanian.

⁶² The name of the streets: Venclausko gatve – Venclausko Street; Tilzes, from the name of the town Tilsit, a main street [road] which crosses town from south-west to north-east, from Tilsit to Riga.

to enter the hallway of the German police. My world became dark, I felt panic, I was in a state of some kind of tremor, and my thoughts were confused, not able to replay what had happened, and what was waiting for me; I only knew I was facing a great calamity if I was to be turned into the hands of our mortal enemies. As I sat in the hallway, Stankus came in. I hurried and apologized to him, but he did not pay any attention to me, and when he passed me over in the hallway, sufficed to grumble that all is in the hands of the Security Police now. After a short while I was called into the office, a very spacious room. In one corner the German clerk was sitting, and beside him, his assistant, and across the room Stankus and two more persons, possibly undercover policemen. As I entered the office with shaking knees, I stood embarrassed and confused in the middle of the room. And then the assistant came over, and I vaguely remembered that he had also spoken Lithuanian, and with ridicule he shouted in German: “In the middle of the room!” and he pushed me, “without much ado”, to the wall, beside the clerk, the head of the office, who, after the remark made by his assistant, concluded that I understood German (possibly, he thought this supported his accusation, against an intelligent Jew who understands German) and he asked me immediately: “What did you say today?” In a raging face and scolding voice. Due to my complete lack of strength, and confusion, I answered shortly: “I said that the Lithuanians would need to live with the remaining Jews”. Then, Stankus gave me a note of a German translation of my statement. Despite my extreme embarrassment, I realized that Stankus had castrated my statement about the Germans and had turned it into a verdict in itself, without the context of the rest of what I had said about the Jews, and by that had inserted a dangerous meaning, that I allegedly had not been satisfied with the outcome of the war and the German victory, a fact that could be used against me. Of course, my assumption had been correct, and the head of the department immediately read the translation out loud and then he asked me: “And what did you say about the Germans? That you do not know what would happen to them?” Due to the dizziness overtaking me, I understood that I could not provide long explanations, and that I had not related to the Germans themselves, but only about the Jews, merely expressing my doubts of whether the Germans would reconcile with the Jews, as they are a developed nation and a highly cultured one, and perhaps would insist that they do not need the Jews, as opposed to the Lithuanians, who could learn very much from the Jews in the domains of trade and industry. And so, due to the confusion and the weakness I only answered the last question, that I had not said such things about the Germans and I added that anyone could make a mistake. “Who for example?” The clerk asked me, “Even Mr. Stankus”, I answered in hesitation, “And you?” – “It goes without saying that me too.” As so we spoke for a few moments about trivial things. After which the clerk asked me for my vocation. And when I answered that I was a physician, Stankus added: “And a good one”. The clerk continued and ask about the polyclinic where I had been working, whether it is a private or public one, and when he received from me and from Stankus the desired answers, he ordered me to wait outside. In all of that, I turned to Stankus and asked him that “in the name of my past” he would diminish as much as possible... and I stopped. Of course, I intended to ask for my punishment to be diminished – that is to say, I admitted myself that I had deserved some kind of punishment. This too was naivety, due to the confusion and the disorder in my mind. And so, I went back to the hallway and a German soldier escorted me out and closed the door to the office – “a bad sign that I am arrested”, I thought to myself, and my heart was squeezed as in a pincer. I sat and waited anxiously for the outcome, and any minute seemed as eternity. After a while a young policeman, a rifleman [saulys]⁶³ who had worked in the prison house appeared, and with a commanding voice as a general ordered me to follow him. I turned to exit through the main door as I came in, but he pushed me to the side and ordered me to go directly into the yard. Here, a psychological moment which I would never forget occurred, a moment which serves as a testimony to the state of my mind during this time. As the policeman pushed me into the yard, I set my eyes on a soldier armed with a riffle who was standing by the door in silence. Then, a thought went through my mind that I had been sentenced to death by shooting and that my punishment was to be

⁶³ Sometimes a name for a Lithuanian “bearing weapon”, “saulys” in the name of Israel, from the trustees of the Pro-German-Nazi regime.

implemented immediately. Surely, I had the Germans and the Lithuanians who scared us to death, so it was not for no reason. But I did not have enough time to search my soul and my feelings properly, that the policeman proved me wrong as he ordered, me with his commanding voice to go to the left and exit into the street. Of course, that I felt a relief, but not for long, as the policeman tortured me with his order: "hands to the back!" "Go by the side of the street and not on the sidewalk!" "Do not look back!" "Do not talk to anyone!" And when all his orders were fulfilled, he began rushing me and to shout: "Hurry up! Faster!" On Traku⁶⁴ Street we met Abramovich, the photographer, and I whispered to him: "I am arrested, tell my wife!" but lately he became a little deaf and he did not hear my whisper; and as he nevertheless wanted to know what was happening, he of course went to the policeman with a soft tongue and flattering words, as expected from an old lobbyist, and as expert in begging the authorities as he was, but this expertise did not helped him this time. After a little while suddenly I heard a fearful shout; I turned back, and the policeman was holding a soft leather whip in his hand that he took from his pocket and used in on Abramovich as a punishment for his curiosity. And so the matter had remained an unsolved mystery for him, and of course he did not go to tell my wife about my arrest as it was not clear to him, and he could have not fulfilled my hope to save my wife out of her despair of not knowing what had happened to me, a despair pressing her all night long, taking the sleep from her eyes.

The policeman brought me to the "Prison House for Forced Labor in Shavli"⁶⁵. The gate that opened, to me seemed as a mouth of a great predator swallowing its prey without knowing what it swallowed. It was only my imagination, but to be true, private [subjective] data was gathered about the victims of the prison house. And so I was led to the small office of the prison house, destined to receive the prisoners, and the night shift clerk, as the evening was coming quickly, began writing down on paper, detailed information about me, which I answered his official inquiry. It so happened that the clerk was the husband of one of the servants who had formerly worked in the municipal hospital, and he had known me very well, and had always treated me with respect. He asked me by the way, what had been the reason to my arrest, and I answered that a dispute had occurred between me and Stankus, the appointee for the Jews, and that he had been insulted by my statements. As requested, I gave the clerk my money, my papers, my watch, a fountain pen and the rest of the small items which I found in my pockets; I was then transferred to the next room, where one of the supervisors of the prison house asked me to give him my comb, my shoulder straps and my shoelaces; apparently this was done so that the prisoner will not kill himself by slaughtering with a comb (?) or by hanging himself with the other items. After he felt and search all the garments I had on me, to see if I do not possess any contraband items, and all of these were done with kindness, because he also knew me, as opposed to others, as I had been later told, which during this ceremony were beaten as a "down payment" to what was about to happen next. From the office I was led through the second gate into the internal yard, where the main building of the prison house was located, and the rest of the necessary buildings: barns, kitchens, bath houses, and so on and so forth. In the yard there were many war prisoners, mostly from the Mongolian tribes with their curved eyes and their short stature. They made a depressing impression with their vile look and their inferior souls, because apart from their defeat in the battle field which is painful by itself, they were still starved and tortured from hard work, and they were beaten with evil blows for every strayed step they took off the discipline path, as I later witnessed with my own eyes. As I was told, many of them would be victims to various diseases and the bullets of their oppressors during labor. And there had been an incident at the aerodrome field, of which some protested, and objection had risen from some of the prisoners, they were shot by the Germans in the presence of the other workers.

In prison, room nine or eleven fallen unto me in pleasant places [according to Psalms 16, 6; I was lucky]. I am ashamed to say that I do not remember this detail. My spirit was so low and beaten in prison that I did not even have the patience to read what was written on the door of my room. Just as I passed over the doorstep and

⁶⁴ Traku, which in its south-east side the prison house was located.

⁶⁵ "The Red Prison House", as the people called it, "Dy Royte Turme" in Yiddish.

seven Jewish prisoners were already around me, and their “leader” was Vidutsinsky, who had been for a very long time the secretary of the “community” in Shavli and of the “Ezra” organization when I had been the chairman of their council. Their ears had heard a rumor that a Jewish physician was arrested, but they did not expect to see me, an elderly physician, respectable and quite known in town, and I had always held respectable positions in the municipal hospitals or in various institutes belonging to the municipality. The prisoners began bombarding me with questions about the reason for my arrest, about what was going on in town and in the ghetto, about the news from the front, as information from outside the prison house had not reached them easily. I tried as much as I could due to my depression to satisfy their curiosity, and I was pleased, if I can use this word in relation to the mood I was in then – from the presence of Vidutsinsky in my room, a good friend and a man of actions. And surely, in few moments he began teaching me about the prison house, and the rules of staying there, which were very clear to him as he was already in the prison house for a month. First, he explained to me that it was necessary for me to find a place to sleep, as the evening inspection already passed and soon it would be dark in the room. Beside the wall, two large shelves were organized, beds of wood, in two floors: upper and lower. Vidutsinsky and his neighbor, also a Jew, made room for me between their spots, a place for me to sleep on the upper shelf, and advised me to use my clothes: my suit as a sheet and my coat as a cover, and they lent me a little pillow for my head, if I am not mistaken. I did as I was told, I put my suit as a sheet underneath me, one of my best suits which I had happened to wear on the day of my arrest. I also added half of my summer coat to my sheets, and the other half I left as a blanket, but all of these were in vain: my bed remained hard as a stone and all my limbs were hurting, and sleep “who could talk about it”. But even if my bed would have been superior, I still would have not slept, because all night I loathed myself in my own sight [according to Ezekiel 20, 43] and I blamed myself for three things: first of all, I should have been more careful, and not enter any disputes with Stankus, the one with the power and authority, especially that the timing was very wrong, as I had seen him from far behind, as Dr. Rosenthal had been asking him about some matter with enthusiasm, until even the back of his head had turned red, and Stankus had remained as cold as a stone, until finally he had started showing signs of impatience and anger, and Dr. Rosenthal had come out of his office with great disappointment and grief, and I had gone into his office right after him, another annoying and cheeky Jew, who had the nerve to teach him some morals. Second, I was amazed at myself, of how I even dared to mention the Germans in those days? A dangerous thing that could easily attract the “shortening of days”⁶⁶ behind it. And third, I blamed myself, why had I been so confused and had not been able to explain to the German clerk the meaning of my statements; one could assume, I thought, that if I had explained the meaning of my statements about the Germans, along with the compliment for the German culture, as they do not need the Jews, and the main thing had been missing from my sentence: “what would become of the Germans, I do not know”, that is to say the continuation, the words “related to the Jews” which was the obvious and logic thing to say; I blamed myself that I had not done that, then maybe they would have not found in me iniquity that was sin [according to Hosea 12, 9] and the disaster would have not come on me, a disaster with such unknown outcomes, which brings fear and terror into my mind, because there were many Jewish prisoners who disappeared, and there are not anymore. I have tossed and turned on my hard bed and my heart was sore with oppression of evil and sorrow [according to Psalms 107, 39] which grew even more due to another reason: I left my very ill wife tossing and turning on her death bed. Because of all the calamities and troubles which had come upon her family members, and because of the “trouble of the son” before he had escaped by miracle from Vilnius, the condition of her illness had seriously worsened, and the recent news, about the death of her cousin, had filled up the cup, and had thrown her into her death bed. And so, I was sure that that night when I was in prison, would bring her to contrition [according to Psalms 90, 3] and would [finally] subdue her and she surely would not be able to recover anymore. And so, as I was lying on the hard beams, my main concern was for

⁶⁶ An alliteration in Hebrew and Yiddish as well: Shorten days – which mean death: and in Yiddish: farkirtste yarn-years-days; which was common with the Lithuanian Jews.

the state of my wife and the comfort that I could have been to her, if I was home. Surely, I have blamed myself – her condition had worsened severely, and now, as I am tossing and turning without sleep, now she lies on her death bed in great danger. This and more. I was very sorry, so sorry, that due to her illness she would not be able to try and speak on my behalf and help me, and as our son was young, and not a man of actions, what could he do for me, and to whom could he turn, in order to help me? And so, I was preparing myself to remain in the prison house for long days, or maybe I was going to be dead before that. With those thoughts a deem light began to shine through the two windows of the room, which are divided by iron bars on the inside, and on the outside they are covered with three wood partitions [barriers], two on the sides of each window, and one on top of it, in order not to see what was happening in the yard, but sufficient in order to see a “piece” of sky, and through the cracks, the deem light of the sad morning was seen – those partitions [barriers] had been the invention of the Bolsheviks, as it was explained to me. And soon a loud whistle was heard and then again, and then again. All of the prisoners got up from their beds, sloppy and dispirited, and started putting their clothes on, and Vidutsinsky explained to me that every day at five and a half in the morning, this was the way in which the prisoners were awoken. After a while the prisoners were allowed to leave the room, attend to their nature calls, and wash their hands and faces. Then I had the honor to be acquainted with the infamous toilets, which in the early period of the arrests, the Jewish prisoners had been “honored” cleaning them with their bare hands. But now there are rugs and water, and of course it is easier to implement this “clean deed”. Surely as far as finding water, this was “not necessarily” an easy task. Due to the large number of war prisoners which were in the prison house and the yard, sometimes the required water quantity was not sufficient. Not only that there was not enough water in order to clean the toilets, but sometimes there was not enough water even to wash the hands. The number of the toilets was limited, and so we had to wait in the line. By the way, it is worth noting, regarding the toilets of the prison house, there was one commodity that its mere sight was “priceless vision” “worth more than its weight in gold”, that is to say paper! Newspapers and books are forbidden, letters are banned from being written or received; the Jews were not allowed to receive packages, and so, where would the paper come from? And so, there is a great difficulty to find paper and sometimes, as I had experienced on my own flesh and blood, the torture peaks, until I decided to use one of the handkerchiefs from my pocket, and to wash it immediately under the faucet, when there was water.

The prisoners came back to the room and soon another whistle was sounded in order announce the morning inspection. All the prisoners arranged themselves in two lines as army men, and waited for the clerk, who each morning and each evening, counted the number of the prisoners. He entered and counted: 11 Lithuanians and 8 Jews, took a short look and left. The prisoners remained in their spots in line until a lighter whistle sounded as a signal that the inspection was over.

The daily life began then in the prison room. In anticipation for breakfast which arrived at six and a half in the morning, most of the prisoners began walking back and forth in the room as wild animals in a cage. others began attempting to find some tobacco to smoke, a concern that almost all the prisoners had, which forced them to resort to various schemes. I had no time to examine all of those schemes thoroughly, but one of them was connecting [relation] to war prisoners located in the yard, near the windows. The connection was done through the open windows and the crack in the partitions [barriers]. In our yard there was a young Russian man, sixteen years old, shepherd in his native land, whom the Germans took prisoner along with his herd. Since he was not a soldier and was younger than the army men, they did not leave him with the war prisoners but placed him together with us in our room. This young man was an expert in relating and negotiating with the war prisoners. He was going to the opened window, knock and call in silence: “My friends!” And when an answer was received, the trade would begin: a slice of bread would be thrown into the yard from above the upper partition, and in return, from the yard they would enter through the cracks, tobacco from the butts of a rolled cigar, and cigarettes that had been thrown on the ground by the Germans or another source. This boy also had a talent to “eat for three” and in his spare time, along with few other prisoners, he would hunt lice accumulated in the clothes, and underwear, as the laundry was idle due to the lack of water, and receiving clean clothes and underwear was

postponed until after the soon to be visited bathhouse, as was promised by the supervisors. All of these details and explanations, along with additional information, which I will detail below, about the order and life in prison, and inhabitants, I received from Vidutsinsky who had become an expert in those matters after a month spent in the prison house. At six and a half in the morning we had breakfast: any prisoner received four hundred grams of rye bread, and twenty grams of sugar (to be precise less than the appropriate quantities, because surely there had been people enjoying the reduction on the expense of the prisoners) – that had been the daily dose along with coffee, that is to say, warm water colored with chicory [Cichorium], as much as we pleased. This colored liquid was brought to us in a large Kettle – “and drinking had been like faith without will”. I still did not have a cup, every prisoner had one, but Vidutsinsky tried and succeeded finding one for me.

After breakfast we began to work: first we had to peel potatoes for lunch and dinner. This work was not forced, but a voluntary one. Every day ten prisoners were invited from various rooms on the first floor (and surely from other floors as well) to the room near the kitchen, and anyone who wanted could come. Two of the more able prisoners brought from the basement two sacks full of potatoes. All the peelers received pieces of broken knives and begun the work. I participated in this work for three consecutive days, almost all the potatoes had been rotten, black, “full of eyes” from the sprouts and roots covering them. We threw three quarters of the potatoes on the floor, and barely received a worthy “white” piece, which someone could eat. Those pieces we threw into a large iron barrel, half filled with water; and when finished our work, we washed our hands in the same barrel, and some of us gathered from the floor the peels and the rotten fruits into the sacks and threw them in the garbage can. By the way, I am sure that the war prisoners collected and gathered all garbage contents, and cooked, and ate it, as they were always hungry.

After this free work, the real work began, the hard labor, as this was the “Prison House for Forced Labor”. On the first day of my arrest one policeman came into our room after the potatoes peeling and took me and another Jewish prisoner (Levin), and we were led to the clerks’ dorms, in order to clean one empty dorm which had been deserted and had been filthy for years. In the first room, two women were washing the floor – and as they saw me, they nodded their heads (probably because they had known me), in front of my fellow prisoner. The policeman took us to the second room and ordered us to clean a filthy and rusty bathtub, to remove the mire and the stains from white oven tiles which also seemed to have been deserted a years ago. And finally, we were ordered to arrange the “throne” of this house. This clerk was a decent man and treated us with kindness. He had even tried to find some kind of powder, which remotely helped us removing the stains and the filth from the bathtub. The dirty bathtub, which was filled with rust, was cleaned by both of us. I cleaned the oven, and my friend cleaned and organized the toilet. After this we returned to our room, but we did not expect to rest for a long time. I was yet to taste the real taste of the prison house, even if matters were far better compared to the first period, right after the Germans had arrived. A few moments had passed, and a short rifleman [a sniper, here as a guard] came and took six Jews, including myself, to move some wood. We went outside to the yard and suddenly I received a horrible sharp blow into my right kidney, and I cried from the pain, and I was taken aback. I managed to cry: “I am an old man!” But my cry remained unheeded by the villain, who honored me with the blow, probably because I was a little behind, and did not keep the “ten-two” pace [in pairs, and unanimous rhythm] along with my partner as in a military procession. Until today, as I remember this blow, all my blood boils and sizzles, even more than I had been angry at the time, but I was forced to continue my walk at that pace and to bear my pain and humiliation in silence. The rifleman [the guard] took us to the yard of the dorm, next door to the prison house, along with an empty wagon we carried with us. The wood was there on the slope, and the wagon was left there. In order to load the wagon, we had to carry the wood up the hill, and put it in the wagon. Afterwards, one of us placed himself between the handles, as horse, and had to pull the wagon as the other prisoners pushed it from both sides. This work was hard, especially when it was done under the supervision of riflemen [guards] and Partisans [members of the Pro-Nazis National Activist Front] from town, who had not known us. Those are the ones who torture the Jewish prisoners and beat them for nothing at all, but their evil and hatred of the Jews; It has to be assumed that

the Partisans who worked as volunteers at the prison house, were collaborators in the horrible project of murder and genocide of entire Lithuanian Jewish communities, otherwise what had been the point of these blows for no reason? In the wood yard there was an armed rifleman [guard] with a face of an idiot, and villain, with a constant content laughter on his face. This villain always forced us taking more and more wood each time, more than we had taken. We finally loaded all the wood into the wagon, and Vidutsinsky pulled from the front and we pushed from behind; well dressed, elderly intellectual [educated] man, I had immediately drew the attention of the young rifleman [guard], and he decided that I was a “simulator” [shirker, pretender], negligent in my work. In order to change the opinion of this young rifleman [guard], and because I did not want to have a reputation of an old annoying indolent, I finished the work with all the strength I had in me, and I leaned on the wagon with my shoulder in order to push it, but I suddenly I received a blow from the back forcing me to stand up: the rifleman [guard] honored me with a blow from his boot, and this time there had been absolutely no reason for it, except the desire to torture an intellectual Jew. And so, It had been beaten twice on that day –first time in my life, since I became a man, in addition to the hard labor exhausting the body, which I had not experienced ever in my life, until that day.

After we brought several wagons of wood to the prison house and we unloaded them into the barn [store house], I went back to the room with a broken body and soul. The physical pain, the horrible humiliation, the lack of possibility to protest or to oppose, all of those left such a horrible impression on me, to the extent that it is a pure wonder I did not lose my mind, especially that my mind was invaded by the Titus’ mosquito⁶⁷, with the recognition, that the disaster which came upon me, was not accidental, and that I had been the one to bring my own troubles, and the collar around my neck, was my own. I was starting again torturing myself with stupid ideas in vain [Jeremiah 23, 16] of the night before, when I my eyes had not known sleep, but the process of those ideas was interrupted in the middle: a clerk arrived and ordered me along with few other new prisoners, to go to the warehouse to receive the items required for prisoners. Each one of us received a cup, a bowl and a spoon which were rusted (all the tools here were made of tin), a little pillow full of straw, a mattress sack which was empty, a towel, and the most important thing, a clean warm blanket. Vidutsinsky explained that the prison regime, as I already mentioned before, had improved so much, that it was hard to believe. The first prisoners, when the Germans had arrived, had been lying on the hard, cold concrete floor, or on metal poles, without any mattresses or sacks of straw. The beds, across the shelves, are standing now, and the prisoners can use them in order to hang their coats, their hats and their towels. Also, the Germans had tortured the first prisoners to a great extent and had starved them – now the state of things was far better. The linen I received I put on the lower shelf near the window, in the place where I slept, as I had been advised by my friends, and I put my tools in the closet, which was attached to a long table – like the grocer’s table – the only furniture in the room, and if we add to the shelves, the beds and the closet beneath the table, the famous tool described by Dostoevsky in his book “Notes from the house of dead [or death]”, that is to say “the chapter”, a metal barrel which standing in the corner as the prisoner’s toilet, that sums up the estate of our room.

When the clock showed twelve and a half, we received lunch. Two prisoners from the ghetto: one who was the prison’s cook, therefore a thief “by default”, would bring a big barrel full of cabbage soup and boiled potatoes, or beet soup – alternately, and the prisoners would have go one after the other to the metal barrel with their bowls in their hands, and each one would receive his portion. I did not taste the beet soup, but the cabbage soup seems tasty after the hard labor of the body, even if it was probably not made with meat or butter (although there was a possibility that several pieces of pork fat were put in there to give a little taste). After lunch there was a little time for rest and then we began again the hard work until it was four and a half, the time we received our dinner (one day oatmeal and the second day, groats). After dinner we sometimes continued to work but not for a long time. Until the evening inspection which is very much the same as the morning inspection the prisoners are

⁶⁷ An insect flew into his nose and picked at his brain for seven years... (Gittin 56, 72).

free for an hour or two. Some of them lie down on their beds and jump with every slight noise from the door because lying down is forbidden during the day; some play the “checkers” game also discretely, and hide it under a blanket immediately when the door is opened and some soldier walks in; some paste in their room as wild animals in a cage; some talk to each other or sit and stare, unkempt, and devoted to their thoughts; some look for lice in their clothes, and then there are those who are busy making rolled cigars from cigarette butts. After the evening inspection, the preparations for sleep begin. Four days I sat in the prisoners’ house, and the schedule was the same every day as the first day with very slight changes. I had not been beaten anymore; it might have been due to the fact that after the first day there had been always one of the supervisors of the prisoners along with the Partisans, whose presence had diminished the authority of the Partisans and they had not been able to behave in their usual horrible ways. One day, instead of wood, we had to bring supplies from the barn [store house]: grout flour, and another day, I believe it had been my last day in prison, we had been honored with a job that we could not have done ourselves if we hadn’t have had a little help from the side. We received an order to remove the garbage container near the entry of the prison house and transfer it to the next yard, where the wood had been, empty its content, and to take it back to its place. First it was required to lift the container and place it in the wagon; but the container wouldn’t move from its place, as if it was nailed to the ground. However, of the six men who were supposed to work on this task, only three were young and strong men. But I, the dentist from Taurage, an old man, and another weak Jewish man (Friedman), our contribution was doubtful. And then one of the Germans who served at the prison house came, and along with him our supervisor, and they saw what great value did the “work of the Jews had”, and only thanks to their help we managed to complete the task. We loaded the full container into the wagon, carried it out to the adjacent yard, and we cleaned it, but when we wanted to return to its place with the help of the wagon of course, the war prisoners came to take the wagon from us, in order to transfer wood as they were ordered, and so we were forced to return the empty container by hand, and that too was above the strengths we had, since the can was made out of thick oak planks, and it was very heavy. This had been the hardest work I had to do during the time I sat in the prison house. It was even harder than the horse position I had to fill, taking my place in the front and middle of the wagon, which had been full of wood and pull. That had been a punishment given to me by the evil rifleman [guard] for my seeming negligence. When this was repeated the next day and I felt my strength coming to an end, I had decided, despite the guard and whatever consequences may be; I dropped the shafts to the ground and I announced that I could not be a horse no more, so Vidutsinsky took my place, and I replaced him as one of the pushers. However, it was as if a little prophecy came to me and I knew that I would soon to be free, and escape from the authority of the evil rifleman [guard], otherwise he would have been sure to find an opportunity to avenge my cheekiness, which due to the presence of the supervisor remained unpunished that time.

On the fifth day of my imprisonment, even before the morning inspection, a clerk entered and called my name, ordering me to take all the items I had received, and return them back to the storage house clerk. That meant that was am free! I quickly gathered my items, and my belongings from my bed, and with a general farewell from the occupants of the room I hurried out with my heart aching for the rest of the Jewish prisoners, who surely had remained with natural and justified jealousy, due to the fact, as I will further explain, that all of their crimes were truly quite light weighted.

Fortunately, I had been wrong greatly about my wife; I thought that my imprisonment would have defeated her entirely and that now she would be terminally ill, on her deathbed without the possibility to stand on her feet. But as matter of fact, after a sleepless night, and filled with bitterness [according to Job 9, 18] and worry, she had gathered herself in the morning, and had found unusual courage, enthusiasm and resourcefulness. She had started since the morning knocking on the doors of Dr. Jasaitis, Stankus, Kozlovskas, Dr. Dogirdyena and the police clerk, and her efforts had been crowned with a glorious victory! On the fourth day of my imprisonment Stankus himself brought a release letter for me, to the office of the Jews representatives from the Security Police, and he told them: “Take your physician back!” One of the representatives, Shapira, took the letter quickly and brought it to our

home, and then our son, Teddy, brought it as quickly as possible to the prison house; however, the hour was late and so I was released on the next morning. Because the office was still closed, and my belongings, which had been taken when arriving the prison house, I could no longer retrieve. I decided to go home immediately without waiting for my belongings. It is hard to describe the joy and happiness of my wife and son as they saw me. For I was saved from a life-threatening danger due to the efforts of my darling wife. She got into the thick of things with her last strengths – and she had succeeded! Shortly, a messenger from the Jewish representatives came to our house and asked us to visit them. I did not understand the meaning of this invitation, but as I entered their office, they told me that Stankus came to them just moments ago and said: “I was too angry, but Dr. Pick was also very angry, I wish to see him”. I hurried to his office and he for the first time greeted me with laughter: “Did you like?” He asked. “Not so much”, I answered, and I added that I had no bad intentions and that I would never forget this release, I offered my hand, and I thanked him. And so I got rid of him. And, thank God, I had have not seen him since. From there I went to the prison house where I received all my items and my money back (not all the released prisoners were granted similar treatment). Pursuant to the instruction of the head supervisor of the prison house I was required go to the Security Police and notify them about my release. That was the last unpleasant moment in this whole shameful matter. I entered into the office in which all of my bones had trembled five days ago and, I announce that I had been a prisoner, and now I was released. They answered to that: “All is good”. That was the end of an awful event in my life, which I would not forgive until the day I die. I left the office and I remembered that I was back now in the “path of tortures”, which had been my path then, as a free man – as much as a Jew could feel free – I also remembered one of the statements that the prisoners had made in the first period: “It is better to die by a gunshot than to be imprisoned in the prison house.” At last I reminisced my story “in the imprisonment” in which I told the story about my imprisonment in my youth, when I had been a student in the Talmudic college Slobodka⁶⁸, and due to “Shabbat desecration” I had not carried my “person card” and I had been caught. I thought about the difference between my situation then and my situation now, between the servants of the Tsar and the officers of “the source of evil”. Fifty years had passed since then, and humanity⁶⁹ regressed so much in this period. When would history straighten this deviant “zigzag”? When would humanity revert to the path of development and progression? The state of matters is not hopeful for the near future.

In concluding my notes of the gloomy chapter of my arrest, I find it necessary mentioning the Jewish prisoners with whom I shared a room. 1) Vidutsinsky had submitted at the time [under the Soviet regime] a request to receive a position, in the questionnaire he had attached to his request he emphasize that he was leaning towards the Bolsheviks, a matter caused by the era. This questionnaire fell into the hands of the German Police, and he was arrested. By the Lithuanians such a crime would have been forgiven, but prior to my arrival, he had been already for a month in prison without any investigation or demand, and I left him there without any hope to be released in the near future. I feel very bad for him; he had told me that until now he had regarded his imprisonment more or less indifferently, as he had hoped to be released soon, but now the despair started attacking him, and his endurance is coming to an end. They said, that when had been once transferred from the prison house to some place for labor, he had stood up in the carriage and had suddenly seen his daughter on the street, and had nodded his head, and then the policeman (a Lithuanian or a German) had delivered him such a strong blow and he had fallen into the carriage in front of his daughter who had cried out and had fainted. Yes! The Jews were abandoned and there is no justice and no judge for them. 2) Tobier, a simple peasant Jew, who signed six accusation letters against six of the “fists” [kulaks] of the village: wealthy and dark peasants, and in the questionnaire which he also submitted in order to receive a position, he also wrote he had been a Bolshevik. This Jew brought a lot of anguish to us: day and night he would cry in silence, and he would starve himself, and every rustling of the door or even in the hallway, he started shivering and was frightened, as he was thought they had come to take him and kill him.

⁶⁸ A known Talmudic college in Lithuania, situated in the suburb Slobodka, is Vilijampole, of the city of Kaunas.

⁶⁹ If he thought in ‘Latin’ he surely meant humanitas, if he thought Yiddish-German: Menschlichkeit, or did he simply mean: the measurement of man created in the image.

This man had several attacks of epilepsy. In normal times this disease would have waived his punishment, or at least reduced it, because a man with such a disease is not responsible to his actions as a healthy man. But now, such a self-justification is dangerous, as there is no need for the sick Jews, who could not be turned into subservient servant. These kinds of Jews should be killed immediately with a gunshot. 3) Friedman Israel, forty years of age, a truly faithful Jew, who during his time in the prison house he lived on bread and “coffee” and did not let himself to be saved with the soup. As a physician, I asked him to eat from the cabbage and the grout, as he would surely fall in time under the burden of the hard labor if he continued this way. This honest man had gotten entangled for nothing in a shameful matter of offering a bribe to a clerk in order to be given permission of the continuation of “Arteil”⁷⁰, or to rearrange it – I am not sure of the matter until now; all that I know is that he had nothing to do with the matter, and he was falsely accused. 4) A young man, Abramovich, a con vile man, who had initiated that scheme, and when he was caught, he wrongly believed that if there were more accused, his punishment would be decreased, and so he pointed him out, along with the prisoner Levin as partners in crime when he had offered the bribe. This young man, a swindler who frameth deceit [according to Psalms 50, 19] admitted once in the room before Vidutsinsky and Tobier that Friedman was innocent, but then he changed his mind and threatened Tobier not to mention anything about his admission. This young con man, as he wanted to build himself on the back of others’ disaster, and to transfer his own guilt to others, also dragged with him 5) another young man, Levin, as I have mentioned before; this was an educated Hebrew man to the full extent, who read and studied, and who had also possessed knowledge of general literature. He asked me to take mercy on him, when I would be free, and to talk of him to Finstein, son-in-law of Gorgil, who had been his partner, and who may be able to help him, as he is close to the authorities. But he made a bitter mistake: Finstein was powerless to even help himself should a disaster occur. When I was released from the prison house, I found out that when Finstein had been away, the Germans came and took his young wife and her two children along with her parents, her brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and moved all of them away from the ghetto to somewhere unknown, and they had never came back. The husband tried with all his might and means finding his wife and children, but to no avail; they had vanished as if the earth had opened its mouth and had swallow them. Yes! I am more than sure that the Partisans had killed them in cold blood. So, on that hour, I was not able to talk to Finstein about Levin and that was the end of the it.

Due to this incident, regarding Feinstein’s wife, a big problem was created for the physicians, because it had risen the anger of the Jewish population in the ghetto towards the physicians, to the death. And the story was like this. After several families and even a few individuals were removed from their homes, from the house located of Padirsiu Street no. 2, which had also been the home of Feinstein⁷¹, the homes were taken in this house by Dr. B-N. and the dentist W-ski. The latter worked at the hospital of the war prisoners. The chief German physician of the hospital, a nice man, had become a shelter and haven for the Jewish physicians working under his supervision. Among other things, they had received from him notes signed by the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar] demanding that houses would be found for them in the ghetto – a difficult and problematic tusk, as parting the of Red Sea. Thanks to those notes, they were able to rush the authorities in evacuating houses for them – and then the disaster happened! This is what they inform from the ghetto. It is very difficult knowing how much of this horrible accusation is true. Surely the dentist W-ski, if he is set on a mission, he digs and nibbles like a mouse, and could penetrate through cracks as an annoying and nagging flea, when he is motivated to achieve something for his benefit. However, one should not assume that he had allowed himself turning directly to the authorities [of the bitter enemies] to demand preparing a house for him already occupied by others. And on the other hand, this is a man, who is hasty and decisive, an extreme egoist, who would stop at nothing to get what he wants, and after all, might had been the cause of torts [the cause for the damages, according to Bava Batra 25, 71]

⁷⁰ In the Soviet Russia, a group of workers for a joint effort based on cooperation.

⁷¹ Padirsiu Street. One of the three length streets in the ghetto which is called “Traku”.

unintentionally, and indirectly, as he had not been able to foresee the unfolding events, or sense what his efforts to find accommodations would lead, and what calamity he would cause. Since then, the population is angry with all physicians, and about the matter in which people were moved in to the prayer house, and from there to a demise perceived as direct result of the necessity to find houses for the physicians in the ghetto! For six-seven physicians who had arrived later on into the ghetto, there were no houses left, and families were sent from town and from the ghetto into prayer houses, which became hallways of hell, at least five hundred! The proportion was interesting! But let us revert to our matter: in any event, for the man Levin who was innocent, I could not had done anything, as at the time, his former partner Finstein, was in a state of a very deep grief. 6) The sixth Jewish prisoner was an intriguing man in his “lack of interest” and exceptionally banal (superficial), the dentist St-n Mtn, a very stupid man, who became a burden for us with his boring chatter, and empty and embarrassing questions which would repeat themselves on a daily basis. He had apparently participated in some Bolshevik board, in order to be seen as an activist and as an innovator [progressive], according to the spirit of times. Now he has been accused with communism, which he is associated with, as the throne belongs to China. 7) The seventh Jewish prisoner was a young shoe man of 18 years of age from a certain town, hasty and alert, who had been part of the “Commiug”⁷² in his town. In the first days he was very helpful to me, helped me to remove my shoes, to cover myself with my blanket and so on and so forth. He felt good in the prison house and was the “cooks’ spoon” in our room. He wore tatters, and I promised to bring him clothes one day, when I would be free. But I have not had the opportunity to keep this promise. And now, nobody knows where he is, as all the Jewish prisoners who had shared my room are no longer in Shavli, all of them had been removed, except from Tobier, who they had not even taken to work outside the prison house to begin with.

And he stayed for a long time alone in the prison house away from all the Jewish prisoners. And as I walked into town to work, I would see him being led with the other Christian prisoners to work. Now he has been removed from the prison house as well. Where is everybody? Who knows? Their fate surely was the same as the fate of the prisoners from the first period who had disappeared and gone. 8) The eighth Jewish prisoner was me, myself, the oldest and most educated from the all prisoners, known to almost all the higher supervisors in the prison house, a respectable physician, with a public position, imprisoned for a little felony. Everybody thought I had been a temporary guest in the prison house, but I myself had been full of despair. And that because of all the reasons I mentioned before: that is to say: that I had been the only one to blame for my calamity, and that I had brought more troubles to my ill wife; even more, I had been sure that due to her illness she would had not been able to help me and try to release me. It is interesting to state one psychological fact: five nights I had spent in the prison house; in the first two nights I had not sleep at all, at the last three nights the sharp tip of my sorrow had become a little, blunted until I had been to take my mind off my troubles, and sleep a little, with the help of a folk remedy I had invented, that is to say: as I had lied down, I had copied in my mind to Yiddish, the first chapter from my Hebrew novel: “Summer flowers”⁷³, and I had not moved from the first page, and then a short while of sleep had been a blessing, after which I had continued torturing myself with melancholic thoughts.

It is appropriate to also remember the Christian prisoners. First, I it is worth emphasizing that no signs of anti-Semitism were evidenced of Christians towards the Jewish prisoners, and that matters were peaceful and quiet between all the prisoners while I was there. Surely once there was a little fight between Vidutsinsky and a Christian prisoner, because Vidutsinsky had taken the cup of the latter by mistake. But the storm was soon over, especially that the guilty Vidutsinsky was the one to get angrier. It is interesting to note, that not only the political prisoners had behaved decently, but also the general prisoners as well. Among the Christian prisoners there was a yellow young man, the secretary of the Bolshevik board in his town, he received a package from home (Jewish prisoners were not allowed to receive anything from the outside), inside was a big piece of cheese and he shared

⁷² A shortening in a style which was popular in Soviet Russia, from the Yiddish: *communisteisha yugnat* – communist young man.

⁷³ Did not survive.

it with all the prisoners, even with the Jewish ones. He made a good impression. I did not have enough time to talk to him properly, and I did not have the time to talk to three other political prisoners, and learn about them, due to the short time I had been in the prison house. There was another political prisoner there: a young man who had graduated that year from the Lithuanian gymnasium, a handsome, well-dressed young man, who still remembered the songs he had learned in his school, in Latin and German, and he showed off singing them all the time. Among the general prisoners there was a thief, a recidivist, who was pleased with the prison house because he found free food and accommodation. There was a man there who murdered his wife, as she had made his life miserable with her bossing around, and after the murder, he took various items from her house. The thief who knew everything about punishments, told him: “the fact that you murdered your wife is nothing, she was to blame, but for the items you took, you would be punished”. An interesting prisoner was the former cook of the prison house. This man “from the prison house went out and became a king”. And one day, he had decided to impersonate a police clerk and conduct searches on by passers, until his scheme had been discovered and he was punished with a year and a half in the prison house. He was one of the food servers in our room and everything was a joke to him. There were two other young men: the Russian who was an expert in communicating with the war prisoners in the yard, and was eating the left over from the prisoners, as if he had not eaten anything all day. He was also a compulsive smoker, and the other young man, a handsome one with a forelock, and with a pleasant voice. He was walking around the room, alone with his thoughts, and sang in a pleasant voice. Vidutsinsky told me that he had been among the Lithuanians who had left to East Prussia to work there in the Germans households. The household had not fallen unto him in pleasant places [was not a pleasant one, according to Psalms 16, 6] and his owner had abused him with starvation and hard labor and had even beaten him quite a few times. Once, when he could no longer take the humiliation from his German owner, he had attacked him with a knife injuring him, [then] had escaped from the estate and had returned to Lithuania. Here he had been arrested and had been brought into the prison house. I do not know how long he had been there, but one evening a clerk came and ordered him to escort him. It was a bad sign that he was not ordered to take his belongings, I had been, when they had release me. The young man never came back to the room. The prison cooks when meeting the prisoners at the toilets, told them that they had heard a telephonic command, that the young man was sentenced to death by a gunshot. It is hard to forget the victims of the evilness of the Germans.

**E. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water [Lamentations 1, 16]:
wholesale extermination of the communities of Israel in Lithuania**

“Pogroms toward the Jews”, this saddening term, how common it is in our History! The awful phenomenon for which this term had been invented for the first time: robbery and killing of the Jews as a whole, as a crowd, not in time of emergency, had occurred and repeated themselves in ancient times (Alexandria in Egypt), had become frequent in the Middle Ages, was renewed in the new age (Russia, Poland). To the regular pogroms one should add the murders of the Jews accompanying wars and people up rises. As it happened for example in the days of “the black death”, the crusades, the Khmelnytsky uprising, and the Kozaks and more. The common denominator among them, that they all had come from galvanization of hidden evil passions within the heart, and the awakening of latent preying and bloodshed tendencies, all emerging from targeted propaganda, and various other factors raging the mobs, causing it to delusional deeds, in the form of wild onslaught, made by an incited and shocked mob, excited and raged upon its victims. But, oh, the horror of what we had in Lithuania! It was unbelievable as we told our great grandchildren and to our grandchildren, these peaceful and quiet people, which had not been raged, or incited by propaganda, sworn their cruel hearts to execute thousands, hundreds of thousands of Jews with indifference and clear minds! Head goose bumps would stiffen the hair, and blood veins freeze, when one hears about the massacres occurred in the cities of Lithuania to the Jews: elderly men and youth,

women and children, pregnant and mothers – their skulls opened and hearts slit, by the bullets of the Partisans⁷⁴ and the Lithuanian riffles; and all of these had been done in an orderly and well executed manner [in stages]: the massacre had been done in groups, every group awaited for its turn, the graves had been ready, the victims had to take off their clothes, so that the bullets would not have ruined them, and so fathers had been murdered in front of their children and children in front of their fathers, and the hand of the murderers had not shaken, their eyes had not darkened, and their hearts had not shattered, from the moans of the dead, as their last breaths had been taken, nor from the tremble of the thin layer of dust above the victims who had been still convulsing under, between life and death. Yes! The voices of the blood of our brothers shout from the Lithuanian land which had become our valley of death, our gallows, and its sons to our executioners and exterminators. Could we forget what had been done to us? Would we accept all of what had happened and reconcile in one of these days with their “educated men”⁷⁵ who had been leading their murderers as the lawyers Pozshila, Kalaksha, the gymnasium teachers and students etc.? Of whom memory would remain in our history as the collaborators of Amalek, and their sins would never be redeemed. It turns out that it was hinted to them from the top, that the extermination of the Jews had been welcomed, that “Samael” [one of the names of the devil], father of the fathers of evil, wants that – and a little hint had been all the murderers had needed in order to exterminate more than two hundreds thousands Jews without hesitations and wonderings. The Germans themselves testified that in no other place had they found such powerful and savage hatred for the Jews as they had found in Lithuania. Repentance be hidden from our eyes [according to Hosea 13, 14] as we remember all the communities which had been killed under the clear sky. A wave of Jews murders had engulfed and washed the entire country of Lithuania, and in the cities, other than Vilnius, Kaunas and Shavli, entire communities had been slaughtered without a trace or refuge of the Jews. But herein, for now, I will list the communities of which destruction we had eye witnesses according to the order in which the evidence was given.

Kleme (Kemle). The city of Kleme had been burnt at the stake on the third day of the war. Only granaries and barns remained in the surroundings of the city. The Lithuanian Partisans had arrived and started demonstrating their ruler whips in the city. They selected one hundred and ninety young and brave Jews and took them to the granaries and worked them with hard labor. The remaining Jews were sent to various estates around the city. They sat there for a month; in this time the murderers had time to talk to their friends from the other Lithuanian cities and together they decided about the fate of the Jews. “And on the third day before the ninth of Av” [July 29, 1941] the fate of the Jews in Kleme was decided. About half a kilometer from the city there had been an incinerator of building blocks, and near it, in the place in which the materials and sand had been dug, there had been several wide and deep pits. Here were the graves of all of the Jews in Kleme! Here they slaughtered Dr. Cohenski, his wife and their two daughters, here was brought the end the life of my wife’s aunt, the woman Sheffer, healthy and beautiful, and both of her daughters, one of whom had graduated from Lithuanian gymnasium, and one of her friends told her: “We are not guilty, we had received an order, die with a strong heart!” Here, the cousin of my wife had been killed, young, soft and ill, who had been taken from the arms of his mother, and by miracle she was saved, because at that time they had still left many women alive. Here, the “moral owners”⁷⁶ from Kleme had died before their time, they were filled with the fear of God and gentle and “they would have not touch a fly

⁷⁴ The author wishes to be precise as he singles out the Partisans – the murderers regiments from the “Lithuanian Activist Front” Organization and the riflemen – members of the “Riflemen [snipers] Association of Lithuania” – a group of dismissed soldiers, organized ad-hoc: every man with his believes, in the atmosphere brought with the German regime, that the Jews in Lithuania must be eliminated.

⁷⁵ The double quotation marks were in the original text. As there was no university in Shavli, the author calls “educated men” [in his onion in vain] lawyers and teachers who attended universities and taught in the high schools around town.

⁷⁶ The religious denomination included the Rabbis of the Talmudic college in Kleme and their students.

on the wall” and the Divine spirit hid its face from its loyal servants who had followed it their whole life! The Divine spirit had left the sons of Israel, it was gone and is no more!

From the family of my wife ‘s uncle, the Sheffer’s, after he had been killed in Rasciniai⁷⁷ and his wife and daughters in Kleme, two young sons were left, who were saved by their Lithuanian friend. They worked at the estate of one of those Lithuanians. Ten days after the Jewish population in Kleme had been killed, the two aforementioned sons, along with the estate owner, came to our door. We gave them as much as we could from our belongings (which had dwindled very much when they had taken the sister of my wife, Zilberman, and her family from Shavli and we had given them many items). We gave the two young men shirts, shoes, sugar, soap, a “Gillette” razor with blades to shave. Several weeks had passed and on September fifth the owner of the estate came again to our house, but this time alone. First the eyes of my wife fell on the shirt of our son, in which the estate owner was dressed in, with the Hebrew abbreviations D. P. which were embroidered on the chest, so it was one of the shirts which we had given as a gift to our cousins. And the peasant, the estate owner, told us: From all of the Jews, residents of Kleme, fifty men and women had been left scattered and hiding in various farms, and it was one day in which the older of the Sheffer boys had happened to be in Tytuvėnai⁷⁸, and several Partisans came, along with several Germans and “as one would gather some abandoned eggs” they gathered the rest of the remaining Jews of Kleme, including the youngest of the Sheffer boys and shot them all. Then, the estate owner sent his own son to meet the older Sheffer to tell him what had happened, and he gave him a cross and some catholic “prayer beads” [most of the Lithuanians, if not all of them, are catholic] and the older Sheffer escaped, thanks to his blond Arian face, and that he spoke the Lithuanian language – and so an entire city and mother of Israel had been cutoff, a city famous of her Hasidic Jews, in all of the Lithuanian state.

Several days before this event my wife fell ill. Due to the calamities occurring to her family members (nationalizations, confiscations, and exile to the U.S.S.R) her weak and ill heart had started failing her. And when my wife heard what happened to her aunt’s sons, “her heart was horrified, and jumped out of its place” [according to Job 37, 1] and she was pale as whitewash. This event had led to a great extent to my arrest and could have caused my demise, as in the tale of that era as one of the countless [number, according to Psalms 71, 15] victims. That day, as we heard about the extermination of the rest of the members of the Jewish community in Kleme, and my wife was very ill and could not get off her bed, I was as agitated and angry as one could be, and decided to go to the “king of Jews” Stankus and ask him for permit for Riba who had been helping my wife, so she could exit the ghetto to help us. Then the storm happened, the one that neighed us and shook me to the prison house.

(Krak) Krakes near Kedainiai⁷⁹. This little town and the Jewish population within had also not been substantial [about 150 families], but this town had become the center of seven communities from the nearby towns (Grinkiskis, Dotnuva and more)⁸⁰ and about fifteen hundred Jews were gathered there. For them, a concentration camp was established and also a ghetto. In the concentration camp they placed the men who were above fifteen years of age, and in the ghetto, women and children up to 15 years of age. On the third day of the month of September, Partisans and soldiers arrived (one of them spoke German), about sixty men, and they gathered three hundred and fifty five men, and arranged them in lines of forty, and took them out of town under pretense that

⁷⁷ Rasciniai, about 30 km slightly south-west from Kleme.

⁷⁸ Tytuvėnai, a town which was known in central Lithuanian as a vacation resort, about 40 km south of Shavli; Tynbiai, in the mouths of its Jews. In the middle of August, the Lithuanians [the auxiliary police] gathered the members of the Jewish community and murdered them in a forest nearby.

⁷⁹ Krakes, about 20 km north-west from Kedainiai, the author’s home town.

⁸⁰ Grinkiskis, about 20 km north from Krakes; Dotnuva, about 12 km south-west of Krakes; the author did not include the rest of the Jewish communities related, in Baisogala, about 30 km north of Krakes, Gudziunai, about 15 km north of Krakes; because he did not intend to write a history book, but only what was in his heart. And so, based on the living evidence which was brought to him, he differentiates here between Lithuanian murderers in uniform and those who seemingly had not worn uniform, wearing only a ribbon or a white stripe, usually on their sleeve. Also, see content below.

they were being led to work, despite that among them were old and sick men. And at a substantial distance from town, they were ordered to lie down and hide their faces in the ground (the murders probably used these moments to make the necessary preparations to execute their scheme). After a while an order was given, and they got up and took off all of their clothes, down to underwear. All of the men, old and young, weak and ill, gripped with terror and fear of death, with quivering hands and waning knees, began following the order. Suddenly sixty riffle barrels mouths opened and began spitting death in all directions. Many of the men tried to escape from the death turmoil, but the fast bullets of the Partisans [the Lithuanians murderers of Jews] did not miss their targets and subdued the escapees. One young man who was only 15 years of age, managed to hide in the potatoes bushes and stayed there until the evening. In the evening, he hunched, and crawled as a worm until reaching a farm house, and the farmer took pity on him and gave him some tatters to wear, and a temporary shelter. For several weeks he wandered from village to village; his fear and terror were great, and he suffered plenty of abuse and agony from the farmers and the police, all until he found some peace (!) in the ghetto in Shavli, as he had been a student at the Yiddish gymnasium here. After that they murdered the women and the children too. And so, in Krakes fifteen hundred Jews were subdued to massacre from the town and its surroundings. Our spirits gloomed over us and wondered through oppression of evil and sorrow [Psalms 107, 39]. Who would narrate, who would mourn, who would compose new laments for the destruction of those communities? An order from above had been sufficient to turn the Lithuanians into our murderers and exterminators, with a calm demeanor, and without hesitations, and they killed us, as one would kill death flies.

Siluva, (near Rasciniai)⁸¹. Here the Partisans called for an assembly, an assembly of traitors and evil persons, and they invited the Partisans from Rasciniai, and thus this celebration was concluded with the sacrifice of almost four hundred men and women of the Jews of town and its surroundings.

Tytuvenai, (near Rasciniai)⁸². When all the Jewish population had been killed, the physician had been absent, because he had been treating a patient in one of the nearby villages. As he came home, and found out that his family was no longer alive, he asked for his life to be taken as well. It was not necessary beg the villains for a long time. His request was swiftly and precisely fulfilled by those who turned into weapons of mass destruction for the Germans, by the mere issuance of an order, which had been fulfilled with unexpected compliance.

Pakruojis (near Shavli)⁸³. The Jews were murdered by the same method as in all the other towns in Lithuania. Fictitious transfer to work, taking off the clothes, gunshots – and that was it! The physician Shraiver and his family converted from Judaism and were spared from death. The conversion was, however, barely granted: the minister refused adamantly to let them into the covenant with “the Merciful Redeemer”, of whose believers adhered to as wolves to the attributes of a sheep. The daughter of physician Yochelson, who happened to visit them, as her parents acquittances, was not granted admission into the catholic church, as she did not have the references as Dr. Shraiver had; she had been granted a direct admission to the “kingdom of heaven”, without the help of the priest.

Panevezys⁸⁴. A town and mother of Israel! One of the most respected towns in Lithuania. At first several streets were allocated to the Jews, without any dividers or limits. They did not remain there for a long time. First the men were killed – and later, the women and the children. There they murdered first the Jewish physicians due to an

⁸¹ About 20 km north from Rasciniai.

⁸² About 25 km north from Rasciniai. See footnote 78.

⁸³ About 30 km east, a little north from Shavli.

⁸⁴ About 80 km east from Shavli; before the war about ten thousand Jews had been living in this town. Among other educational institutes, one of the best known was the Talmudic college in Panevezys.

incident which had occurred. In the days of the Bolsheviks regime, it had been snitched on one of the nurses from the municipal hospital, that she had not treated fairly the Bolshevik patients. The representatives of the party demanded that the nurse would be turned over to them, but the Christian physicians hid her. Finally, a gunshot had killed the physicians and the nurse, and so when the Germans came, the Partisans hurried to avenge the blood of their fellow physicians, with the blood of the Jewish physicians and they killed the entire Jewish population. A town and mother of Israel, proud of its public institutes and businesses. It is a pity for those who are gone and lost!

Saukenai (near Shavli)⁸⁵. This had been the wild domain of the despised Kalaksha, the right hand of Pozshila, and the latter had ruled the entire Pakruojis region. These two villains were lawyers, seemingly educated; those were the ones who had arranged the slaughtering of the Jews in the Shavli district and its surroundings. Their hands were full of the blood of Jews which they had spilled like water. Half of the Jewish population in Saukenai had been murdered, and the other half had been sent to Zagare, and they had been buried there too. Two young ladies who Kalaksha [one of the two aforementioned lawyers] had been fond of, were saved by him. One of them lost her mind, and the other lived for a while in his estate until his “mistress” found a way to get rid of her. The one who had been a local dentist and her family received the catholic religion. After they were murdered, the Catholics buried them in their finest graves at the Catholic cemetery.

Tryskiai⁸⁶. 24 Tamuz [July 19, 1941], day of Shabbat, a massacre of 75 men with the Rabbi and his two sons in front. The victims were ordered to dig their own graves and then take off their clothes.

Zagare. In Zagare there had been many tents ready at that time for the refugees from Poland. Later Jews from Shavli, Papile, Saukenai, Vaiguva Uzventis and others⁸⁷ were sent there. For a long period of time we received contradicting rumors about the fate of the Jews who had been sent there. After a while we learned what was happening there. They were tales that the Partisans gathered a large group of Jews in order to actually take them to work, but the latter, as they had heard of the usual formula, of what had happened to their brothers, that the work had been pretense, and they were going to be massacred, they started running and escape for their lives. Then the Partisans chased after them, and most of the Jews were killed. The details are questionable, but we know now that no Jew had been left in Zagare, and that they had been all killed: men, women and children. Yes! How awful was our pain, to the extent of which our feeling became dull, and we write events so horrible, about the blood spill of our brothers, with indifference and apathetic looks, and the distortion does not take hold of us.

One of my Lithuanian patients, as he was answering my questions, if there are any Jewish physicians in Zagare, told me: “There are no Jews in Zagare, the Partisans and the volunteers had brought contempt and shame upon us with their actions. They had turned the town of Zagare into a “slaughter house”. All of this was sickening to us.”

Radviliskis (near Shavli)⁸⁸. (From the tale of a famous dentist in the town who had many friends among the Christians).

⁸⁵ About 30 km south-west of Shavli.

⁸⁶ About 50 km north-west to Shavli.

⁸⁷ Papile – about 40 km north-west to Shavli; Saukenai – see above; Vaiguva – about 45 km south-west to Shavli; Uzventus – about 35 km south-west to Shavli. Here too, as he has heard from the Lithuanian, the author differentiate between “Partisans and volunteers”, savanoriai, one – savanoris, are another words for the members of the Riflemen Association of Lithuania, the snipers and their kind.

⁸⁸ About 20 km south-east of Shavli, with a community of more than two thousand Jews before the war.

On the first day when the war began, her friend, the Lithuanian commandant, advised her to leave town and to go to a nearby village. He explained to her that the town of Radvilskis is an worthy military center: first, it is located near a weapon factory – Linkaiciai [which was about 3 km south of the town] – and it is a central station, and large reserves of petrol was located close by; because of all of those factors, aerial and cannon attacks should be expected in the area, as well as armed confrontations. She took his advice and collected her best clothes and jewelry, and went to a village nearby, and at home she left her servant. The next day, forty more Jews came into the same village. The prophecy of the commandant fulfilled itself to the fullest and starting from the second day the attacks on the town and its surrounding began. And because of that, there was no possibility to go into town and get provisions. And the hunger began to agonize the escapees, as in the village there was no bread for such a large number of people. On the fourth day, there was a large conflict between the fighting camps, and all the escapees were laying in a duct full of water for eight hours. On the fifth day the battle repeated itself and the town escapees were forced again to hide in the duct, which was full of water. [They were] frightful of the bullets and bombs. In those days the escapees saw the Russian soldiers escape from battle one by one, infantry and cavalry. And on the sixth day, the Germans were already in town and its surroundings. There was not a Jew on the streets, as all of them were afraid to leave their looted and burglarized homes, and the mood was as before the pogroms. And whoever shown his face on the street, had been immediately arrested. The dentist was not arrested as she was protected by her friend, the commandant, and on the twelfth hour she came back to the village. On the third hour the Partisans [the murderers of the Jews] came and evacuated all the Jewish escapees from the village, and they forced them to return back into town, and they warned that any Christian who hiding a Jew would be shot. The Partisans began rushing the escapees, and only half an hour was given for the preparations. When they came near the town, they saw that Jews were being led into town from all directions. In town, all the men were arrested, and the women were sent free. In the meantime, false rumors were spread for propaganda, along with a provocation [incitement] that the Jews killed two Partisans and one German. Therefore, the Germans killed one Jew on the street, and the Lithuanians threaten that they would kill one hundred Jews for every Lithuanian killed. On the Shabbat, on the third hour they had released all the Jewish prisoners, who described the tortures and the abuses, and the night of hard labor they had gone through. On Sunday, the Germans had captured the good houses of the Jews, and along with the Lithuanians they had looted and had vandalized everything. The Lithuanians demanded that the Jews give them the hidden jewelry they had, as they took all other possessions by themselves, or along with the Germans. They had threatened that if their request was not fulfilled, they would take revenge on the Jews and hurt them as much possible. On Sunday the Jews were again kidnapped from the streets, allegedly to work. But apparently they were only abused: their beards were cut, animal droppings were put on their heads, water was spilled on the pavements and the Jews were ordered to dry it with their abdomens, they were forced to run and the Germans came along with daggers, riffles, and those left behind received a daggers into their backs, they were forced to jump over fences, and hurdles, and similar things. On Monday, everything repeated itself, and on Tuesday, they gathered all the Jews in the town square, and in the evening, they led them as a herd of sheep with whips and lashes into the station. They were led into an old army house, in which they were three filthy rooms with shelves to lie down on. The men made, under the supervision of the Germans, a fence from iron wires, and they then elected the guards and the commandant [commander] of the camp and granted permission to go into town to buy bread. The filth in the rooms was awful; the [sleeping] shelves were not sufficient for all the occupants – and so they lied down on the dirty floor. There was no kettle to warm water and no bowl to wash in. Hungry and thirsty, children were crying, women fainted. There was one positive detail there, and all the prisoners in the camp tried to use it, that is to say, a well of water, easy to use for washing. One German of the supervisors received a bribe, and he let the prisoners bring kitchen tools from town. Several Germans were “traders” and they sold dried fish to the occupants of the camp. They became more pleasant, more generous, but soon they left the concentration camp, “and a new king had risen”; new Germans came and with them a Lithuanian translator – a “sadist” who tortured greatly the prisoners of the camp: he did not allow people to go to the physician, or to go

into town for provisions and more. An unusual incident occurred in this camp: there was one young Jew there called “Yashka”. No one knew where he came from. He began to befriend the Partisans [the Lithuanians], drank with them, and played cards at night, abused few young women from the camp... did some horrible things that even the sadist Lithuanian was amazed by the horrible way in which he treated his brothers. He was a great villain; it was assumed that he had been a German spy. One pregnant woman gave birth in the camp and “Yashka” did not let us call a midwife, and so the role of the midwife was filled by the dentist who used the boiled water of two thermoses, which were there; one woman was sick with a gall bladder condition (seemingly bladder stones and an infection of the bladder tracks) and because of Yashka no physician had been called, and the woman died. The same “Yashka” was in charge of the orange “stars of David” like they had done other places. In the end, after they moved all the people, along with several guests, who had come from other places, into another army base which had been further from town, the camp was closed; one group they led to Zagare, a second group came to Shavli, and the third group was lost in the chaos of the journey. In the camp in Radvilskis there were not only Jews from that town and its surroundings, but from other places too, as the policemen, by orders of the Germans or without such order, had arrested and had brought to the camp every Jew who passing near Radvilskis, by foot or by carriage. And so it had been a real miracle, that my son and his friend, as they had walked home from Vilnius, had passed by Radvilskis. This had not been the case for the young man Swich and his friend, who had traveled by train, and when it had been found out they were Jews, they were thrown off the train and were shot to death near the town of Radvilskis.

Telsiai – Telschi⁸⁹. The most well-known town of all of the places in which the Jews had lived in, famous in Europe and around the world for its Talmudic college from which a great number of scholars came out and had been always full of scholars as many as pomegranate seeds. Surely, this Talmudic college had been a shelter for all the dark and religious people who had opposed all the new views, and all the new winds blowing in the minds of our people. But this should have not been considered: great scholars of the Torah, which is one of the pillars of our existence, and as I mentioned, plenty of scholars had come out of this town, and scattered all over the world. The history of this community which had been full of wise students and great men of Israel is a matter by itself, which depresses and upsets the depths of the soul and deserves to be written for all future generations to read. Surely, the history of the community in Telsiai and its demise deserves to be told by a great writer would be able to understand all the events that happened there and tell them for generations to come. Here too, the God of Israel hid His face from His servants who had been doing the deeds of His will and shook Himself out of them. They trusted that God so much, always hung their highest hopes on Him – Oh, the bitter disappointment! Oh, the anguish! The hearts and souls are empty as a vast desert!

This is the tale of one woman who had been saved from the concentration camp in Telsiai.

After the nationalization of their store in Skaudvele [Skaudvile, in the language of the Jews] by the Bolsheviks, they had moved to Taurage. There they had been living for about two months (her husband had received there a decent position, with the Bolsheviks). On Sunday, the twenty fourth to the month of June, when the war started, the whole town was already on fire, and they escaped to the town of Upyna⁹⁰, in which the Germans already entered. The Partisans caught there the Rabbi of the town, cut off his beard and ordered him to prepare a fire, to light it, and burn at the stake. The square was narrow and there was a danger to all the houses around it; and so, the matter of the fire was cancelled, according to the request of the villagers. And the Partisans ordered the Rabbi to run, and they shot him and injured his legs. His wife seized the opportunity to leave town and took the Rabbi to a town in which there were six physicians; There is no further information about the fate of the Rabbi. In Upyna, the state of the Jews was like their state at the times of the pogroms. And so, the woman and

⁸⁹ About 70 km west of Shavli.

⁹⁰ About 10 km west from their former home in Skaudvile.

her family: her husband, her father-in-law, her mother-in-law and her little son, traveled from Upyna to Tryskiai. But about fifteen km from Tryskiai, near the town of Luoke, they were caught by the Partisans, robbed from all of their belongings, and were taken to the concentration camp in Luoke, in which there were hundred and fifty people. The attitude of the Partisans to the prisoners was horrible. The prisoners were in a granary; the guard were constantly there; they were whipped constantly for the slightest thing, and for nothing at all; the labor was hard; pulling of the weeds from the stones in the streets, washing the floors in the houses, and similar things. About five km from Luoke was a village named Kaunatavas. Two Jewish families had lived in this village. Those families were also taken to the concentration camp in Luoke. The Partisans searched their houses, as they had always done, and in the belongings of one of the families (Zivch) they found a red flag, a remainder from the Bolsheviks regime, which they had no time to burn when they had left their home in such a hurry. 20 people from the surroundings of the town were brought to the camp on that day. And so they took all the people who were brought on that day, along with the Zivch family, who was accused of being Bolsheviks, and the men were whipped until no blood was left in them. After that they were led to a cold and wet basement and were left there. In the daytime, all of the people were sent into town for labor, and there, they did their best to find provisions, because there were none in the camps. One the sixteenth day in the month of July, two S.A.⁹¹ Germans came and they took out all of the man without any exception: they made them crawl on their abdomens, to beat one another for real; awful blows were administrated to all the prisoners; and then they were led back to the granary. It turned out that one of those two Germans was in fact a Russian (Itamelineski), an acquaintance of the narrator's family, and apparently had become one of the Germans when the Bolsheviks had left. He announced, that an order was received from Berlin to kill all the Jewish men, as the Germans had many men falling in the war and the Jews had no victims. On the same night starting at midnight, they took groups of men to "work", they led them into the basement, and on the next day they were led about two km from Luoke, where eighty men were shot and buried in graves which had been ready for them. Nine men escaped, and only two of them, as one Partisan told, were saved and remained alive. The women remained three more days in Luoke, and after that they were led to Viesvenai⁹², about 15 km from Luoke, as many women were already there. They stayed there for four days in broken granaries, filled with filth and mold, and water from the pouring rain. After those four days they were led to Geruliai, about 10 km [west] from Telsiai. They gathered there about two thousand and five hundred women from Telsiai and its surroundings after all the men had been exterminated. The women began to organize themselves; they established a board under the supervision of a Lithuanian higher clerk. He allowed them to work the fields; the women received portions: bread, butter, grout of oatmeal, milk. There was also a physician there, Dr. Blat, the only man who supervised the entire camp. Ten men tried to disguise themselves in women clothing, but they were caught. All, apart from one, were killed. In any event the rumor was that they were going to kill the women as well. Then a delegation was sent to the District Minister and to the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar], "Gewecke", who came once a week to Telsiai. The delegation asked that a ghetto was to be arranged for the women. On the thirtieth day of the month of September, the Partisans came and asked the women for all of their belongings – otherwise, all of them would be shot; the Partisans explained that the women would be led to the ghetto which was in Telsiai, and they were not allowed to take any money or jewelry with them. On the next day, on the sixth hour, all the women were led outside, and the District Minister told them that carriages were to come and take all the women and their belongings, and that they had only ten minutes to gather their belongings, and whatever was not gathered, would remain in the granaries. They even suggested not to wake up the children and that every woman should leave a note next to the child, and they would be brought to them later on. After ten minutes all the women came back to the field, and they were divided into two groups: one group of five hundred women with the daughters were meant to go to Telsiai by foot, and the rest of the two thousand

⁹¹ S.A. from Strumabteilung, the "Crushing Company" of the Nazi party, with its official name: The National Socialist German Workers' Party: N.S.D.A.P.

⁹² About 20 km north-west from Louke, then on the road to Telsiai.

women, with boys were left in Geruliai. The belongings of those who were going to Telsiai were loaded into the carriages which arrived there. In Telsiai, two streets in the ghetto were allocated to the five hundred women, and those streets were fenced by wooden boards. All the women realized that the ghetto was temporary, not a permanent one, because they were not given wood for fire, although it was cold, especially at night. A Lithuanian “lecturer” [= referent, reporting person] was appointed in the ghetto who received the salaries of the women when they worked. And he gave them portions: bread, grout of oatmeal and potatoes. At that time there had been a rumor among the Christians that the ghetto in Telsiai was going to be closed. And so, the escape from Telsiai began: many women died of cold and hunger in the forests, many fell into the hands of the Partisans; and some were hiding until now⁹³ in various houses belonging to farmers; four women, the narrator among them, received a permission to come into the ghetto in Shavli. The escape had basis, and had been justified, as the women who had come to Telsiai had heard gunshots, and as they left passed by several graves on their way, which had been readied; at that time they began to exterminate the two thousand women in Geruliai⁹⁴, who, after had been ordered to take off their clothes, had been shot with machine guns and hand grenades. The Partisans were drunk but had fulfilled their jobs with precision and dedication. On the twenty seventh day of December [1941] they exterminated the rest of the women and the children, more than four hundred – and so the tragedy in Telsiai was over, a tragedy which we would never forget, which had taken the lives of our brothers, and among the saints and the pure, so many victims of the fathers of Satan. An honorable place would have the ones who had been killed in Telsiai.

A story of a “stick snatched from the fire”, a man in women clothing who had been saved from Telsiai.

On June 28, on the first day of Shabbat after the Germans came, the Lithuanian found in “Rein” [Rainiai] forest seventy-three dead bodies: Lithuanians “nationalists” who had been the prisoners of the Bolsheviks. The bodies had born signs of an exceptional cruelty, and death had occurred in the most horrifying ways: limbs had been missing, some had not had eyes and more (some say that the Partisans themselves had done those manipulations to the dead bodies in order to exaggerate the cruelty of the Bolsheviks and the Jews). And then they sent 15 Jews and a photographer to take the bodies out and to take their pictures. Those people came back after midnight and from their stories about the state of the Lithuanians, the Jews understood that all was heading for trouble. On the first and second days the Partisans sent about 50 Jews in order to wash the bodies and to kiss them. They were forced to do that twice each day while tortured and blown – one of them was shot. On the second day they prepared “the gate of honor” and on the third day, the bodies were brought to town. One hundred men were busy digging a common grave in the graveyard, and after that the “funeral” and the burial were held with horrible inciting speeches against the Jews – the Bolsheviks. The abuse and the tortures of the Jews in Telsiai began immediately after the Germans had entered Lithuania. Before the discovery of the bodies, on the twenty sixth day of the month of June, the Lithuanians arrested 150 people and sent them to the “Rein” estate – about 6 km from the town – and on the twenty seventh, the Germans burst into the homes of the Jews and took all of them into the town square. There, the German Major asked the Rabbi of the town to approach him; the Major ordered that the crowd choose three women, for them to go and negotiate with the Russian Partisans hiding in the forest who had been attacking the Germans. He promised that if this would be done, his attitude towards the Jews would be gentler and understanding. The Rabbi told him his opinion that the Jews were not suitable for this kind of mission, but he nevertheless went and told the crowd what the major had told him. After several hours they gathered all the Jews (about 17 hundred) near the lake; there the Major announced that the Germans were going to try a new weapon and so the women, the children and the elderly should go home, and they kept only the men. Gunshots began and all the men were arrested until morning. All of this was done in order to torture the women, the children and the elderly, in the false pretense that all the men had been killed. And so the first training

⁹³ The months of November – December 1941. Compared by A. Ierushalmi, Shavli notes, Bialik Institute and Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 5718, page 47.

⁹⁴ Geruliai, about 10 km east to Telsiai.

repetition had been conducted to what was about to really happen later on. On the Shabbat, all the Jews in Telsiai were sent to the “Rein” estate (about 2,000 people), and the town remained “free” of Jews. After a few days they also began to bring Jews from the surroundings: Plunge, Rietava, Varniai⁹⁵ and more, about one thousand and five hundred in total; those were sent later to another estate, Viesuvien, about 8 km from Telsiai. In both estates organization commenced, boards were elected, kitchens were opened and so on. From both estates people were being sent to work: to clean the army dorms, the streets and similar. The board suggested to the Lithuanian commandant, to give them cars, and they would provide drivers with gas. But the commandant refused, explaining that the work was not needed at all for the Germans and that all their intention was to torture the Jews and play with their patience. On the sixth day in the month of July, an order was issued that all the money of the Jews had to be submitted to the board, and that the latter would deposit the money in the latter’s account, or in in various individual accounts. A sum of six hundred thousand rubles had been collected then. The clerks explained that the Russian “valuta” [currency] would lose its value soon. Much of the currency bills had been lost by then, and money also found its way into many “thrones”, as the owners did not want to give it to the board but were afraid to keep it. This had caused them a great deal of damage because until then, they could have bought provisions from the farmers passing by the estate. After that they killed all the men they gathered in the “Rein” estate, and the women were in Geruliai and ten men had succeeded and wore women clothing and hid among the women in Geruliai. As you know the cup of poison was also passed to the women in Geruliai: all of them exterminated, except for five hundred who were sent back from Geruliai to Telsiai – out of those, more than four hundred were killed and the rest had gone where the wind had taken them: they died from the cold as they escaped to the forest or they were killed by the farmers who they trusted and to whom they had given all of their money in order for them to save them, but the farmers killed them and had taken the money for themselves. [Several] were saved by hiding in farm houses and in churches, and [five] of them arrived into the ghetto in Shavli. And as for the ten men who wore women clothes, they were discovered even before all the women in Geruliai were exterminated, and they were all killed except for the one who had escaped. The tales of this one, a “stick snatched from the fire”, are a matter by itself and I have not enough room here to detail them. I will give one example that the escapee hid for six days in the bushes of one farm house; in the nights he would steal grains from the granary and eat them, and his thirst was broken by sucking on the candles of ice from the roof tops. After those adventures he finally succeeded to escape as he had shown great deal of courage, a healthy body and exceptional endurance, and it is really unbelievable how a common man “an everyday Jew like” had the power to endure and to go through everything that had happened to this man. It is true that all of us, now that we are hunted, we show every day, that the Jews are made of stone and that there are no others in the world with more endurance, vigor, and resistance to all that is evil. If we did not possess that, we would have surely died by now under all the troubles and the tortures brought to us by our bitter enemies.

Raseiniai⁹⁶. My wife’s family hometown, the place where her uncle and aunt had lived, her brothers and their families. There were apparently all swept by the Lithuanian extermination broom. Would we really never see them again, these loved, pleasant ones? had my wife’s brother nice children, Leiv exterminated? It is so hard to grasp! There is no desire to believe! But our bitter fate shouts: “Believe – be still! Believe – and burry you face in the ground! You had not been concerned about your future! You had not been concerned to be a nation like all others, a nation on its own land, to grow our own vineyards”.

Kedainiai. My home town, my mother’s, hometown, and her fathers before that, the town of the elite, which had once been full as pomegranate seeds with wise students, nursery of Rabbis and Torah scholars who had spread

⁹⁵ Plunge, about 30 km west of Telsiai, Rietava about 40 km south of Telsiai and Varniai is about 35 km from Telsiai.

⁹⁶ About 70 km south of Shavli, before the war the Jewish community there counted two thousand souls.

through all of Eastern Europe (and they had gone even to the west – Rabbi Ezekiel Katzenellenbogen) [1668-1749, “Presiding Judge and the Rabbi of Kesainiai and Birzai and their regions”, fighter of the Sabbatians and suspected Sabbatians]. On the ruins of this ancient town, in which I had spent my youth days, and of which everything is bounded in my memories, my eyes are watering. The town in which Senior Sachs⁹⁷ had been born, my relatives and Lilenblum my close neighbor, in just a few hours the whole holy community was exterminated from under the sky.

Siauliai [Shavli], Kaunas, Vilnius. Three oases, three cities of refuge! Only in you few Jews had survived as reminders of the many Jews of Lithuania! What percentage had remained alive? And what had been the fate of those who had been removed from you and from your prison houses? Had they all indeed been sunk to the abyss [according to Deuteronomy 2, 34]? An innocent question without the ability to believe all the terror you had been through. So many astonishing and frightening rumors we had heard about you, until the bitter truth hailed and slapped our faces: “Do not entertain your hearts with false hopes, in those three cities alone about eighty thousands Jews were exterminated, and in all of the Lithuanian state, more than two hundred thousand Jews had found their graves, to the extent that it is possible that only one tenth remained. It is also possible that all was not over, and the prophecy would yet fulfill itself: “And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up” [Isaiah 6, 13]. Our horrible tragedy is that we, the ones who remained, cannot believe until now that we are alive, and we cannot be safe and certain that the long hands of the murderers would not reach us as well, and that the father of all villains will not come to us with all his fury, if he would not succeed, and that he would not fulfill his promise to erase all of us from the face of the earth if he [God forbid] shall win. And if we will survive, what would we do in a country which drank all our blood? How could we live with the citizens who had become to us animal masters? How could we forget what they had done to us? Had the slaves only not dared disobeying the hard masters ordering them to exterminate us? But their “we hear and we do”, their precision in fulfilling the orders, the cruelty and the abuse, the lack of concessions and compromises, the lack of turning a blind eye from the ones trying to escape – all of those are not in their favor, all of those would not be forgotten and shall not be forgiven. After all those things could the communities rise from the dust and rebuild themselves with the ones who remained? And what would be the image of those communities, when almost all the men of actions and resourcefulness are gone? The days ahead will speak! Statements as sharp as swords will be spoken!

The fullness of the killings in Kedainiai. There was a ghetto in Kedainiai. It had been arranged on the street of Smilna. After that they took all the occupants in the ghetto and removed them to the road leading to Dotnuva. When they understood what was going to happen to them, a few young men decided to protest. The story is that they pulled one of the Partisans after them into the pit and killed him. It is easy to assume that no good outcomes could have come out from that kind of protest, the revolt of several unarmed young men against the hooligans with the rifles and the machine guns, the consolation out of despair 'Let me die with the Philistines' – this ambition had no possibility to fulfill itself appropriately.

8. The decrees

The Germans had one goal: to embitter the lives of the Jews who remained and to make their lives as hard and difficult as possible. This goal was fulfilled by various and odd decrees and orders which are being issued upon us constantly. There are decrees that degrade our decency to the ground, demonstrate to us that we are considered as lower class, of a lesser value, that we are not allowed to come in contact with the exalted Aryans,

⁹⁷ An author and an explorer (lived 1816-1892). See J. Klausner, A History of Modern Hebrew Literature, Second volume pages 128-147, “...one of the most wonderful characters in his generation...” See also F. Lachover, The History of the Hebrew Modern Literature, 5711, Volume A, Second book, page 115.

and that we are not worthy to enjoy their culture; and there are decrees intended causing us physical and mental degeneration, to decrease and starve us, and spread infectious and deadly diseases among us. It is impossible to detail all these decrees and orders, the painful stabbings of needles in the live flesh, which are almost countless [cannot be counted], all the distresses – which enclosed our lives from all directions. And so, I will write the ones I remember and as much as I can, in the order in which they occur.

The decrees before the move to the ghetto

- 1) The decree against going out at night after the eighth hour of the evening. The Christians had been permitted to stay outside until the eleventh hour. Later the freedom of the Christians was reduced as well, and they were allowed to be outside until the ninth hour. The one hour was established in order to maintain the difference and to emphasize that the Lithuanians are not equal to the Jews.
- 2) The decree against decorating in revelries [birthdays, holidays] the houses belonging to the Jews with the Lithuanian national flag. It turned out that the purpose of this decree was to show that the Jews are not full citizens and do not have the same rights as the Lithuanians. By the way, this decree could help locating the houses of the Jews in times of need.
- 3) Limitations regarding selling food to the Jews. Even before the decree was issued and the “tickets” were issued, the Christian store owners had started, on their own, removing the Jews from their stores and refuse to sell them certain products, especially butter and milk. There is a story about the wife of Dr. R. who was in line and waited for her turn in order to buy milk, and one Lithuanian ordered her to get out of the line, and as she had been almost deaf, she did not react to his words, so he then took her by the back of her head, and pushed her violently aside, until she almost fell to the ground. Later they allocated two stores for the Jews, in which they received small amounts of various products. But soon there was a shortage in the products most needed for the health of the body: meat, milk, butter, cheese, wheat bread, sugar. Those limitation reached their peak in the ghetto, but those details will come later.
- 4) The mark of disgrace. The middle Ages with all its fears, and all its thorns, and all its abominations came back to life again. The mark of disgrace of which the mere reading about it in our history, would raise our rage and foam beyond words, was something we had to live with now! First we were ordered to wear an orange “Star of David” on the chest, on the left side. Then the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar] came and added another layer. An orange Star of David on the back as well, in order so a Jew would be recognized from the front and from the back. The value of that addition was something that we, my wife and I, felt on our very flesh. And this how the story went: on the thirteen day of the month of September [1941], on the day we left town in order to move to the ghetto, an unusual incident occurred to my wife, which serves as an evidence to her mental state back then. After the examination board had confiscated my entire work office with its machines, its furniture and my library, and after the lion share of our estate had been spent, an estate we had built and nourished for more than twenty years, we organized a small portion of our furniture and our belongings which we decided to take to the ghetto, and we loaded them on a wagon in two loads. The evening was fast approaching, and with a heavy heart, started heading to the ghetto. Suddenly my wife felt a sharp pain in her leg, as if she became paralyzed, and she was under no circumstance able to move or go forward. My wife sat down on the edge of the sidewalk and waited “until the indignation would be over”, and I was helpless. It was forbidden for us to hire a wagon driver, it was forbidden for us to walk on the sidewalk, and the hour was late and we had to enter the ghetto, and to find a place to sleep, and a shelter to our belongings, and all until eight o’clock. Our despair was endless! Finally, my wife felt a little relief, the pain started to fade, and I began to walk with her as she leaned on my arm. Near the house of Dr. Ivaniski [not Jewish] I decided to walk her on the sidewalk, as her pain began to rise again. Suddenly something happened, something that struck us both as a thunder: we both received at the same two blows which left us speechless. The little shaft on my glasses was broken and,

as the glasses slid down my nose I was not able to see clearly the villain who hit us, in order to remember his face and recognize him if needed. He made an impression of a common worker, who apparently was zealous for the sacred sidewalk that the Jews dared to tread. I protested as I tried to repair my glasses: “You have no right to beat”, and he, while gnashing his teeth as an evil dog, answered: “Do you still look for permits?” and wanted to hit me again. However, it was possible that when he saw my face he recognized me [and also] a German was coming and I began to complain that this evil person hit an ill woman. The German had no reaction, but the vile man hurried, into the next yard and disappeared. To make a long story short – did the mark of disgrace on our backs brought the villain to do such a despicable thing? The Germans are very strict about everything: they marked even the size and the width of the mark of disgrace and the places in which it should be worn. [The size of the side of the triangle had to be 10 cm, firmly attached to the front and the back, in 10 cm from the stitch of the shoulder.

- 5) The decree against using the sidewalks. This decree was insulting and humiliating in an awful way. The Jews were walking like shadows by the side of the streets, and the Christians were allowed on the sidewalks. Our feet frequently met the stones sticking out from the street, a sure way to ruin the soles of our shoes, which cannot be repaired now due to the lack of leather, and overshoes were hard to find. The question was obvious at first: how would our people fulfill this decree in the winter, when the snow piles up on the sides of the streets? The sky was fighting with us too... and in that year the winter hurried up and started from the month of November [1941] when it was very cold and large quantities of snow fell on the ground, and we had the honor to walk through piles of snow, and to drag out feet on the slippery ice, and as real saints we fell and got up. But there was nothing to it! If we would remain alive, we would bear that too.
- 6) The restrictions regarding culture and science. Taken from us were the pleasures from the scientific inventions constituting the larger part of our cultural lives. It was forbidden to use radio, the telephone, the telegraph, the post, the means of transportation: train, car, bus, bicycle; the heart would hurt as we remember the part Jewish minds had taken in the inventions of the radio, the car and the airplane; the heart would hurt as we remember our part in the cultural lives in general, when we had been using the products of science before the Lithuanians had even a chance to see them, and when they did see them, like with the train, the bicycle and more, they believed it was the work of the devil, that a demon is hiding inside of the cars. And now they are allowed to enjoy the things we created, our scientific inventions, and for us they are forbidden. Yes! The telephone receiver on the ear of the rural Lithuanian is just as “a ring of gold in a swine's snout” [Proverbs 11, 22].
- 7) The decree against appearing in public places. We were presented with an entire “flower bouquet” of decrees in order to remove us from the general public and to cast us out as lepers: it is forbidden for us to appear in the theater and the cinema, in public parks, to sit on benches around town, in general not to walk around town (this decree was completed and implemented in a unique way when we were already in the ghetto, I will tell the details later on). Every little gentile among the clerks, any German soldier, had the right, when seeing one of us in the streets, to start an interrogation and to ask about his business. Where did he go, and where did he come from? And if the answer was not satisfactory, then they could beat us, and even to take us and arrest us.

Recently, terror comes upon all the Jews who meet the war prisoners as a part of their work. The supervisors of the prisoners take the Jews they meet and force them to transport their weak prisoner “friends”, or even carry them on their shoulders up to the prison house. Supposedly, their place of rest. On the way, they would receive special additional blows in order to hurry up. There are inventors who order the Jews to kiss their “Bolshevik friends”. There is a story about one intellectual Jew who had been

forced to kiss not on the face, but in some other place... “Even if it is not true, it is well conceived”⁹⁸. As the Italians say, may their name and memory be blotted out. All the decrees and the orders I enumerated are nothing compared to the decree regarding the ghetto, which enclosed our entire existence and sealed our entire meaning. Who would have thought that this anachronism which had been cancelled and had been forgotten for hundreds of years, would live again in the twentieth century, and that the ghetto with all of its humiliating and depressing details, would be established once again? And who else could do this if not the Germans, lovers of history and allegedly romantic, who are again the fans of Wotan⁹⁹, who had awoken them as they aspire to impose the darkness of the Middle Ages again upon the world.

And one question arises: “what is this and for what?” Do all the Germans as a nation lost their minds as they attached themselves to a lunatic, filled with psychoses, as always “the hand of Israel is in the middle” and the Jews are to blame for everything as they aspire to exterminate the Aryan nations and rule upon everything, upon the entire world? How much of the stupidity and the sick logic, and the disturbance of the mind in these ideas, which became our hurdle, and which gives a legitimation to do with us as pleased for nothing at all. Surely this lunatic until he became involved in the war with Russia brought, with his courage and cheekiness many benefits to the Germans. And so they forgive him for this one weakness, and the crowd believes in him and worships him like a God – the crowd of the classic country in which the birth of the allegedly scientific anti-Semitism had taken place: “it was not for nothing that a starling went to a crow, but because it is [its] kind” [Bava Kama 92, 72].

- 8) Before we start to write about the ghetto – the main point in our stories – it is necessary to state another important decree which was brought upon us even before we entered the ghetto, we were forbidden to use the work of the Christians: coachmen, barbers, carriers, store owners, servants, valets and so on and so forth; it was not appropriate that the lower class would be served by the upper one, that the Aryans – the best that was ever created – would work for the despicable Jews, the ones of the lower race, the ones who the corruption is in them [according to Leviticus 22, 25]. Surely the “blood humiliation” was sufficient when one would read the writings [signs] on the windows of the stores, the wagons of the barbers and the coaches: “No service for Jews”. I had received from Stankus¹⁰⁰ a written permission, in Lithuanian and a very poor German, to use the coach for my travels to the patients (before it was forbidden to treat Christians), but I dwelled among scorpions [according to Ezekiel 2, 6] in a coach on which was written: “No service for Jews”.

⁹⁸ Se non e vero, e ben trovato.

⁹⁹ A divinity, from the German mythology, for war and destruction; an additional name of this divinity: Odin.

¹⁰⁰ The person in charge of the Jews matters then, until he was too killed by the Germans.

9. The ghetto and its decrees

No one is capable describing and encompassing all the details of this decree which still stands until today, and of which the last word had not been spoken. Ghetto – that is to say our entire tragic lives at this moment, surely, to its wholly limited extent, but it is branched out to so many details, which are ought to be studied, observed, investigated and examined by a committee of specialists. And each one of them could select his own specialty. And so, my listings would be sometimes faulty, incomplete, only a portion of the trouble and despair which came upon us. But at least a blurry picture, I will give to our sons who come after us, of all we had been through in the ghetto of Shavli.

A. The formation of the ghetto

Not many days after the Germans had entered Shavli, the question of the ghetto began raising its head and started to be heard, started to depress our souls and to terrorize us like a violent wind, like a bitter pole [a bitter destruction; Deuteronomy 32, 24] which was meant to anger us all constantly, without rest in the days of our lives. The Germans quickly began dealing with the issue of the Jews, in which they became quite experts, became smart in finding the ways to harm like no others. First of all they appointed a “Commander [person in charge] for the matters of the Jews”, this position was given to a drunk young man, Stankus, who was a Major in the Lithuanian army, and the crown of the “distress for the Jews” under the supervision of the Germans, was very suitable for him. And he began to fill the part of “the messenger of evil” [Psalms 78, 49] as best he could. Stankus approached several of the respected men of the community in Shavli and asked them to appoint representatives for the Jews. The ones who had held public positions in the old days, almost all of them quit and got out of the job, for various reasons, and especially because they were afraid to draw the attention of the Germans upon them, who in various locations had begun torture and arrests, first of public figures. After a short negotiation there were several volunteers, who wished to be in the public eye, and agreed to take upon them the task of being the Jewish representatives in Shavli, that is to say: [Mendel] Leibovich, [Dov Bar] Cartoon, and the old [Peiba] Rubinstein. At the same time various rumors began to startle and to haunt us about the organization of a ghetto for us, rumors which changed from day to day and contradicted one another. One day we heard a rumor, that all the Jews in Shavli would be sent to Zagare – an unfortunate town not far [about 70 km to the north] from Shavli – and the next day we heard another rumor that this decision had been cancelled, and instead it was decided to move us to a suburb of Shavli, Shimsha¹⁰¹, to live in the clay houses of the poor farmers, which were surrounded with swamps, slime, and mud even in the days of summer. One the third day we were angry to hear the news that the Jews in Shavli were to be divided into two groups: one group of experts, professionals, and one group of common Jews without professions, and artists. The specialists [experts] were to be sent to Traku Street, and the rest of the population were to be sent to gibbous and slimy part of the town called “Caucasus”¹⁰²; and on the fourth day, our spirit was once again settled as we heard that the question of the ghetto was no longer an issue, and “our homes were happy!” And so, the rumors would repeat themselves every day, and one contradicted the other and so on. But, as a matter of fact, one day Stankus called one day the Jewish representative before him, and suggested that they would go to Zagare and see the place to which the Jews of Shavli were to be transferred, and to see the buildings which were ready there and which were used by the Poles who had escaped at the beginning of the war with the Germans from their home, to Lithuania. The representatives dared and refused him and they had good reasons: that they were not allowed to travel by themselves, to see the graves for their brothers, as surely five

¹⁰¹ In the eastern part of Shavli.

¹⁰² ...

thousand men had no possibility to exist in a remote town as Zagare, which does not even have a railway, and especially that the exiled were to go there poor and naked, because there was a possibility for all our belongings to remain in Shavli. And we were to take only “what could be carried by hand”, that is to say hand luggage. Our ears heard about this and we were very afraid. We understood that the question of the ghetto was still an issue, and that our removal from Shavli and our transfer to a place of calamity was something that had been discussed and was about to happen in the future. The rumors about a formation of a ghetto and the implementation of the details of such decision did not stop, and they were strange and backward – the common thread was that they all were destined to bitter our lives and to make us afraid for what was about to become of us. Finally, those in control, and had the power of decision, had decided that the ghetto would be opened here [in Shavli] and not in another town, as if as Shavli did not have enough “holes and dens”? Its surroundings were full of sheds and unstable buildings and clay houses “standing on chicken feet”, filthy and dirty, which would shorten the days of the wealthy and spoiled Jews in their nice houses and with their nice tools, and that should happen very soon. At the same time, a happy rumor circled around the Jewish community according to which the artists and the specialist would be left in town, but this rumor was quickly denied, and instead it was announced that all the Jews, without exceptions, would be obligated to live and sleep in the ghetto. Only the arranged offices of the physicians which contained electrical machines will remain in town, and the physicians would be obligated to continue their work there, and they would only sleep in the ghetto. One of those offices was my radiologic office, as well as the office of Dr. Woolfert, the office of Dr. Pesachovich, with his cardiograph, and a few others. The quick Dr. Pesachovich was ahead of everybody (except of the fact that he thought that he was God’s gift to men), and he received such a permission from Stankus. I was not in a hurry to receive such a permission. As Stankus had promised me with full mouth that I will surely receive such a permission, and for now there was no need to receive one. And as I regarded the issue as settled, and that it was not just another rumor, I submitted a written request to Stankus about the permission to leave my office in town as I had been promised by him. To my surprise, the matter got quite complicated, not like it was with Dr. Pesachovich. Stankus sent my request to Dr. Jasaitis¹⁰³, in order for him to testify about the necessity of my office, Jasaitis began to be hesitant and postponed his testimony. It seemed that the part of “steals a God’s thing” from the Nuremberg Laws¹⁰⁴, which were about to be validated in our town as well, which forbids Jews to treat Christians, would annul the whole permits issue. And so, when I asked Jasaitis to sign my request and to attach his agreement, he turned me down and said “Let us wait a few more days” – he must have had information about the banning of the Jews to treat Aryan patients. In any case I was taken to the prison house, and the issue of my permit remained pending.

And so the organization of the ghetto began: in the Trotsky region they allocated the streets: Ezero, Zilviciu, Padirsiu, Ginkunu, which are near Traku Street. And in the Caucasus region they allocated the streets Gelgudo, Silu, Krumu, Kaukazas and small parts from the streets Venclausko, Visniaus and Ezero¹⁰⁵. Around each one of the regions they put poles with determined spacing between them, and the spaces between the poles they filled with barb metal wires, and in the fences two gates were cut. And so two shelters were prepared for the Jews in Shavli as costumed in Germany, in order to differentiate the ones of the lower class, from the advanced Aryans, and among them also the outstanding Lithuanians, who in the old days had been servants and slaves of the Polish, and they had been as squashed threshold, but now they attained high positions, and required a dividing barrier, for a quarantine, against the impure and dangerous Jews, who by accident are still alive, in their country which had become a valley of death

¹⁰³ The appointee on behalf of the authorities on the health issues in Shavli and its surroundings.

¹⁰⁴ The Nuremberg Race Laws from September 15, 1935; see comment 60.

¹⁰⁵ According to the order in the text: Gelgudo, Silu, Krumu, Kaukazas, Venclausko, Visniaus, Ezero.

B. Transferring the Jew of Shavli into the ghetto

After the two ghetto¹⁰⁶ regions were prepared, the former residents, workers of factories and the poor of the land, were forced to relocate from their condemned and filthy homes, and simultaneously the preparations began for our transfer into the ghetto. For this purpose, a few committees were established in order to examine the “real estate” of the Jews, to select the items allowed to be transferred into the ghetto, and which would be confiscated for “the public good”. More often than not, these boards were strict, and often, they were merciless, surely under external influence but not only, as they were based on the assumption that “what had been bought by the Jewish slaves, was bought by their masters the Germans and Lithuanians”. They acted as if they were entitled, that all the property of the Jews belonged to them, and what they let the Jews take into the ghetto was given from their own, and they were in fact doing a favor to the Jews, and so the committees confiscated the best furniture, the clothes, all the jewelry, gold, and silver items, and the Jews were only allowed to take a small portion. Oh! The wealth of the Jews that had gone down the drain then! The committees were also the ones allocated the funds, provisions, clothes, underwear, and the shoes that each family took into the ghetto, and that also had caused the waste of the Jews wealth. As a matter of fact, we, and all our properties, belonged to the Germans. We began to “smuggle” our belongings and hiding it in the homes of our Christian friends, as it had always been done by the wealthy and affluent Jews, which resulted sometimes in very bad and even disastrous outcomes, as I will explain below. There were also committees which were not so strict and allowed taking more items into the ghetto – after the Bolsheviks had taken a portion of the Jewish belongings and especially after what had been taken by the Lithuanian and Germans looters – was not much left to take, and we all became indigents.

After the inspection and confiscation of property, furniture and the other items which the committees did not have enough time to take in the carriages they had come with, our transfer into the ghetto began gradually: street after street. Soon it was obvious that the two regions of the ghetto which had been prepared, were not sufficient to receive all the Jewish people remained in Shavli, that in spite of the “emptying” [exile] by the Bolsheviks, the flight at the beginning of the war and the numerous arrests, more than five thousand Jews were left in Shavli, out of the nine thousand who had been in town before the war, and surely for them the place in the ghetto was not enough, even in extreme density. Then they decided to add another region from the town surroundings, “Kalniukas – the Little Hill” – the coastline plain by the great lake. However, the residents of Kalniukas consulted among themselves and they decided to send a delegation to the German District Commissar [Gebietskommissar] to ask him to save them from the impure Jews who would ruin and infect their nice and clean “beauties” (which surely were no better from the other two existing regions of the ghetto, which were filled with bedbugs, cockroaches and rodents). They say that Stankus in person supported the residents of Kalniukas, as his home was in the same region. The District Commissar heard and accepted the request of the delegation and he annulled the decision to add the Kalniukas region to the ghetto, and so the stress and the density in the ghetto increased even more, and many family literally remained under the clear sky without a shelter or a place to sleep. Then, the Germans and the Lithuanians found a solution “to kill two birds with one stone”: to reduce the density in the ghetto by reducing the number of Jews in Shavli. Surely, all the calamities that the Jewish population had gone through at the end of the Bolsheviks regime and especially when the Germans entered town clearly reduced the number of Jews in Shavli, but this is the evidence: reducing the number of Jews is an advantage in their opinion, not a disadvantage.

¹⁰⁶ In fact two different ghetto “neighborhoods” were established: the one called Caucasus and it was the southern one, and north from it, between the “Red” prison and Frenkel’s leather factory – another called Traku. In this part of the ghetto all the central institutes for the entire ghetto were located, including the Jewish representative, Atstovybe.

The stratagem of the Germans and their servants, the Lithuanians who fulfilled their wishes, in order to reduce the density in the ghetto will remain written in blood for all generations to come as one of the darkest times of our history. It is no less cruel or less savage than the killings of Lithuanian Jews in other towns and the cities, and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say, that as long as the Jews of Lithuania and their children are alive and breathing, they would not forget the cruelty and the evilness of the Lithuanians towards the Jews who had built their towns and cities, the ones who had created trade and industry in their country, and what they did to the latter in all the Lithuanian towns in which the sons of Israel came down [2 Kings 6, 9] after the Germans had come in general, and especially at the time of the ghetto.

In the end, the Lithuanians, along with Stankus as their leader, under the management of the Germans, made a list of all the Jews they considered as unnecessary excess: the old, the ill, the weak, lonely women with no professions (anyone except Jews with trade skills useful for them, that had been hard to find within the citizens, as hat makers, fur and glove makers, and the like, all the Jews that were excess), and to those they often added their young and healthy relatives, sons, and daughters. It is suspected that several young lonely ladies were added into the list who had hidden many valuable items with some influential Christians, and the latter, as they wanted to inherit what had been left in their possession, wanted them to "disappear". And when the list was made they started removing these ones from it, the ones who were still in town and the ones who were already in the ghetto, to an unknown location, under a pretense that they were going to be moved to Zagare; after a while they stopped moving them there, but instead gathered them in one of the prayer houses in Shavli, perhaps in order to give the sons of Israel an opportunity to perform the commandment of the "Redemption of Captives", and to personally benefit from it. And those who were had not been redeemed, were moved to an unknown location as well. To where? A frightening question mark floating above a great abyss of blood and tears. As aforementioned, they said that the ones on the list had been transferred to Zagare, but the carriers of the wagons in which they loaded the victims, would return after a little while, and we assumed they had no time to arrive and go back from Zagare. The truth was that all of them had been led to three locations near Shavli: to the surroundings of Kuzai¹⁰⁷, what had been fertile grounds for calamity, where in the days of Nicholas the horrible they had spread rumors that the Jews had informed the Germans of the Russians hiding place, and to the surroundings from the village Sapnagiai up to the forest Bubiai¹⁰⁸. One Christian girl told us, that she was in the Bubiai forest by mistake and she saw from far away, that out of the pile of bodies in the grave, a hand was raised and on it a bracelet with a watch filled with blood. A Partisan rushed ragingly to the grave, took off the watch, and shoved the hand back thrust upon thrust [Psalms 140, 12] into the pile of bodies, as the arm was still convulsing between life and death. Yes! An endless and unlimited cruelty had been demonstrated by the villains, and we really believed at first, that all of those who had been led out of town had been transferred to Zagare. The sound of their blood shouting from the ground, our ears shall ring, and our heart shall shrink, and we shall know no security [according to Psalms 30, 7] in our souls! How can we forget the pharmacist Meirovich and his wife, the teacher Goldstein and his wife, and last but not least, Professor Kravitz and his wife? Dear people, nice and kind, courageous as never before! How can we forget them? Their memory is always in our heart, consolation will not come to our eyes. We were hoping to see Professor Kravitz often, as he had been one of the visitors in our house, we thought we were going to engage pleasant conversations in the ghetto, as friends and colleagues, as he was such an interesting man, with such a clear logic and a talent for analysis. A loss which would not be turned! Surely, the "tragedy of the son" which had happened to him had brought him horrible desperation and had subdued him, and only death could have saved him and his wife from the agonies of their souls. Those ill people had one son, tall as an oak, educated, law student. At the Bolsheviks regime he had held a very high position in the police: he had been, if I am not

¹⁰⁷ Near the town and in the nearby forest, Kuziu miskas, where they were murdered.

¹⁰⁸ Sapnagiai, a village about 6 km from Shavli, near to a road [from the east] leading to Joniskis and [north] to Riga, Latvia; Bubiai, a small town-village near a forest and several lakes [a region which was recognized as a Nature Reserve lately], about 15 km south-west of Shavli.

mistaken, the head of the clerical work in town, and so, when the Germans came, his father thought it was best if he left Shavli. And he happened to be in Linkuva¹⁰⁹. There, as the story went, were several Partisans who were preparing to hurt and kill the Jews, and when courage and the circumstance allowed them, they stopped a carriage which was on its way from Linkuva to Pakroujis¹¹⁰, a carriage full of Jewish prisoners, and one of them was “Munia” Kravitz, and they took him and two of his friends, and after a few moments gunshots were heard which ended the lives of the three Jews. Among the witnesses was the Engineer Rafaelovich who told us those details. Professor Kravitz was by nature a great optimist, and he never has complained about his misfortune, of which he had a share of, but lately, before he learned what had happened to his only son, his heart predicted a calamity for him, and he was miserable and angry and shed tears more than once. Yes, death saved him and saved his wife from limitless agonies of the soul. It is pity for those who are lost and found no more! A sea of tears, a sea of blood washes us more and more.

And the physicians had amused their hearts with the thought that they would keep their offices in town, and they had trusted the promises of Stankus and Jasaitis, disappointment and bitterness was their share. The known decree of the Nuremberg Laws regarding physician was validated, and all the tables were turned! A decree was issued that Jews physicians cannot treat “Aryan” people, and the permissions that had been given to the physicians to keep their offices in a town, which was entirely populated by Aryan, were obviously cancelled. Even more: the committees received orders to confiscate those offices with their furniture, their tools and their books. The special committee appointed to do that, with a participation of a Christian physician, did just that. What an ancient fortune [stately, according to Isaiah 23, 18] had been robbed from the Jewish physicians! So much property, which had been recently acquired with the sweat of their brows, and labor on sleepless nights, all went down to the drain, and our haters inherited it due to the catastrophe. All the medical equipment and the libraries which had been accumulated in the office [clinic] and its barn [storage house] near the physiotherapy office which had been in the house of Dr. Levin, and all the Christian physicians with positions in the hospital or in the town’s institutes arrived and divided the treasure. The Jewish “luggage” which was wasted is priceless, especially now when medical equipment and supplies were so hard to find. The only outcome was that the Jewish physicians who had been amused by the thought that they would keep their offices in town, did not take the necessary means to secure their machines and their properties which would be lost later on, and also, as they had been sure the offices would remain in town, they were late to move to the ghetto and make arrangement there when there had been still a possibility to do so. I had been among those late physicians, not only because I had been waiting for my permit, but also because of my arrest.

And the extreme stratagem of the murderers to evacuate houses in the ghetto and to reduce the Jewish population surely increased our despair and filled us with distress and tortures as we saw our acquaintances and friends taken from us in such a horrible way. But the density in the ghetto was hardly reduced by this measure. To receive a home in the ghetto for those who were late comers, became as hard as parting the Red Sea. It is hard to describe as a torture the “intangible souls” who wondered around in the ghetto all day, and crushed the offices of the supervisors, with faces as dark as a cauldron, and at night they rolled in the remote corners of the narrow and insufficient homes of their friends, until they finally found their so called rest in some distant hole.

On the third day after my release from the prison house the committee came to examine our belongings and to confiscate my office as well. After my imprisonment, when I felt I had escaped a great danger, maybe the danger of death, like the part of the prisoners in the earlier period, nothing was dear to be and I was in a state of “all that a man hath will he give for his life” [Job 2, 4] and so I was almost indifferent to the confiscation of the items in my office. “After a fire you get rich”¹¹¹. Now I can count the damages, what wealth, I was robbed of! The Roentgen machine, “son of the mountain” [quartz], “Sulcus”, diathermy machine, the gynecology chair,

¹⁰⁹ About 50 km north-east of Shavli.

¹¹⁰ From Linkuva to Pakroujis, about 15 km to the south.

¹¹¹ A consolation popular saying among the physicians in Lithuania.

various types of tools, furniture, and above all my library in six languages: Hebrew, Russian, French, German, Yiddish and Lithuanian. So many years I had been building and flourishing it! How much money had been spent on all of the books! Surely I managed to transfer a large portion of my books into the ghetto, especially Hebrew books which my son took care of, and many medical books I left in the attic of my former home, but I lost the biggest part of my books for three reasons: 1) as I mentioned, my indifference after my arrest, 2) lack of packaging means and possibility to transfer my entire library into the ghetto and 3) my friends had misled me as they had told me that it was necessary to give all the belongings of my office to the committee, that is to say all the equipment along with the books. The truth is that the physician who participated in the committee for the confiscation of the belongings of the Jewish physicians was Dr. Doctoraitis, who had been my student in the municipal hospital, and I had been his “teacher and Rabbi” and he treated me with much respect. And if it was not for the reasons I mentioned above, I believe I could have arranged the matter of my office then and take as much as I liked out of my belongings. But, unfortunately, especially due to my arrest and also due to my hope to remain in town, I was late and I did not properly take care of the items in my office, but I was able to hide several of our belongings from our home, and our kitchen with our Christian friends. Surely, it was obvious that I had no possibility to smuggle and hide my big machines; however, the Christian physician from Kleme promised me that he would be able to receive a permission to buy the Roentgen machine from me together with the new tube I had purchased, I could have receive 18 thousands rubles, an amount which could have pulled me out of the material distress and depression, in which I am today. This great damage had been done to me by the promise made by Stankus, as aforementioned, to keep my office in town. This promise became my obstacle.

We welcomed the committee hospitably. “My dear student” which had a talent for “drinking” just like the other two members of the committee, received nice portions of wine and “liqueur” and fine gifts. And intoxicated with wine they wrote the items which were in my study and in my library and they did not pay much attention to the rest of our belongings, to the point that I could had taken with me everything I had wished. Unfortunately, I had hidden most of my belongings and my clothes before with my Christian friends, and now, due to other reasons, it is hard for me to retrieve them. And so now I find myself lacking things, things I could have sold in order to provide for myself and my family, because the money is no longer in my pockets, and the salary (15 rubles for a day of work and ten ruble a day – for my son) is so little, that it is not sufficient even for the food we need, even when purchased according to the card [for the rationed portions in the ghetto]. This salary was set for us by the Germans in order to just barely able to provide for ourselves, so we would not die. Because often there was a lack of bread in the ghetto, and the price for one loaf could rise up to 80 rubles, and the tea was hard to find, and the sugar [who would pronounce/remember its name, as it was replaces by saccharin which is very expensive.

On the thirteenth day of the month of September [the year 1941] (“the dozen of the devils”), as the evening was coming upon us, after the tortures of my wife and the two blows we had received, as I told you before, we finally had the good fortune to arrive the ghetto, to the Traku region¹¹². There was no home ready for us, a place to put in the rest our furniture, our belongings and books. And only then did our real troubles and calamities began. We were fed up with wondering our souls and belongings for nine days: we were in the state of lost and deviated gypsies. In vain we had flattered the clerks of the ghetto, begging them to find us some kind of a home, and especially that I had been still tired from my arrest, and my wife had been tired and ill, but the clerks had rejected us from day to day with promises, with no outcomes or results. Because of the fact that the crowd in the ghetto still blamed the physicians for the removal of the people in the ghetto to “the temple houses” [the author refers to a dilution action which was had been performed by the murderers to the occupants of the ghetto], finding a home for us became even more difficult. Finally, our acquaintances showed us a “nice apartment”, which was

¹¹² From the name of the same street from which several houses were attached to the ghetto.

occupied by a family of “forsaken of men”¹¹³ who had come from Taurage, and who arranged themselves a home there immediately after the ghetto was established. Then the clerks of the ghetto also tried to help us and suggested to the aforementioned family an apartment which was as good as theirs, just that its location (near the gate) and its hard access (down the hill) were not suitable for a physician home. We would prolong the tale very much if I told you in detail all the adventures we had with this family – “the poor people who belonged to another town” – after many refuses and vicissitudes from this family, and the desire of their oldest son to blackmail us, we gave this family an amount of 200 rubles as compensation fees (and a cup of butter)... and we received the apartment: a small room, a narrow kitchen and a little hallway, which was more crooked than standing. The apartment was full of slime and filth, all the cracks in the walls were filled with bedbugs and yellow and black cockroaches, and the walls were covered with sponge paper full to the uttermost [according to Ezekiel 23, 32] with dirt. We cleaned the apartment as much as possible, we tried to cover the walls in carpets, in order to at least hide the bedbugs and the cockroaches so they would not startle us each time. We live in this apartment, narrow, crowded, unclean, full of mice, which attack us from time to time, and we are happy! We have a place to stay and to cook in, especially that the kitchen is all ours and there is no need to share it – a thing that brings many fights and disputes in other homes. Surely, the villain son of the family who had been there before us, who wanted to exploit us, sought a revenge, and he brought the policeman who took our son to Joniskelis, a thing which hurt us without limits. Apart from that, we suffered more than a month from the stench of the left overs that the old tenants “left” us. Meaning the sister of the teacher Ir. – a nervous girl, almost insane, a gossip, a snitch suspect of kleptomania, whose presence at our kitchen at night, the grumbling of this young woman made us very angry. We finally drove her out of our kitchen after several disputes and after the shattering of one of our windows, because she began to steal from us. Her belongings remained for a long time in our hallway, which gave her a reason to come back from time to time and abuse us. We finally got rid of it (the remaineth)¹¹⁴ when she was moved to the Caucasus region – I write down this detail in order to emphasize even more the hardship and the unpleasantness related to the apartments issue in the ghetto: great density and indecent people as neighbors and more.

C. The appearance of the ghetto

The two sections of the ghetto, two large areas surrounded by fences of stinging barbed wires, sprawl on hills and inclines which end in the lakes in Shavli. The streets in this steep terrain have no stone pavement or sidewalks; surely, in several parts of the ghetto wooden pads were laid down at the sides of the streets, but the pads were rotten and they cannot help at the times in which the snow falls or after a pouring rain, when the streets are full with water puddles and filled with mud and flood up to the ankles¹¹⁵. It is also hard when the streets cover themselves with slippery ice, then walking becomes hazardous. The danger is even much greater at the times of the toddlers, the “toddlers of the sons of Israel” which slide with their sleds from the hills and the slopes and turn them into real slippery ones. They are happy to use the comfort and delight which had always been the “part” of the Christian children. Now they are “rejoice unto exultation” [according to Job 3, 22], and who could tell the future for those children who grow without education in school as fields plants. Is there any hope for them? Would they grow and become men; would they be killed before their time (as it had happened) [= the author added the parentheses]¹¹⁶ by the sons of gentiles?

¹¹³ Beyond the personal anger on those people, the term “forsaken of men” is related to a singular in the holy script [Isaiah 53, 3] which was used by the teachers and students of the Talmudic colleges in Lithuania for people with a very low social class, men without name.

¹¹⁴ The remaineth [according to Exodus 26, 12]. To a very large extent, this language from the author, who is restrained by nature, reflects the cruel reality, the stressful reality, the one between depression and hysteria in the ghetto in those days.

¹¹⁵ From here we can assume that the text was written in the spring of 1942.

¹¹⁶ This addition was therefore made after the Aktion (deportation to the death camps) of the children from the ghetto in Shavli at the beginning of the month of November 1943.

The architecture of the ghetto was quite a primitive one: all the houses with some exceptions, are wooden houses with one story, short and dense. The apartments have one or two narrow rooms, much smaller than the rooms in regular farm houses. Usually, the ceiling is very low, the walls are covered with poorly painted paper or just with newspapers. There is a stove in the room which is also used to cook and heat the apartment. In the winter it does not fulfill its purpose, and fails heating the apartment, and in the summer when you cook something on it, it is hard to contain the excess heat. The former tenants of those houses had been mostly workers in the Frenkel¹¹⁷ factory and similar, poor people, hardworking and meager, who most likely had spent their spare time in the pub, and the women had worked too, waiting for the time they would go home, to take care of their children. In one word: the tenants of those houses had not paid so much attention to the state of their houses and their arrangement, and so the neglect is great there, and in the hallways and in the barns (storage houses), sometimes everything is more cracked than standing, and in the inside of the houses the walls are dirty, and full of bedbugs and cockroaches. There is another big problem in the ghetto, even a greater one: it is the kingdom of the rough and small mice in the full sense of the words. These little rodents sometimes take the last provisions of the inhabitants of the ghetto, in this hour when finding food is hard like the parting of the Red Sea, and one should keep a close eye on them. But keeping from these pests is far from being easy at all. One time, with very great difficulty we had managed to buy a piece of meat, an honorable one, and when we wanted to smuggle it into the ghetto, hidden under a pile of potatoes, the policemen at the gates of the ghetto caught us and except from the anguish, we were forced to pay another five rubles to the policemen as a punishment. And when we hung the very expensive meat, which had costed us great deal of money, on the ceiling, we found out the next day that the two wild animals living with us ate a large portion of the meat, as apparently they entered into the hallway through the holes in the ceiling, had been left from the period of the last tenants. Moreover, in our room, the provisions which were hanged from the ceiling received the same treatment from the rodents. The large number of mice in the ghetto could be explained by its vicinity to the leather factory. The leather factories provide for numerous battalions of mice which wonder around them. The factory of Frenkel had been famous in the old days all over Europe, and its products had been seen not only in Russia, but also in Western Europe as well, and now its brightness has deemed, its glory has faded, its splendor diminished. Surely now the factory is still running, and even under the management of its former manager [Eliyahu] Mordil, who the Germans cannot get rid of, as all the paths of the factory and all its corners are known to him. However, the whole world is closed right now, and the production of the factory, which is intended only for war purposes, was widely reduced. But the number of mice had not been reduced, it has increased. So many melancholic thoughts arise from this factory, the one which the Traku region of the ghetto is leaning on. A live and clear evidence of the initiative and the talent for actions of one Jewish man. Frenkel the father [Chaim] was wise enough to buy in the old days for a small amount, the swamp land by the great lake in Shavli. There he had established a little tanning house and had begun to work there as a simple worker with few other day workers. His success had been astounding! Literally from day to day the factory had grown and flourished and prospered and had become famous in the whole world. Frenkel the father who had become a “multimillionaire” expressed his fear [concern] for all of his family members and his numerous relatives and had called them often to the factory, not like those others who had become rich and ignored their relatives [flash; according to Isaiah 58, 7], in order to forget their past. He had been a very generous man and had done great deeds to the benefit of the Jewish community in Shavli. His only son was as talented as his father, but with such a fortune fallen onto his lap, he has managed. He was also not as generous as his father and regarding the institutes of national value, he was even a miser. Surely to charity matters related to religion, he has shown his good side, and he especially opened his hand widely to governmental institutions, and for the publicity, even the paid ones, which could bring a tangible benefit. He had given his best money, when he could see his name in the papers,

¹¹⁷ In 1877, Rabbi Chaim Frenkel established a factory for leather processing, which employed hundreds of workers and experts, among them many Jews. His son, who continued his tradition was Yaakov, until the Russian nationalized the factory in 1940.

because he was chasing respect as much as possible. As opposed to that, it was necessary to negotiate with him from time to time for a donation for “Keren Hayesod” for another national institute, as his excuse was that he was not a Zionist. So much this Lithuanian Rothschild could have done for our people. And he would have been so happy if he would have purchased a field and a vineyard pursuant to his pocket in the land of our forefathers! If only a tenth of his possessions which had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks he would have given to our people, and now those possessions had fallen in the hands of our destroyers and demolishers who rule us over! He could have created a true class for hundreds of workers in the land of our forefathers! The institutes he could have established there and the name he would have bought for himself! Oh! So much of the Jewish wealth has gone down the drain in Germany and in other countries in which our haters set their feet! We were presented as an empty vessel and were left “in a hopeless situation”.

And luck had shown its good fortune to Frenkel the son, his wife and sons. He and his little family had timed their leave for America before the Bolsheviks had arrived. He had gone there when the Global Exposition had opened there and had settled in this country. He had been saved from so many troubles and humiliations as he is now outside the Lithuanian borders in the land of the free. If he would have stayed here surely this sick man would have found his end in a concentration camp, in the prison house or in the ghetto by his great assets which have fallen in the hands of strangers. This has been the fate of his old mother who had died in the ghetto lately. She drank a full glass of poison which finished her and brought the end to her! Such a wealthy woman who has reached a level of begging for bread, and she had to sell her last assets in order to provide for herself. And the Frenkel millionaire has died in a foreign room, in a narrow room filled with mold in the ghetto in Shavli! A good lesson for our wealthy ones who had trusted their fortune in a foreign country, and they had believed no harm would come to them in the shadow of their money. A more valuable lesson than the famous “Kenithpresten”¹¹⁸! And this woman in her times of glory was famous for her cheapness which could literally make you laugh, unless for the sorrow and grief surrounding us now. The story goes that this woman, when she was finishing her work in the office, where sometimes she took the place of her son, would turn off the light [electricity] in order not to waste it, and the workers in her factory were also only allowed to use electricity until an early hour of the night. She guarded with much pedantry when it came to her multimillionaire property!

Regarding the description of the facade of the ghetto, there is one positive detail I should state, which is that almost near every house there was a little or a large garden. In the spring and in the summer those gardens turned the view into a beautiful one, and everything seemed like a little village. But we were not blessed with those sights¹¹⁹, as the ghetto was no longer there, and in the end of autumn, when all the vegetables were picked, and in the beginning of winter as well, the picture was very gloomy, as near every house one can find a muddy, empty, dark lot. Lately the owners of the house had many claims towards the inhabitants of the ghetto regarding the crops of the gardens: cabbage, potatoes and such which remained there, when the ghetto was established, and the new tenants allegedly enjoyed them. Most of the times the claims were exaggerated, and the money of Israel once again went down the drain. By the way, the owners miss their “dens” very much and especially their gardens. So, they submitted a request to the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar] to give them back their homes and their gardens which provide them with vegetables and flowers in the summer, which are a source of living for them to a certain extent. And so, they appointed two lawyers to go to Kaunas to the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar]¹²⁰ and talk to him on their behalf. We still have no news about the outcome of this trip. There is a question which is constantly on our minds: Would we stay alive? Our lives are so worthless, if such a question was guiding us since the Germans came here. And if we do stay alive, would we still be here in the ghetto? Maybe

¹¹⁸ A figure of speech, which was common among the Jews of Lithuania, just like “Graph Fon Hibencstas” translated to “the wealthy [noble] without nothing”; here as a “not understandable behavior” at all.

¹¹⁹ The conclusion is that the author wrote those things at the end of winter, beginning of spring (the eve of Passover 5702 (T.N. 1943), approximately).

¹²⁰ Theodor Adrian Renteln, was the Gebietskommissar of Lithuania in the years 1941-1944.

they would move us to another location, as lately happened to the Jews from the western countries who were moved to Latvia and other counties which had been conquered¹²¹. And maybe “I dreaded my sins” about a thing which seems so far away from possibility – and maybe a gain would come to us and salvation, and we would leave the ghetto as free men as soon as in the next spring, “is the Lord’s hand waxed short” [Numbers 11, 23]? For now, it is hard, so hard, to believe in the near salvation. Surely we had seen miracles and wonders in the days of the Bolsheviks, some which nobody would have thought about, as they had held their position against the number one army in the world, the one with excellent technics, with discipline and courage which had never seen – but still they are so far away from a certain and decisive win! Surely, one should not trust a miracle, but surely in one of those days the war would be over, and if we happen to arrive to that day – surely we would lose our minds with happiness! There is no one to describe such happiness after so many days of bitterness! After all this time when we did not believe in our lives! Most of our sons and most of our remainders would sell everything and would not leave as much as a thread and a shoelace and would leave the valley of death and immigrate to the land of our forefathers. Would this beautiful dream come true? Would the Arabs agree? Would the nations which would be decisive for the fate of the Jews in the land of our forefathers agree? Surely the Arabs do not need to take lessons from the Lithuanians regarding the killings, and they are no less cruel, those savages of the desert, from the savages of Europe; but the difference between the victims of the Arabs and the victims of the Lithuanians is enormous! Here we were as sheep for the slaughter [Psalms 44, 23] for nothing at all, and there we were heroes who gave their lives for their country. There our enemies fought us, and we returned a fair war, and here we were killed like a mute sheep, and we had no possibility and no way in which we could have resisted. We wish to continue to bear [according to Isaiah 53, 12] and to die for our country in the land of our forefathers for victory and glory, to be like all the gentiles, in our own country and not in a foreign one, citizens of the homeland and not foreign “competitors”, who are thorns [according to Numbers 33, 55] in the eyes of the locals. Surely, there had been a time when the people of land had needed us very much. And so “in the first days which had been better than these” we had taken the place of the third class: the traders, the artists and the intermediaries between the nobles and the farmers. Now, when they began to develop a third class of their own, they decided that we are no longer needed, that we are excess, in spite of the fact that it had been clear that until today they had not been ready, and are insufficient to take our places in trade and art. But the urbans, and the ones who aspire to be urbans, and especially their store owners, thought that our function was over and that we need to step aside and make way for them. And their jobs began to be done by others: the Bolsheviks and then the Germans after them, helped the Lithuanians and quickly performed a job which would have taken the Lithuanians many years to perform in order to get rid of the Jews, as they have succeeded getting rid of us now. Yes! Their job was done by others, but it is a doubtful that they would benefit from this job, and if the current state of matters would bring benefit to the Lithuanian country. The Lithuanians has begun lately [end of the 1941/2 winter] to be angry and to protest. The story goes that their representatives have submitted a memorandum in Berlin, in which they claim three claims: they complain about the fact that they do not receive independence, about the fact that they are deprived of their food and they complain that... they have become murderers who would be remembered in history as such. “The robbed Caucasians”, God have mercy! Who would believe! Lately the Germans have begun flattering the Lithuanians: they allegedly gave Lithuania and the rest of the Baltic countries an urban and economic independence under their supervision. Apparently they need the people of the Baltic countries, and the latter, for now has received only bitterness and disappointment.

I will finish the external description of the ghetto with a little comment about the appearance of the ghetto at night (the author refers to the fall and winter [1941/2] – we still have not enjoyed the spring and summer in this beautiful place). There are no streetlamps in the ghetto. It is dark at night as single, deem rays of light come from

¹²¹ The author denied himself the thought of the possibility that they were heading for extermination. An extermination which the Germans did not want to execute on a German land, and on what they thought would be a part of a German land.

the curtains of the dark windows, and then the ghetto seems as a remote town of the Middle Ages, a town from another era: there is no pavement, no sidewalks, no streetlamps, and the houses which have no beauty and no splendor are enveloped in darkness [according to Psalms 139, 13]. Only from both sides of the ghetto in Traku light can be seen at night: deem from the right and bright from the left. On the right we have the Frenkel factory, and each night the guards and the servants clean the workshops there and prepare them for the next day. And on the left, light is beaming from the fence of the prison house, where the guard are – a reminder to the fact that the neighboring ghetto is also a prison for thousands of oppressed, troubled Jews tortured from various distresses and from the hunger approaching nearer and nearer, because there is no money left in the pockets, everything is expensive, and the attempt to bring even some potatoes or bread into the ghetto is extremely dangerous and rewarded with an arrest if the horrible villain is caught by the policemen near the gates. Let us thank the many owners who had installed electricity in their houses, however the situation was bad for the tenants without electricity, with no petrol, candles were very hard to find, and there was no possibility to install electricity now in the houses, due to lack of materials and because it is expensive. And so, they spend their long winter nights in the dark, like prisoners in a prison house.

D. Getting in and out the ghetto

As I told you before, the Prison House for Forced Labor in Shavli is near the Traku region of the ghetto, and as a matter of fact the ghetto is also a big region of prisoners. Surely inside, the inhabitants are more or less free, and we allegedly have independence regarding certain matters: there are representatives who can even tax us, we have our own court (without any Rabbi or judges, as they were all exterminated), there is a mechanism: clerks, policemen, sellers, to provide for us and fulfill our needs and such, but in here as well there is no lack of the watchful eyes of those who condemn us, the various, countless decrees, regulations and orders, always new ones, which here also shackle us with wires of iron. I will speak more of those details further on. Here we will state first the decree which we encounter each single day, and which give us the feeling that we are not free, that we are indeed in a prison house. I refer to the decree regarding the coming and going into the ghetto. As I mentioned before, the two regions of the ghetto are surrounded with gated barbed wires. From the inside, near the gates there are “supervisors” who are one of us, and from the outside there are policemen in shifts. Our Jewish supervisors need to examine the ones wishing to exit the ghetto, and to check if they have the necessary permits. Those permits are received from the German “work police”, which aside from its director and one of its clerks who visit the ghetto almost every day, has additional clerks from the clerks of the ghetto who deal with those matters along with the representatives of the “work police”. At first matters were far more complicated: there had been many people who had received permits with a remark: “allowed to come out at any time”; those permits had been given only to select few: several physicians, acquaintances of the clerks and those who had been “recommended” to the police clerk, also, at first there had been a servants “institute”: men and women from the Christians in town had made fake agreements with the ones they had known at the ghetto, in order to work for them as helpers, and those agreements had been submitted for the approval of the work police. This institute was cancelled nullified, and those kind of permissions are no longer given, because many women brought various kinds of food provisions from town, and entered it into the ghetto with them, and for that [privilege] everyone wanted to be a fake helper, and so now we have no longer the possibility to receive food that way, a matter of great need now in our miserable lives. The permit to get out of the ghetto is given lately to the ones working in various workshops in town, and unfortunately for the Germans, they cannot be replaced for now by Lithuanians. And so the town has workshops of hat makers, leather workers, blacksmiths, tanners, watch makers, glove makers, fur sewers, which employ many Jews; also there were fashion workshops in town: for corsets, belts, shirts, dresses, wallets and more, in which many women, also from the former “servants”, work. Among these experts we can also find the physicians working as lab technicians, the pharmacists, and the ones working in various offices as translators, letter writers in German. A permit to leave the ghetto was also given to simple workers, “black” men

on a daily basis, who work in the aerodrome [the airport]¹²², near buildings on the sides of the streets, in the German kitchens and in the hospitals as woodchoppers, water pumpers and similar. The workers of the Frenkel factory also belonged into this category, as well as the workers of the BATAS¹²³ factory, but they were only a few. The necessity to see a physician was also a reason to receive a permit to leave the ghetto and to return into it, but just for once or for several times. All those matters were handled by the representatives of the Jews under the management of the work police. The clerks of the ghetto also took from time to time workers to the train station in order to clean the tracks from snow, to unload certain cargos and more – pursuant to the needs of the Germans. It is worth noting that when the German demanded a decent number of workers for a frequent job, as the cleaning of the snow from the rail tracks, then the representatives decided to take people from the various workshops and various types of workers, and even three young physicians were forced to do this dirty job one day. And so the Jewish “organizers” who are standing near the gates from the inside, and inspect the permits of all the ones who wish to leave, and they warn them of the orders of the Germans: to walk as much as possible in pairs, or three people at once, without being seen in the streets from the eight hour of the morning until the fourth hour in the afternoon; and so the ones who leave need to pass the gates at a quarter to eight the latest, in order to suffice and enter the workshops at eight and remain there until four, as aforementioned. And without a special permit from the owners of the workshops they were not allowed to be on the street, if it is not a necessity from work, from the eighth hour of the morning until the fourth hour in the afternoon.

The function of the policemen outside the gates is far more honorable. Except from the fact that they could reexamine the permit if they wish to do so, they are obligated to look carefully at anyone who is coming back from town and wishes to enter the ghetto, and to investigate and demand, whether they are smuggling forbidden items into the ghetto, items on which I will detail further on. Lately, many Jews were arrested for trying to leave the ghetto without permits, or for being on the streets on the forbidden hours, because the Germans rulers expressed their wishes that the Jews would not desecrate the beauty of our town with their faces, and they should be very careful around the other citizens of the town. Also, there are arrests every day, of people who tried to smuggle various food provisions into the ghetto, and were caught: slices of bread, potatoes and more.

E. The nutrition

We are the rebels of pleasure in the eyes of our haters and the ones who banished us from our spiritual and cultural life; they only left us the material life, the wild growth as a plant in the field. But the limitations of nutrition bring us to degeneration and discriminate us even in the sense of our material and corporeal existence. Often we do not even have a piece of bread or potatoes, and the hunger agonizes us. The representatives established two stores in order to take care of our existence, and to provide for our needs. At first, these stores would sell according to food stipends, bread, potatoes, turnips, cabbage, grout of wheat and nothing more. Types of provisions containing proteins, one of the main food groups, one of the primary needs for a healthy body, were missing. There were some provisions which were forbidden, “not to see and not to be seen”, like meat, fish, and milk and dairy products: butter, cheese and more, eggs. It was easy to see results of the absence of those foods, which were beneficial to health, by: notable skinniness, very obvious one, which had touched the flash of almost all the occupants of the ghetto; often one would meet people with their faces poor and thin until they were unrecognizable; surely, the tortures of the soul had clearly left their marks as well; but the absence of honorable food, a matter which had become chronic, a matter which had become a constant phenomenon, was surely the main reason for the state I have mentioned above. After a while the stores extended the variety of goods: sugar began to appear in the stores often, artificial honey, flour, which were sold in small portions. Lately I have to say

¹²² In the Zokniai suburb of the town. It was established in the days in which Lithuania was independent; the Soviets extended it and the Germans intensively used it and at the same time built it, extend it and enlarged the airstrips for long-range bombers.

¹²³ A factory which produced shoes and was in fact the direct extension of the Frenkel factory.

that the matters took a turn for the better, and that because of the rulers who have finally reacted to the complaints of the ghetto inhabitants regarding the former sellers in the stores. Those were leeches in the full sense of the word, they would suck the blood of their brothers as they behaved as they were the owners of the stores and not as mere keepers of a public institution: they were “trading and selling” at their own account, they would “inflate prices” to their benefit, they would raise the rates of the existing goods as they saw fit, and they were the only ones benefitting from it all. Moreover, sometimes they would receive from the town small amounts of goods which were not common like sugar, honey, and flour, for the people of the ghetto, and the latter would not even see those goods as they would keep them for themselves, along with their accessories [the items which came along with it], the whole holy gang. They would also provide unappropriated services, misuse their permissions to provide for the needs of the ghetto, as they would smuggle only for themselves goods which were allowed, and some which were not allowed, hence increase their fortune from our misfortune. There were many cases in which those sellers would hide various goods, which were brought as “equal for everyone”, in order to sell them later at a higher price. The rulers and the representatives finally heard the complaints and appointed new clerks, and with them, new orders. Now we saw meat, fish and butter in the shops, something that had been “not seen and not mentioned” in the old days, and lately they were sold to the inhabitants of the ghetto, surely, not often and in small portions. In any event the nutrition is insufficient, and especially that the bread portion is two hundred grams a day per soul. These amount of bread, especially when we lack potatoes and flour, can bring to annihilation by hunger and degeneration in time, and most of the people in the ghetto, most of the fathers and the sons, concentrate their minds and all of their attentions on the question of how to gain a break for their hunger, and how to fulfill the needs? In the first period after the ghetto was established, we had been still allowed to enter foods into the ghetto by the gates, potatoes, vegetables and some bread, and the limitations had been pertained to all the other types of food and especially to meat, butter, sugar and flour; however many policemen had not been so strict and had turned a blind eye when seeing the provisions, and the inspection had been superficial. There had been also other solutions then to the distresses of nutrition: first of all, we had still had money, and could had bought the forbidden goods from the speculators, twice or triple the price of course, which had their way to smuggle them into the ghetto, and in this way we could have bought meat, butter and flour in the ghetto. Also, the number of men and especially women who had been allowed to leave the ghetto and go into town had been larger; and everybody had found the time to go and visit the houses of acquaintances or to buy goods from the stores or the speculators in town. Then the more difficult mission would have begun, to enter the goods into the ghetto and hide it from the policemen. They would give the packages of contraband [the smuggled goods] to their relatives inside the ghetto through the wires of the fences, when there was no policeman in sight; they would fill the pockets of their clothes and the spaces between their clothes and their shirts, and the spaces around their belts, and also in their pants and their boots and similar places (the women would put them above their chests and under her arms) with meat, butter, pig’s fat, eggs and more, and they would believe in God and pray that the policemen would be superficial, and would not check in private places. However, they had not been always lucky, those who had found different and various tricks to deceive the policemen at the gates of the ghetto. Sometimes the smuggling had been easier, and the goods were smuggled in baskets which apparently were full of potatoes, onions and the rest of the allowed vegetables and the forbidden goods were underneath them. And sometimes they smuggled the goods in very peculiar ways which would have extended the length of our writings very much, and in spite of all of their tricks and methods they, failed and the policemen had caught them, and the criminals were brought to the clerks and the clerks set fines as they saw fit: all pursuant to the fined and the punishments. But the policemen became wiser, and instead of taking the criminals to the clerks for their fines, they began to “reach compromises” with the criminals and receive money to their own benefit, and all was well. The danger had not been so great, and the transfer of the contraband “knowingly and unknowingly” by the policemen went on; and in town, among the Christians citizen, speculators had risen, and multiplied like mushrooms and truffles, and they had begun the

trading, that is to say, the provisions: butter, fat and more but not for money, but for items: clothes, shoes and many more.

And the German police which is watching us at all times (especially that we know that there are, as they promised, spies among us and informers for their own benefit), heard about the things which happened in the ghetto regarding the food. Lately, due the war which continues endlessly and due to the many needs of the German army, food limitation decrees were issued even for the Christian population and some foods were reduced, especially the ones containing proteins and fats, all the more, so they could not treat with indifference the deeds of the deceiving Jews, and wise at the wicked, they found various ways to end the deeds of the “criminals”. First, they gave an order that the inspection of the ones entering the ghetto should be done comprehensively and that it is forbidden to bring various kinds of foods into the ghetto, even if in small portions, and that the ones who found guilty would not be fined anymore but arrested, and sometimes even killed. Second, it was strictly forbidden for the Jews to be seen in town between eight in the morning and four in the afternoon, and there were no more possibilities to visit a Christian or a store; third, they began to search and inspect the farmers who came into town, especially in market days, because the drive for speculation was with the farmers as well, who began offering food provisions of various kinds, and so they tried to smuggle and hide the provisions from the Germans who were confiscating everything. Finally, they closed some of the workshops, and the ones which were needed and not closed, had been ordered to let go of half of the Jewish workers, and hire Christians instead. And so three hundred people lost their permits to go into town and the quantity of the provisions entering the ghetto has been severely reduced. The new decrees already caused many arrests, with moving results. The fear of the strict inspections, and of punitive imprisonment, the suspicion of the searches (which occurred in the Caucasus region, surely due to informers, which brought yet other imprisonments) in the houses of the ghetto resulted that the speculators have disappeared from the ghetto, and only the Christian speculators remained in town, which is good, as in that way they show our haters that they had been wrong, and that speculation is not only a Jewish characteristic, and it is not only in our nature. When they had stopped the visits in the houses of the Christians and their stores, the Christian speculators started to come themselves to the workshops and to try and arrange there a trade market. Now that the number of the Jewish workers in the workshops had been reduced by half, and the inspection near the gate is even stricter, the contraband has been reduced, and its absence is felt in many of the houses of the ghetto, with their occupants approaching starvation in the near future. Surely, the transfer of provisions has not stopped entirely today. The hard work exhausting the body, the concerns and the fears depressing the soul, require satisfaction and reward by nutrition that is more than healthy, and here the bread is spoiled, and the vegetables are not enough, and the soul is dry and hungry! And so many inhabitants of the ghetto, which are still allowed to go into town, endanger their lives until today and try to bring the prey to their homes from the speculators and with an unimaginable price. The contraband [the smuggling of food into the ghetto] is still going on. And so are the arrests, and the matters are tiring. Surely, many prisoners have been released lately, who right after their release were struck and so they paid their deeds. Lately, the Lithuanians allegedly receive an urban independence, and some of them feel guilty and heavily burdened regarding the Jews; there is a possibility that the latter, when they could do so, would try to make up for their sins and would release the prisoners, who were not released by the Germans.

More or less we discussed these details which perhaps are not so interesting, in order to describe our lives at the ghetto and the matters which rob us from our energy and our initiative, and which transform us all into cheaters and deceivers. Surely, our conscience is peaceful and quiet, as we are dealing with the danger of losing our lives, with the purpose to starve us and bring us material and mental degeneration. And still we suffer quite a lot from the conditions of our lives which are responsible for the transformation.

F. The material condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto

The wealth of the Jews had gone through the strict filter of the Bolsheviks who had confiscated and had seized the properties of the owners of the factories and the workshops, and most of the honorable business owners. The industry, the trade and the retribution from the homes [apartments for rent] as private sources of profits had been cancelled, and the springs of living had been shot down for a decent portion of our people. All that has been left were daily workers, clerks, physicians and so, who received a fixed salary and never had sources of living on the side. Little amounts of savings had been left, and all the deposits in the bank were confiscated. Also, the owners had some jewelry and various items. And so, when the Germans came, the Jews, traders and home owners, had lost the most important part of their assets, but many Jews were still wealthy and even rich, and they still owned quite large quantities of possessions [sic]: furniture, kitchenware and houseware, clothes, jewelry and similar, which had not been taken by the hand of the Bolsheviks, unless they had been carried for speculation. The matters took a turn to the very worst when the Germans came! The period of robberies and violence from the Partisans [the Lithuanian murderers] and the conquerors began, the decree of the ghetto was given which led to the inspection committees recording all the properties and confiscating the “Aryan part”. When the ghetto was established there was a rumor that it would be strictly forbidden to come into the ghetto with various items: they promised that only one suit would be allowed, several shirts, several shoes, two kilograms of sugar, two thousands rubles [Soviet currency], and other items, especially new ones, would be confiscated. Then the provisions which had been ready were being spent, and the best of the items the Jews had hidden with their Christian friends: clothes, underwear and especially jewelry, as gold and silver items were forbidden in the ghetto; the Christians also received large amounts of money. A selected [stately, according to Isaiah 23, 18] fortune had been hidden with them. “The results of the hiding” were numerous: many Lithuanians began to use the items right away, as if the owners of the items were no longer alive, and they were winning from the abandonment. There were also Lithuanians, who were attacked by the vice instinct as they saw the items as “the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places” [according to Psalms 16, 6], and if they were influential, they tried to move the owners of the items to the prayer houses [for this purpose the Lithuanian murderers of the Jews in Shavli used the “Landkeramarsha” Shul, the synagogue of the merchants of the rural region, which had been in the center of town, a few steps from the busy Vilnius Street, that is to say in broad daylight and where everybody could see], or directly into an unknown location, from which they would not return, and then the Lithuanians would remain the legal heirs. There were also Lithuanians one could trust, who would return the items to their owners when needed, but it is hard to receive the items from there now, for reasons I will state further on.

After all of the above the conclusion is clear, most of the inhabitants of the ghetto were left naked and with no possessions or means, and they are poor and live in poverty, or are about to become poor in no time at all. But what are the means of income now for the inhabitants of the ghetto? The German “work police” had issued an order which every worker has to receive a salary. Seemingly, this is a legal and just order, but as a matter of fact it has become an obstacle for many Jews. There were many men and women, inhabitants of the ghetto, who in order to escape from forced labor, and for the possibility to go into town, had accepted various jobs in the workshops, and the homes of the Christians for no compensation at all. But now, the order from the police demanded that each worker’s salary was to be transferred to the police each month, and not every worker could work for free, but instead is required to transfer his salary to the police, which keeps half of every salary of a Jewish worker. The order was as following: every worker must transfer to the police his or her salary pursuant to the set general rates “without religious relevance”. But a Jew only receives 15 rubles a day from the police, and a Jewish woman – 13 rubles, and not for every day of the month, but only for the working days, except for Sundays and Holidays, and the excess, that is to say the difference between the Jewish salaries and the Christian salary, remains with the police. We could conclude from that, that many Christians providing employment, were forced to transfer on account of their workers, who until now had worked for free, decent sums, if the worker himself is not able to afford losing the excess amount, which is left with the police, and mostly, it was not worth it for the job providers to do so, and so this order also caused many dismissals of the Jewish workers. And those

skilled workers who kept their jobs, as it was worthwhile for the jobs providers to pay them, received as aforementioned 15 or 13 rubles per day, a ridiculous laughable salary, if we take into consideration that the prices have been rising on a daily basis, and that the cost of living, compared to what it had been in the ghetto, is higher substantially. It is obvious that the purpose of such salary is only to sustain our existence with bread and water as in prison houses, and we continued to be slaves, woodchoppers and water pumpers, for the Germans and the Lithuanians. It is worth emphasizing, that the various experts, specialists receive the same salary. For example, I, who had worked in the municipal polyclinic as an expert radiologist, especially with the utilization of my own machine, which had been taken from me for the purpose of this job, which brings to the polyclinic hundreds rubles every day, received the same salary of 15 rubles per day. That is the income for all the inhabitants of the ghetto, except the select few, of whom I will discuss further on. And so, what do the inhabitants of the ghetto who earn meager salaries do in order to complete their poor budget? The trick was simple: all of those who had the possibility, would sell various items from the remaining of their belonging: clothes, shoes, underwear and other, or trade them for food. It is again obvious that the ban to go to the Christian homes and the reduction of those Jews permitted to go into town are huge obstacles for the implementation of this practice. But sometimes the saddest consequences came as a result of hiding our assets in the Christian homes. The Germans had announced loud and clear, that anyone who possessed properties which once had belonged to the Jews, no matter how he or she came into this possession, is obligated to notify the authorities by a certain day about the matter. There were several Lithuanians, that from fear of search and the punishment, fulfilled the order, but most of them ignored it and the properties of the Jews are still in their possession; moreover, they are afraid, of the Germans to see Jews carrying items from their homes, which surely would bring result in punishment. And so, even if the belongings are in trust worthy hands, with honest and decent Christians, it is very hard retrieving it now, in order to make the most benefit of it, selling or to trading it for food. And who could tell us the future, who among us would live to see the moment in which all of our belongings would be returned back to us? Would we get to say the blessing: “Blessed are You, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion”? Times will tell! In any event, those of us who would live perhaps would learn a lesson, and receive a good moral from the history, that all that you build in a foreign country is like towers in midair, and all that you acquire there is like the webs of spiders, which at the slightest wind are as the chaff that is driven with the wind out of the threshing-floor [according to Hosea 13, 3] and they will not know their place. One thing is certain and does not disappear. And remains in existence forever – it is real estate, land, and buildings on the land of our forefathers. Even a “nation that is like a donkey” would not go through the trouble we are going through, if it sits on its land, if it is not a foreigner it could not be blamed that it had taken what belonged to another, and no one would demand to give back, what it allegedly had taken in the first place.

To make a long story short, the material condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto was very grim, and it was getting worse due to the daily price increase and the lack of sources of a minimal decent income. Very bleak was also the conditions of the physicians, apart from Dr. D. who happened to remain the only physician for internal diseases in the Caucasus region. And Dr. P., who is sick with “Mania Grandiose” and dared to visit Christian patients in town until he had been tripped by calamity, the rest of the physicians earn no more than “black” workers, from treating private patients. The six physicians who work as lab technicians, thanks to the intervention of Dr. Jasaitis, has been earning salaries of common workers to begin with as decreed by the German work police. Let us thank those villains for that too, because the Lithuanian town with its head, former Judge Linkevicius¹²⁴, had agreed to receive our services and force us to work with no compensation at all. And the truth was that until the intervention of the work police in the matter, we had been working in the municipal institutions without any hope for compensation; as the mayor had conveniently reasoned that lab technicians’ salaries had not been accounted for in the municipality budget. Surely the municipality budget, like any other budget, had an

¹²⁴ This appointment came to him from the German government in July 10, 1941.

article called: “Unexpected expenses”, and it would have been easy to set a salary for us, but this man, the mayor, hard hearted and awful, always the cold and strict bureaucrat, had become an enthusiastic anti-Semite since the day the Bolsheviks had removed his wife and child from Shavli. (shame, such a shame), that he himself had not been home then!) And he tried to annul our salaries as much as it was in his power, so we would not be paid for a necessary and useful work. And it was entirely up to him. And if he said that we would not be paid, who would have dared to disobey him? Surely, Jasaitis has done his best to find us jobs in a time of which most of the intellectual Lithuanians did not even dare smiling in our direction, but to get into the thick of things and to open a dispute with the mayor regarding our salary, he could not have done so, and he perhaps he did not even want to; because even without it, we was known in certain circles as “a friend of the Jews”, which is now not a virtue or a good “reference” for the Germans. By the way, it is worth noting the statement of mayor Linkevicius, a Lithuanian intellectual, a former lawyer and judge, when the Jewish workers come to him to demand a salary for building the fence of the ghetto: “Surely the Jews had made the ghetto for themselves! We shall not pay for such a thing!”

And as far as the Jewish physicians working at the medical institutes as lab technicians and radiologists, their position in the future is completely unclear, as the Germans had already closed several laboratories, and in others they had reduced the number of workers. Once the annihilator had been given the right to rule, he could not tell necessity from excess. I and Dr. P. are very much needed to them, and they would not find any other radiologists in our place, and so how would they remove us from our positions? But the answer to this question is simple: the Germans care about the health of the Lithuanians as if they cared for last year’s snow: it was required to destroy the Jews, because that was what the leader had said, but if the “Lithuanian pigs” are killed as well, there is no harm in it, as if they killed two birds with one stone. They were pondering to which objective to give the priority: to their hatred of the Jews, or to the health care of the people, so we should not be surprised if they order or advise (as we are dealing with an independent government now!) to release [dismiss] us. In these conditions it is very clear that even the physicians, who in the old days had been among the Jews making a good living from their work, are now under tremendous material stress, and they too, as the rest of their brothers, are obligated to scheme and scam, to find ways to find buyers for their various possessions, in order to buy their daily bread.

There is one category which is like no other regarding the material condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto, which is the artisans who work on their own account, and the speculators. The tailors, the shoe makers, the brush makers and similar, which do not work at the workshops, therefore the law of the common salary does not apply to them. And they receive decent earnings from their work, they always have money, up to the point that they are the best customers of the speculators, and they are willing to pay two hundred and fifty rubles for a kilogram of butter, sixty rubles for a loaf of bread, or a kilogram of flour, ten rubles for an egg, three hundreds rubles or more for one chicken (and there had been an incident in which an artisan in the eve of Passover¹²⁵ had paid eight hundred and fifty rubles for a turkey) and such prices, that a simple worker, or a physician, would not even dare dreaming of. And as far as the speculators, surely lately with the new decrees, their work has been reduced, they had managed in the first period of the ghetto to fill up their pockets with money and gold. despite of the strict inspection performed at the entry into the ghetto, there were people who managed now and then to receive a decent amount of butter, meat, flour and so, and smuggle it into the ghetto, and here they have become wealthy. One Jew had been simply introduced through recommendation to the clerk of the wholesale commercial institute, “LIETUKIS”, and he received barrels containing hundreds of kilograms of butter. For every kilogram he paid the clerk a price of 40 rubles instead of the usual 20 rubles. The clerk, who approved the butter which had been ordered by some fake cooperative, earned 2000 rubles for every barrel, and the Jew, who sold every kilogram for 50 rubles, and even 60 rubles sometimes, earned an equal amount. Of course he had partners for the transfer,

¹²⁵ The year 5702 = 1942.

and the permits to smuggle the goods to the ghetto also cost a hefty sum, but even left overs had been sufficient to make those people rich, because “how many provisions do the Jews have”¹²⁶ to speculate with: thank God we had flour, meat, potatoes, sugar, salt and many more – trade objects which could generate good amounts of money. And the ones who speculated with meat, brought a live cow into the ghetto once, and a live heifer, even if the Germans made lists of the live stockings in the houses of the farmers. The speculators could have brought a horrible disaster upon the inhabitants of the ghetto. But this time they had only received a fine of 3000 rubles and the butcher had been forbidden from slaughtering. Surely our diseases we did bear, and our pains we carried [according to Isaiah 53, 4], because the speculators demanded also 40 rubles for every kilogram of meat – a prey from the ghetto inhabitants; to make the long story short, these were the people who due to their brilliant “past” “see now the world in their dreams”, as the rest of the inhabitants of the ghetto are hungry with no means of buying food.

In order to conclude, and this time not in a positive note, the material condition of the ghetto inhabitants, I should tell you about the awful order which had been officially issued on the thirteenth day of the month of October [1941], that is to say the tax order, the contribution: after the times of the Bolsheviks, the times of the Partisans and the Germans, the inspection and hiding committees¹²⁷ have taken our very last belongings from us, and presented us like an empty vessel, after all the springs of income have dried, except from the little salary of the workers, and the speculation which was going strong then, a decree [according to Esther 3, 14 = an order] was issued, that both of the regions of the ghetto were obligated to bring into the Commissar’s cash box half a million rubles. Also, the Jews were obligated to hand down all their money and gold, the electrical appliances of their kitchen, fur coats, leather suitcases and more, to the Commissar’s office as well. And so, they decided to suck the last drops of our life force and turn us into beggars with nothing of their own. When the tax money was divided between the payers, Dr. W-T. was forced to pay the amount of 7500 rubles, the dentist, W., was also forced to pay 7500 rubles (he received a discount and had to pay only 5000 rubles in the end). Dr. K-R. and Dr. D-N. were forced to pay the amount of 1500 rubles each, and I and Dr. Bl. were forced to pay 2000 rubles each. As I myself had remained without a job from the day the Germans had arrived, I also had not been earning my salary for the work I had done before the Bolsheviks left (as the chairman of the sanatoriums board and the chairman of the drivers examination board – this money had gone down the drain). Surely in the month of July I received a job in the “external ambulatory”, but the unit was soon to close its gates. And the private office was indeed a good one (surely the patients would bring me various foods as gratitude), but it did not last for a long period of time, because I was arrested in the first days of the month of September [1941] and five days after my release I moved into the ghetto. Here in the ghetto I do not make large amounts of money, because of various reasons, which here is not the place to detail them, I have not had many Jewish patients, and the salary came late for me, and so the first few month I lived only from the money had been left for me by my brother-in-law Zilberman, when the Bolsheviks had taken his family out of Shavli. If it had not been for this money, then we would have been hungry for bread as well, because my savings were long gone on the transfer to the ghetto, which costed us much blood and money. Surely, we have a few worthy belongings, but to turn those into money was very hard in those days, because the items which were easy to sell like clothes, shoes and more, were not in our possession and they were hidden from the eye in a good hiding place. It goes without saying that the amount of two thousand rubles which I was ordered to pay was my enduring riches [Proverbs 8, 18]. My wife tried to convince the Commissar’s office to reduce the tax amount set for us, but this was done halfheartedly, because we knew the truth, and I bore witness [according to Jeremiah 29, 23] to large errors which were made when the tax amounts were set, and also there were plenty of concessions reserved for the “privileged” and owners of various rights. And in any event I was sure that what was done could not be changed and there was no possibility to alter or reduce the amounts which had been set,

¹²⁶ In the origins the phrase is: “How many qualities do the Jews have” from the Passover Haggadah, here stated with great irony.

¹²⁷ Special units which searched the houses of the Jews for excess valuables.

because there would be no end to it, and the tax amount could not be collected in the short time in which it was due. And so, on the sixteenth day of the month of October we paid the amount of two thousand rubles and we also turned in a silver handbag with a Hebrew engraving on it, which had been a gift to my wife before we got married, and I was left poor, with nothing at all. And I feel the lack of money until now, as I was forced to borrow certain amounts from my friends, Christian physicians, amounts which to me are handful in the eyes of the lion. Now, if I would not succeed selling some of my belongings, I do not know from where my salvation will come, and my sorrow is heavy, and a desperation of no bounds overcomes me. If the war lasts another few months, and the state of matters would not take a turn to the better, then we wholly perish [according to Numbers 17, 28] as we do not have money even for some dry bread, especially with my wife being ill and so we need the help of a young woman who serves us, and we need our salaries to pay her, for we are left but with few out of many [we had before; according to Jeremiah 42, 2]. Yes! Awful and bitter is our fate without an escape for now. Surely there is a little spark of hope which succeeds to enter our lives that we would manage to sell some of our items, and we could receive a fair sum of a few thousand rubles for them, and on the other hand, we would like to believe the war would be finally over; because if the spring and the summer pass without a clear and decisive win of the Germans¹²⁸, then the clerks [officers] of the army would remove the fathers of the scum and peace shall come, and we would be free from our imprisonment, and we would live like people again, and after that... after that we would try and do our best, everything which is in our power, to leave the valley of death, the land which is marked by the blood of our brothers. Is our hope justified, or we are only dreaming? It is hard, it is hard to believe in a dark world without an escape, that we are lost without hope, and that the rule of evil would prevail until the end of times.

G. The moral condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto

The despair as there is no hope for the near future, the disappointment of many “believers” who put their faith in the salvation of the Lord, the doubts regarding the “supervision of the Creator” which had no reaction to the troubles we had suffered as never before, the necessity [redacted: which would not be condemned] to desecrate the day of the Sabbath and the Holidays, the lack of Kosher meat occurring so often, and the lack of food in general, all brought the condition of religion in the ghetto to be very much reduced. Who of us is not saved now by non-Kosher meat? Who of us is not forced to turn the Sabbath into an ordinary day, and who of us does not desecrate the Sabbath and the Holidays in public, even if not forced to do so? And who of us does all the Jewish commandments now in public without fearing that an objection will be raised? So much indifference and lack of interest in religious matters came upon the inhabitants of the ghetto! Surely there are still several orthodox Jews in the ghetto, from all the dark and gloomy people who are its inhabitants, who would not change their ways and follow the religious law strictly as before, but their number is few, and even a boy would know how to count them. If indeed the fear of the Lord does not always walk hand in hand with justice and integrity, with morals and good deeds, and if thieves and robbers, takers and deceivers, fearful of God and believers are not a rare vision, it is fair to assume that for commoners, and for certain people, there is a certain reciprocity between religion and morals. And here in the ghetto we can certainly see that along with the weakening of faith, the pillars of morals were also dwindling in a horrible and sad way. Surely aside the financial reasons: the calamity and agony to no end, the desperation and the disappointment, weakening the feelings of faith, special characteristics have been affecting the moral condition: the unusual agitation of the nerves, the fear and concern for the day of tomorrow, which could bring extermination and forfeiture, the individual trouble of each one of us without an exception, which consumes our entire attention – all of those have been developing an egoism which has been growing every day, and which has become extreme and has shaken the pillars of morals. Each one of us has been sunk in our

¹²⁸ The people in the ghetto remembered that Hitler and his representatives talk about a blitz [= Blitzkrieg] and so they amused themselves with the hope that: if the war was to become longer, he would be removed by his officers, who feared repeating the journey of Napoleon, if not worse.

troubles and our personal breakage, which has been as vast as the sea, and no other men and women exist. And so the ambition to build on the back of loss of others has come, the sheep-sharers have appeared, where there were sheep, the number of speculators grew, the price hikers, the ones skinning the poor, and all has become regular practices: food stealing, stealing of various items, stealing woods for fire; artisans who have refused to return back items they had received for repair, many cases of informers, cases in which the Germans were informed about the meetings of the Jewish representatives, there were attempts to flatter the Germans, in order to be given certain concessions at the expense of others; there were surely errors regarding the houses in the ghetto which resulted in horrible situations, such as removing certain families in order to make room for others. However, the voice of the crowd was often exaggerated in this matter, and there were many rumors which were not true, regarding families who had been removed in order to make rooms for physicians. But regarding several families who had been removed of the ghetto, there was a speck of truth in the rumors, and all was only because people took care of their own businesses, criminally disregarding the outcomes such a behavior would bring for others. And still who would have thought that in this time of trouble, a trouble like we have never seen before, the division between our brothers would grow so much, and that the lack of sympathy for one another would intensify to such extent. A clear example is the attitudes between the physicians these days. Jealousy, hate, strife and contention [according to Isaiah 58, 4] up to beatings, found their way among our gang which had all allegedly been educated. Students of wise men shall bring peace to the world, go and learn how excellent these students are! And if the cedars have caught fire, we shall not be surprised by the large number of speculators and panders who spawned up like mushrooms in the ghetto, con men and crooks of all kinds.

A typical incident had occurred to us. We had bought potatoes in town from our Lithuanian landlord and we have paid fully for the goods, and we had conditioned our purchase to the delivery of goods from her by a carrier, one of the coachmen of the ghetto. At the same time, she had promised to give as a gift several potatoes to one of her acquaintances in the ghetto, and this man sent his neighbor, the coachman to take from her the potatoes which had been promised by her. When the coachman entered to the Lithuanian house to receive the potatoes, she thought that he came to take our potatoes and she asked him: "Has Mrs. Pick sent you to take her potatoes?" The coachman then answered without hesitation: "Yes", and took the potatoes and gave them to his neighbor, and the latter started eating them, the potatoes we paid for; the coachman, a former cook, and his neighbor were considered honest men, but now, in the ghetto, everything is allowed! The landlord came into the ghetto and together we took our potatoes back from the mouth of the cheater with very much disgrace.

One of our fellow physicians, when they had wanted to move him into another apartment had dared stating the following: "If they would dare touch me, then half of the inhabitants in the ghetto would be removed". Surely this fool had never dared removing anyone from the gates of the ghetto, but the carelessness of his statement at the hour, in which this kind of fate is hanging above all the physicians' heads in the ghetto, is an evidence as a hundred witnesses about the egoism which has ruled this man. However, he received his punishment and reward at the time of the "trial" in which he was being sued by the German officials.

The same physician also received a blow from his friend as he cursed him, with the intension to humiliate the attacker as in a street trial of the people [their peers 2 Kings 15, 10], and with such violence! Harsh words should have been sufficient, the reputations of the physicians in the ghetto is not a glorious one already. And the one physician who took the horns of being the trail blazer and first failed snitch, may God have mercy on us. As he was jealous of his colleagues receiving lab technicians' positions in town, a statement came out of his mouth in front of the head of the German work police, that the work of lab technicians is fake and fictive. Surely those words were uttered in a clean language, in the German language he knows well, in order to bring to the dismissal of the lab technicians from their positions. But as a matter of fact, our job was important and necessary, and so what he had hoped, did not happen. In the same way, when I was seriously sick with the disease of the grippe [flu] which attacked me, the physicians in the polyclinic were in a very unpleasant situation, because there was one radiologist short and had no possibility to replace me.

The decrease of moral values in the ghetto is also related to the lack of politeness and courtesy, the lack of hospitality and kindness, which can be found at any corner of the ghetto, as the officials of the rulers are a [negative] example for all the inhabitants. In this matter, the arrangers [= the policemen] in the ghetto were always angry and walking like a storm, they were always frothing, always castigate, and even often use beatings on those who allegedly do not respect the discipline laws; and the officials themselves are always very serious [solemn], as if they are angry, always answer rudely and speak roughly [according to Genesis 42, 7], in the cases in which they would even grant the interlocutor with an answer. Most of the times they would ignore the ones who talk to them and practically “turn the back of their heads”. Surely their cumbrance and burden [according to Deuteronomy 1, 12] of the “holy crowd” can make the nerves very angry indeed, but the officials of the rulers need to remember that the ones who turn to them are equally with shaken nerves. And especially that the matters for which we turn to the officials are supposed to bring compassion and sympathy. Had been wealthy people, former respectable “home owners” sometimes ingratiating themselves and ask for permission to crowd in a corner to live, or some wood in order to warm their shivering body from the cold in their cracked and filthy homes.

H. The mental condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto

Seemingly it might be considered a great naivety to detail of this aspect; but it involves many details of the life in the ghetto and so we will¹²⁹ detail a little bit about it. Without any difficulty, it is very easy to assume how the inhabitants of the ghetto feel: people who had been once wealthy and rich, have become poor and hungry; active people with resourcefulness must wonder around now, or become black workers; people who had once been free citizens, and now have no rights, and their body and properties had been neglected; people with dry souls, wanting a healthy and nourishing food and now they are sometimes hungry for bread, which even that they do not get enough of; depressed and tortured people by the awful decrees, and by the constant fear of the bitter death which awaits them in not many months. Very distressful for the nerves and destroying for the soul was the constant war regarding the feeding: the various tricks to distract the minds of the policemen, the equal side in those: all done in anxious spirit, angry and tensed nerves due to the danger within, up to a point that it would be no exaggeration to say that the cost of the foods smuggled, was the loss of the nerves and the health. However, we can say that all of these troubles are nothing compared the two horrible blows which hit almost all the families and even the single people of the ghetto, that is to say: “bereavement and widowing”. The beginning of those horrifying blows had started during the Bolsheviks regime – when the bourgeois had been removed, and they peaked when the Germans came. Quite a few orphans and miserable, bereaved and lonely were left when their fathers and relatives had been sent to the U.S.S.R, to the endless forests and the snow and ice deserts of Siberia, but the confusion and chaos grew even more in these families and in others with the beginning of the war. So many sons had been lost to their fathers, young men who had escaped and faced Latvia, with the hope to enter the U.S.S.R from there. So many students, young men and women, who had learned in the faculties in Kaunas and Vilnius, as they heard that the Germans were coming, had been filled with fear and terror which had made them angry and had caused them to escape, and had misled them where there was no way [according to Psalms 107, 40]; and their fathers had been left bereaved. And had been no sight about the fate of their sons anymore. So many fathers had been in a “bereavement” state, even if their sons had survived in their place and had not escaped, when the Jews had no longer been allowed to travel, to use the mail or the telegraph, and in that way there had been no longer a connection between the fathers and their sons. But no one dares talking about the destruction of the families which has been brought to them by the arrests and the leading to the houses of prayer¹³⁰ as the

¹²⁹ The author talks about himself in many ways, not necessarily in the term of pluralis maestis; but as the physician within, the professional, the phycologist, who wishes to diagnose the phenomenon before him [and his is allegedly not a part of it].

¹³⁰ The deceiving nature of the Germans and their alike presented false and misleading declarations, according to which: the Jews who were gathered in the houses of prayer were to be removed to another towns. And when the rumors began in the ghetto that they were being killed, many still wanted to believe that there is still hope for them.

Germans came. Partisans had gone from house to house and arrested young men and old men, fathers without sons and sons without fathers, all on a case by case basis, and who happened to be present there at that moment. So many widows and orphans have remained following those arrests! So many young women still cry after the husbands of their youth and no one could console them. And the tragedy of leading men and women to the houses of prayers and from there to their place of killing, how could anyone describe those terrifying events and the dark and horrible impression left in the deepest places of our hearts? There are no words to describe the true colors of the feelings of the people being led to their deaths for nothing at all, their state when they were closed in the prayer houses and all night they cried in front of the empty and open Holy Ark, from which the books of the Torah were taken and hidden, and shouted bitterly to their God who turned His back on them, to a divine spirit which had left them already. After that they were removed from the houses into the valley of death, they were forced with blows of gunstocks to take off their clothes and they were killed without mercy, those innocent ones, the holy and the pure. Kravitz and his wife¹³¹! With courage and shivering I try to picture their last moments before my eyes, their eyes full with fear of death, the distress of their souls, as they saw that everything was ending in such a horrific way, the loved and the pleasant, the pure as angels, how could I forget them?

Three places became our graves: the surroundings of Ginkunai, Bubiai and Kuzai¹³², the horrible places which had been ready for trouble even in the great war which had given birth to the rumor that the Jews had been the ones informing the Germans of the hiding place of the Russians – in bitter twist of faith – and so they had been exiled by the evil Nicholas Nikolayevich¹³³. The Partisans sought locations in which there were pits ready, in which there were bushes and caves, graves which had been ready from the start, and there they lead their victims to be killed, and in order for the bullets to only touch the bodies and not the clothes, they made their victims take off their clothes before the shooting. We still remember the horrifying detail of the arm with the watch which rises from the pile of bodies, we also remember the answer of the Partisan who turned to the dentist with the request to make gold crowns for his teeth, as he did not know she was Jewish, and when she asked from where he was going to provide the gold, he answered he has quite a good quantity of gold from the Jews he had killed. The family members who drank poison, the witnesses of those horrible events, the ones who saw and heard everything all the inhabitants of the ghetto, it is easy to understand their mental state! And during the several periods of time we had gone through, after the hard work and the suffering, after the anxiety to find food, and then to smuggle it into the ghetto, the inhabitants walk, troubled and bitter, with their faces slim from malnutrition, and blackened as a cauldron with sorrow and pain, walk as shadows, cry, moan, and complain when they meet one another, talk about the front, about the news in the ghetto, give good news without trust or believe. “Meet without joy and die without sorrow”. There is no present and the future is uncertain, being roasted slowly in a steady flame, and the dim spark of hope which is still remaining is buried deeply, so deeply in their souls, is fading away. Would this dim spark change its light? Would the hope get fulfilled and become a torch lighting the path for those walking in the dark long night? Would help and salvation come on the way? Or perhaps we are the last of the Lithuanian Jews? Or yet we too are destined to join the rest of the victims in time? For now the most horrible curses of proof exist within us: “Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out [Deuteronomy 28, 19] (the author means to walking into and out of the ghetto), “and thou shalt be only oppressed and robbed always, and there shall be none to save thee” [the same 29] (we think immediately of the Partisans [the Lithuanian murderers] and those who incited them) “so that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see” [the same 34] (is this a hint of leading our brothers to death?) “and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day, and shalt have no assurance of thy life in the morning

¹³¹ The Kravitz family [he was a music teacher, and even taught in the Hebrew gymnasium in town] came often into the home of the author. They often met to listen to records of classical music and opera and discuss the various works.

¹³² Those are towns-villages about 15 km from Shavli, the bigger death place was Kuzai. See footnote 107.

¹³³ The relative of the last Russian Tsar, a Grand Duke [1856-1929], who was the commander of the Russian army in World War I.

thou shalt say: 'Would it were even!' and at even thou shalt say: 'Would it were morning!' for the fear of thy heart which thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see" [the same 67 and more (our mental condition in all of our time in the ghetto)].

In the ghetto it was also forbidden to go out after eight o'clock in the evening; therefore, all the inhabitants of the ghetto already sit in their houses at the eighth hour in the evening, hidden and out of sight. The windows are covered with shades, which indeed are few. They are mostly covered with black fabric and rugs, in order to block the light from the outside. The streets with no floors are dark in the hours of the night. The autumn and the winter are dark as well, but occasionally, a deem fragment of light finds its way through the curtains and the window frames, creating an aura of mysteriousness, sort of secrecy to the ghetto, and it seems as if behind the curtains there are magicians and alchemists who work in the dark. The dark ages are alive, the darkness of medieval surrounds us.

The mental state of the inhabitants of the ghetto is also very much influenced by the constant bad rumors. Apart from sad facts, of events which clearly had happened, apart from the very real constant decrees, and the indubitable news here about the slaughter of to the Jews of Lithuania, and the persecutions of the Jews abroad, the fears and the constant threats, constitute fertile ground for the horrible imagination turning into embroidery, two dyed garments of broidery [according to Judges 5, 30], of horrific pictures in agonizing colors. We often hear terrible vile rumors, some of which are unfortunately true, but most of which have no base, and contradict each other. The common denominator is that it all dries out our bone marrow, stresses the nerves, and influence adversely our mental condition. Even before we left for the ghetto we had been tortured for a long by the saga [= the issue] of the ghetto formation, which came along with a series of positive and negative rumors, as I have stated before; and after we moved into the ghetto, the tales about the Jews of Zagare¹³⁴ began. "There are people from Shavli there, those who were removed out of town and out of the ghetto", "there are no people from Shavli here", "all the Jews had been killed there", "the Jews are free to do whatever they please there, and they can buy provisions from the market". "They had killed many Jews there, for no reason, on the streets, in daylight, as in other towns in Lithuania in which there had been Jews", "many Jews were killed due to their mistake: they had wanted to take the Jews to work, and they mistakenly thought something which was completely different from the Lithuanian truth (!): they thought they were going to be killed, and so they began to escape, and for such cheekiness they were shot by the Partisans". And so, the event was described in countless ways, and the truth was nothing of the kind. There surely were more than four thousand Jews who had been killed, Jews who had been gathered from all the surroundings of Zagare, without any reason and pretext, as it had happened all over Lithuania, where the Jews lived [coming down; according to 2 Kings 6, 9]. There the rumors about the Partisans [=the Lithuanian murderers] began: "the Partisans left from Shavli", "the Partisans are having a meeting", "the Partisans had decided to kill the remaining of the Jews". "The Partisans will not shoot Jews anymore". A special matter were the rumors about the date in which they meant to kill the Jews in Shavli. First there was a rumor that all the Jews in Shavli would be killed on the twelfth day of the month of October. Afterwards, the wholesale killing was postponed for the 15. And when this day had passed as well they promised the killing would be on the 18, and then – the 22, finally it was postponed for November 7, and those rumors were based on other rumors: "Pozshila¹³⁵ moved to Shavli (that was true), Stankus¹³⁶ said his name will be written with gold letters in the history of the Jews of Shavli". The wife of Gewecke, the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar], ordered some underwear from a Jewish tailor and asked that they should be ready in three weeks; and that was evidence that

¹³⁴ For some reason the murderers chose Zagare [in the mouth of the Jews] to gather the Jews from the north of Lithuania and to exterminate them there. News and rumors about what had happen there also reached the ghetto in Shavli.

¹³⁵ He was arrested by the Germans for robbing the belongings of the Jews, which were considered German property now, and not after a very long time, he was killed.

¹³⁶ The one who was appointed by Linkevicius, the mayor of Shavli on behalf of the Germans, for being responsible of the matters of the Jews.

the Jews will live three more weeks. The contribution and the demand for the valuables of the Jews were pretexts to make searches in the homes of the ghetto inhabitants, to find anything of value in order to end the Jews in Shavli. And opposed to the one who had this opinion, there were others who said: on the contrary, they will do us no harm, because if they wished to finish the Jews, no contribution would have been demanded, instead they would have killed all the Jews and simply take everything! And the news about the front, they varied so greatly; here there was room for all the ones with wild imagination, and simple liars would build towers in the sky based on anecdotes from here and there: “the Germans march on”, “the Germans are retreating”, “the German army is surrounded” and more. One day there was a rumor, that a memorandum had been received from Goring that no harm should be done to the Jews from now on. And after a few days a speech of the father of the fathers of the scums appeared in the paper and in it, as a dog which eats its own vomit, he remembered his psychosis, that the Jews are be blamed for everything and that they should be exterminated from Europe. After a short while about seventy men and women who were late and remained in the villages were gathered and killed despite the alleged memorandum from Goring. Among those who were killed was the wife of Zagarnik – a woman of valor in the true sense of the word – who had gained substantial wealth in the old days. She was killed with both of her children and the children of her sister. Afterwards we heard a rumor that the Lithuanians submitted a memorandum. A note to the German government, in which they complained about the fact that they had been turned into killers and murderers, and that history would record them as such. And suddenly there was another rumor, that they were about to remove the Jews from the ghetto to Zagare, to Zokniai (the village where the aerodrome¹³⁷ [the airport] was located). And so, the ghetto was filled with contradicting rumors, some made us happy and some made us sad, and the nerves tensed, and we grew angrier and more devastated each day. One day the ghetto pessimists walk with bowed heads, darkened faces, [according to Joel 2, 6]: terrified as a result of a bad rumor, and the next day it turned out to be fake, the clouds dissipate, faces glow, and stature was taller. One winks to another: “I waste away, I waste away” [according to Isaiah 24, 16] and the people would say: “the whole town is full of secrets”. All of those are the results of life in fear and terror, the disturbances and the calamities which are part of our everyday lives, of which influence runs deep, so deep in the souls of the inhabitants of the ghetto and their mental state.

As far as the mental state of the bereaved fathers, we witnessed, experienced and tasted ourselves first hand, the taste of this matter. The case of our only son could be used as a “quintessential” portrayal of the matter. He was supposed to finish the exams of his first year in the university of Vilnius and come home in the month of June [1941]. And suddenly the war broke, and he was forced to stay in Vilnius with funds that would have lasted until the end of the month and possibly for the road expenses. Since then we had seen no sight of him and had received no news of him: had he stayed in Vilnius, or had he tried to escape to the U.S.S.R? Surely we had many doubts, if such a young man, who very much took after my fathers – the students of the Talmudic college and from my wife’s fathers – passive people – negligent, moderate, unlikely to dare taking such a bold step, especially when he had no means to do so, but I have been hoping. Perhaps my brother and the rest of our relatives in Moscow were a force of attraction to him. My poor pen cannot describe the agony of our souls as we had no news of him, and the mystery surrounding the wellbeing of our only son. Day and night we have been troubled by concerns and fears regarding his whereabouts: is he healthy where he is? Is he free or in the prison house? Is he well fed or is he hungry? Is he forced into hard labor? Had he managed to safely cross the border if he had escaped from Vilnius? Those ideas were constantly in our heads, especially when we heard bad rumors about Vilnius which had become a living hell for the Jews, and people are hungry there. We did not believe we will see our son before the end of the war and a mark of sorrow and moaning was stamped on our existence and our lives. The bitter question: “Who are we laboring for?” began to haunt us and we literally did not want to live anymore. And

¹³⁷ The airport, with a capital A, before it was considered as the airport of the town. Jews from the ghetto in Shavli had been taken to work in its construction and development. At first they had been returning to the ghetto every day after a twelve-hour shift and even more; later, the workers were imprisoned in a prison nearby.

the truth is that we found out later, that our son remained in Vilnius and found shelter in the home of his friends' family, and they also "honorably" provided for him, as much as they could. Along with him many of the young men and women, students in Vilnius who were from Shavli, remained. But the situation had become difficult, especially the nutrition matter, the season of hard and forced labor had begun, future prospects had been looking more and more gloomy. And so, six young man and women from Shavli had discussed among themselves (one of their fathers had been with them) and they had managed to find a Polish man who had agreed bringing them to Shavli in a carriage for a decent amount of money. The amount enabled the Pole to buy himself an excellent "Rocinante", a horse that at the second day of the road was already lying at the side of the road and decided that this was to be its final burial place. The Pole had to go to the nearby village to ask for help, and then managed to buy another horse, a cheap one, which was not much better than its dying friend, the latter. After a few hours rest on the "holy ground", it came a little bit to its senses, and due to the fact that two are better than one, the two "eagles" began to slowly drag the carriage from village to village, on narrow roads, in order not to pass by any town, which could have turned out to be dangerous. Early in the morning the travelers started traveling, and in the evening they found shelter in a granary or a barn belonging to a hospitable farmer who was still in the village, or they would sleep under the sky, as they would find some comfortable thicket (if the weather allowed it). To make the long story short, after various adventures and wondering for six days, they finally arrived to Shavli. A great miracle happened to them when they passed near Radviliskis¹³⁸, a place in which there was a concentration camp for the Jews with its Jews eating clerk and his servants, who would haunt and catch every Jew who was near Radviliskis, by foot or in the carriages, and they would send them into the camp which was famous for its horrible attitude towards Jewish prisoners. Our son and his friend were miraculously saved from the Jews hunters and passed this mined place. It was a miracle in the full sense of the word. Surely, our son had left almost all of his belongings in Vilnius: clothes, underwear, suitcases, books, but he himself was fine and he came home and our eyes lit.

On the same day my son and his friend left Vilnius, in a carriage which was more pulled by them than it pulled them, two students, Savich and Epstein, succeeded to convince a young lady to give them two train tickets on the train heading to Shavli via Radviliskis. Not far from this station they were thrown out of the train by the other passengers who understood they were Jews; there they were shot by Partisans (the murderers of the Jews and an end came for these two students, one of whom, Savich – the student of the drama department in the university was going to be a great actor. Since the gymnasium he had been already a good orator. What a pity for his pain and his life! Too bad for an exceptional talent which had gone down the drain, this beauty which the land had swallowed!

A unique and horrible chapter by itself, which very much has affected the mental condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto, constituted by the rumors about the fate of men and women who had disappeared. There had been people, and now there are not: the many prisoners, with the best citizens in Shavli among them, the best of its sons; the poor people who had been remove from town and from the ghetto into the prayers houses, and from there to an unknown location, or directly to this place, and they had not come back; those who had been gathered from the villages and have not been seen until this day. Where had they been all led to? Had they all found their graves here? Had they all stayed here in Lithuania? Had a part of them been removed from the country? Had any of them survived? "The desire is the father of the idea", many of their relatives wish to desire that they are still alive and are amused with this idea, that they are imprisoned in some concentration camp abroad or something similar. Unfortunately, and with a hard heart, we must admit that the "hope" to see those who had disappeared when the war would be over, is a naive wishful thinking. Had their blood been more special and thicker than the blood of all the Jews which had been spilled like water and had satiated the Lithuanian land as a pouring rain? How could we forget the men and women of action and initiative, the students of the wise and the

¹³⁸ That is to say near 'home' already, the town was only 20 km far from Shavli.

educated who left us without return, and whom mysterious, unknown fate rages and horrifies us more than the fate of our dead ones whose fate we know about, and which does not rise so many bothering and hurtful doubts and hesitations: “Weep ye not for the dead; but weep sore for him that goeth away [according to Jeremiah 22, 10].

I. The matters of culture and education in the ghetto

The father of the fathers of filth, many times expressed in his speeches, his decision and demand to exterminate all the Jews in Europe. He did present a different formula not once, that he has already succeeded to exterminate and cure the flu of the Jews and their influence in Europe for thousand years. What can we learn from the last formula is that should he not wish to exterminate all the Jews in Europe without leaving a remnant and refugee, he shall decide to turn the remnants into people without any influence on human society, and according to this decision he had issued an order that the children of Israel would be left without education, and would grow like savages in the desert. There were no schools in the ghetto to be seen or mentioned and even the groups teachings were not allowed. At first we had arranged in the ghetto unofficially, only based on the promise of Stankus that he would look away, a little elementary school. Since there had been no suitable space in order to receive all the pupils, they had been arranged on a little balcony which had given the possibility of teaching small groups of children, and the rest of the pupils had been also divided into small groups, which had received the teachings in the private narrow dense homes of the teachers. As aforementioned, an official permission had not been granted for this establishment, and there had been a danger that they would find out about the deceit of the deceiving, criminal Jews: also, an order was given later, that all those who were not professional should move to the Caucasus¹³⁹ region of the ghetto. Then the teachers stopped the teachings which was not considered as a profession, because if there are no schools, there is no necessity for the teachers, and they shalt not be joined [according to Isaiah 14, 20] among the experts and professionals, and so one teacher began, the allegedly headmaster of the school, to become a leather worker, two teachers were attached to a chemical laboratory in the ghetto, one teacher became a painter overnight, and so on and so forth. These transitions saved them from wondering around, which would have forced them to leave the place they had been accustomed to, and to go to a unknown place [the Caucasus ghetto], especially that the division into professional and nonprofessionals and the transfer of the latter with the old people into the Caucasus region frightened the inhabitants of the ghetto. And so, the organized schools in the ghetto were cancelled and private lessons began to be given. But not every father could afford to pay the tuition for his sons, and so many kids in the ghetto grew up without Torah or education; and if the state of matter was as such regarding the education of the children and elementary schools, it was even worse for the high schools which had been closed and locked for any teenager. And the former students, what was their fate? For now, their teachings would have to wait. Who would know how much time is “for now”: how much would this pause last? As long as we are ruled by the hand of evil, as long as we are stepped on like dirt, and cast aside like lepers, there is no hope for our sons. They need to remain ignorant and idiots, enslaved like hard laborers, as suited for the sons of a defective and inferior race, which is to blame for all the disasters of mankind, and which only wants to multiply [according to Hosea 13, 15] among others and to spark disputes between all nations. Why the sons of such a race need education?

And the cultural issues of the adults, where did those stand? Was it possible to arrange a club in the ghetto? Would they arrange expenses for a broken heart [according to Proverbs 20, 25] where there is no power, time and a suitable location? What cultural issues may interest people with sunk hearts when all their energy is spent on finding food, who always fear the wrath of the oppressors [according to Isaiah 51, 13], and whose fear of death is constantly on their minds? Those who were left with a little interest of cultural issues could read some books. Surely, there is no library in the ghetto. The public Hebrew library which I had been one of its founders and which

¹³⁹ The enclosure, the other region into which the nonprofessionals will go.

had been named after me, was lost in the days of the Bolsheviks. In this library the most important books had been the Hebrew books, and then, the books in Yiddish. The latter had been taken by the Hebrew “comrades”¹⁴⁰, and they had formed a Hebrew-Russian library near the M.O.P.R.¹⁴¹ and the Hebrew books they had hidden in the attic of one of the “comrades”, after one of the former teachers in the Hebrew gymnasium, who became an enthusiast Bolshevik, suggested to burn them. No one knows what had happened to those books for now, and the rich library of the Hebrew gymnasium had been taken in order burn in the central heating in the gymnasium home, where the offices of the work police were now (and also the Trade Institute was there now), and also to warm the heater of the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar]. Surely the Jewish workers who worked in the work police saved many of those books and moved them into the ghetto; private people also, including my son, brought a number of books into the ghetto. In any event there were plenty of books in the ghetto; but there were not many readers. All the people were busy from the eighth hour of the morning until the fourth hour in the afternoon. And so they were forced to wake up at seven o’clock in the morning and they came back into the ghetto in the fifth hour in the afternoon. Add to that dinner and lunch, there was little time left, which was often dedicated to reading the newspapers¹⁴² circulating around the ghetto, as surely they were of interest to the inhabitants, as they contained news about the situation in the front. Surely those papers were as a troubled fountain, and a corrupted spring [according to Proverbs 25, 26], but there was no other choice. The best one was the German paper which appeared in Riga¹⁴³, it appeared glamorous and had a decent literary part, but the news in it were fake and it was full of lies, and they only fulfilled one purpose: propaganda and constant bragging of victories, and the success was also used as propaganda. So much cheekiness in that news! The Germans did not tire or shamed with disgusted feelings, as they announced every day about how they held back the Russians attacks. They reported many Russian victims, shattered and smashed tanks, and so on and so forth. And about their losses and victims there was not even a word, as if the Russian threw snow balls and potatoes. There were so enthusiastic that they have recently reported a Russians loss of more than twenty million men! It is unnecessary to demonstrate how incorrect were those numbers. If we do not take into account the district they already concurred and in those districts the men were no longer drafted, about 160 million people were left in the U.S.S.R, of which the most to have been drafted could be 15 percent; so that would mean a number of 24 million people, and so according to their reports there were only four million soldiers left in the Russian army! And this number of soldiers were constantly, all winter, attacking the Germans and trouble their rest! Aside from the incorrect news this paper was filled with poison and incitement against the Jews and reading it – makes you feel disgusted. There was also a German daily newspaper appearing in Kaunas, which took after the one from Riga; and the echo of those German newspapers in Lithuanian – the bedpans to which all the German filth is drained, are two Lithuanian newspapers: a daily newspaper in Kaunas and a weekly one in Shavli. The latter was a “pogromed” [of pogroms] rag, which had printed in its first issues an allegedly “scientific” article with quotations, tales from the “bottle” [inventions of a drunken mind] and many other book reports which did not exist, stories about how the Jews allegedly use the blood of the Christians in the Jewish holiday of Passover. Yes, the lies and the fiction of the Dark Ages were still alive in the twentieth century. An evidence about the nature of this rag and about the trend it had been riding from the start, had been its very first issue, in which an article had appeared, an article inciting the Lithuanians to perform pogroms in clear words, which had invited them to judge all the Jews in a “popular court”, by themselves, for all the troubles which had arrived from the Jews who had been one with the Bolsheviks; and there the author

¹⁴⁰ The new language form, which came with the Soviet regime: the quotation marks are ironic from the Hebrew-Jewish words after them, referring to the representatives of the Communist party.

¹⁴¹ See footnote 15.

¹⁴² Buying of Lithuanian or German newspapers and their reading was forbidden; and all of this was surely done in hiding.

¹⁴³ The offices of the East Commissar of the Reich [Reichskommissar des Ostland] where situated in Riga [the capital of Latvia], and the Districts Commissars were subjected to him. Due to the fact that it was the center of things, its German paper was also the central paper for the entire Baltic region.

of the article had gone on and on, to count all the “killings” and all the defects which had been made by the Jews: cutting off hands and feet, cutting down breasts, taking out eyes, and many more, and the list of the “killings” had made by the Jews the author had ended with a detail which “sheds light” on the entire value of the article: among the Lithuanians who had been very much damaged by the Bolsheviks in such horrible ways, had been some whose “heart had been cut off their bodies by the ritual”, that is to say by the demands of the Jewish religion. And so, in a generation of religious ownerless, there were faithful and believing people who were afraid to fulfill the practical demands of our Jewish religion, we became the Bolsheviks! Also, the accusation that there is a ritual of cutting off the heart was new, but surely the lie has no legs. And so, it was clear that from that time the rest of the news about the killings of the Jews were also fake and deceiving as the last one. The end of the article had repeated its beginning. The opinion of Ahad Ha’am in his article has been proven: “cold comfort” that the blood libel is an evidence of the nature of the other libels of which the Jews are blamed for, and as this libel is a lie and a fake, the other ones are the same and they are based on the hatred in the heart of our haters and classifiers and not on real facts. To make a long story short, as far as the cultural issues in the ghetto, the things were quite weary now, and there is not much to say about them now, unless for the desire to tell about the details of the life in the ghetto and to provide a picture, more or less, complete of those lives.

J. Heath Care and medicine

One of main important conditions for health of the body is hygiene, which can be achieved by bathing, showering or at least washing of the entire body. It is very hard to talk about the washing of the entire body in the ghetto: on the one hand, the exceptional density, and on the other hand, the constant concerns and fears bring to negligence and take the mind off treating and washing the body, which are already impossible for most of the inhabitants in the ghetto. Furthermore, bathrooms were not to mention, and were nonexistent in the ghetto, and this disaster, which was a danger for all the ghetto inhabitants, that is to say the lack of bathrooms, which were already praised by our wise men and their value was well known as they said: “every town in which there is no bath house, no wise student would live in”. There is one detail needed to be stated regarding this issue: in town, the public bath house is closed two days a week. The Jewish “representatives” in the ghetto tried to speak at the municipality and with the District Commissar that the Jews, the inhabitants of the ghetto, would be allowed to use the public bath house in those two days, especially that the distance to the bath house was short, and we only needed to cross a side street, not a central one. Of course, the negotiation of the representatives has brought no results with the villains: the permission had not been given! What are we talking about? We are talking about the Jewish bath house, the bath house which the Jewish community and its heir the “Ezra”¹⁴⁴ association had paid for, large amounts, in order to inspect the building and to repair it, and they had also taken care of its formation and management. Yes! The admonishment curse had been fulfilled for us entirely, in its wider meaning: “thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein” [Deuteronomy 28, 30]. So much of the money of the Jews had been lost! We had worked so hard and the fruits are being eaten by strangers. By the way: from the windows of the laboratory of the central polyclinic in which I work now, I can see across the square the building in which the Hebrew Gymnasium had been; and now the Trade Institute was established there, with its doors closed before the Jews, and the work police is also there. Every day I look upon the building which has caused us so much of our blood, one can see a third floor which was added lately, before the Bolsheviks came; it is different from the other floors with its whiter bricks, I look and my eyes are teary and my heart is faint [Lamentations 1, 22]. Every one of us donated significant amounts for this third floor. And so much work was needed to build it, we needed to also buy the adjacent lot in order to extend the square for the students, their physical education classes and their amusements; as a member of the parents committee I knew and I was a witness to all of the adventures regarding

¹⁴⁴ That is to say an association for the “Ezra” (help) of the Jews in Germany, Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden; was founded in Berlin in 1901. One of its purposes was to improve the quality of the lives of the Jews in Eastern Europe.

the gymnasium building and the extension of the square. And now our prize which we had [the initiators and donators], the achievement we were so proud of, was in the hands of our murderers and our evil enemies, and its fate was the same as the fate of the bath house, which we are banned from now, from the assets of our community, our properties and our hard work.

The popular proverb says: “spider webs in the house – concerns in the house” – that is to say: if the inhabitants of the house have concerns and are drowning in sorrow, they would not pay attention to the cleanliness of their house. This proverb is perfect for our lives in the ghetto, lives which have been full of sorrow and concerns, and if we were to add the density and the many tenants in one room, it is easy to imagine the state of cleanliness in the houses. The third plague of Egypt was spreading and fast, in a horrific way. And if even in the houses of the wealthiest and the moderately educated, the lice began to swarm, what would the poor people do? Furthermore, all the yards are filled with mud, garbage and filth, and in the toilets there were piles of men excrements until there was no room. And there were not horses or carriages to evacuate and clean the filth. When the spring comes and the sun begins to warm the earth with its rays, it will be very hard to inhale the odor from the filth in the toilets and yards. Due to those things it is easy to imagine that the hygiene in the ghetto had been faulty and defected in such a horrible way, and any infectious disease becomes immediately a plague which would kill us all. The danger even grew more when in town the typhus disease began to spread, which is, as we all know, transferred by the lice. This disease was brought by the war prisoners and the soldiers who came back from the front, and the ones in the prison house, the place in which the war prisoners found shelter, and from the military hospital, the plague was transmitted to the inhabitants of the town, and many were sick. If this disease was to enter the ghetto, then – if we are taking into consideration the faulty hygiene condition in the ghetto – the entire ghetto would have been infected and the solution of our “friends” would have been to burn the entire ghetto to the ground, as they did with the Jewish hospital in Kaunas. Surely in the ghetto were a few, secluded cases of the disease: a few young men who worked for the Germans became sick, but no one died and the disease did not spread; the representatives tried to take preventive measures by various means: first of all a small hospital was arranged and there all the cases were transferred, the hairdressers removed the hair from the heads of the little boys and the little girls who were filled with lice and lice eggs, they asked that the pillows and the linens would be taken outside, and when it was very cold, this trick was an important hygiene measure. In the end, the horrible danger of death passed over the ghetto, and we were miraculously saved from the typhus disease. But the miracles do not occur every day and there were still many problems remaining. The unhygienic conditions and the insufficient nutrition reduced substantially the immune of the bodies, before the diseases in general and infectious disease in particular, which have been lurking us in every corner, like the tuberculosis disease, the weakened body is a device which very easily accepts all the infectious diseases and it is a fertile ground for the reproduction of the various microbes and damage of the various organs.

If the hygienic situation of the inhabitants of the ghetto is not satisfactory, and it threatens to bring various diseases upon us, the medical condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto brings us a larger satisfaction. In the two regions of the ghetto, two ambulatory clinics were established which have been providing free or cheap medical services for the inhabitants of the ghetto; near the clinics were also two dental clinics. Also, in the two regions of the ghetto, Traku and Caucasus, there were more than twenty physicians, midwives, nurses who can treat the patients with a high level of professionalism – surely six physicians are working in town, but after the fourth hour they too return to the ghetto.

As I speak about the medical facilities of the ghetto, there are three issues needed to be emphasized, and of which I will discuss more in the chapter dedicated to the new decrees: it was forbidden to accept Jewish patients in the hospitals and the medical institutes in town; it was forbidden to receive and buy medications from the pharmacies in town, and finally the unheard of decree, to forbid Jewish women giving birth to sons, and they were obligated to miscarry their fetuses. How the heart could not revolt when hearing such things? Do we have the hardness of stones so we could control ourselves in the face of such calamities? “The Pharaoh had only

forbidden our sons” and the father of the fathers of filth, may his name and memory would be forever forgotten, decided to uproot it all! Would he succeed? Would there be no salvation for us, “all the sons of Israel”?

Considering the details, the representatives managed to organize a minuscule hospital in the two buildings of the cemetery. “In the purification room” and the custodians’ dorms [adjacent to the Caucasus prison]. The hospital is organized to just sufficiently treat the patients of the hospital, pregnant women, labor and delivery, and the ones who were forced to abort their pregnancies in order to escape expected harsh punishment by the German police, if they would have dared giving birth to a living infant. Obviously, there was no radiology machine and the hospital lacked other items as well, but in the hour of distress this small hospital could take the place of the municipal hospital, especially that the anti-Semitic surgeon of the municipal hospital, T. K., has become closer to the Jews, and has started coming to the ghetto hospital to perform the more difficult surgeries, which could not be performed by the hands of our younger surgeon H. This anti-Semitic surgeon is among the Lithuanian intellectuals who think that the Jews need to be taught a good lesson, but our haters have indeed exaggerated; and so he has become more comfortable with the Jewish patients and he is happy to help in the ghetto, especially as he is being paid for his job, a primary condition to his work.

The position of the main physician of the ghetto hospital has been given to a new man, Dr. B-N. He has bought his world in one hour as a native of the Klaipeda¹⁴⁵ region, he speaks the German language well, and therefore has volunteered to go to the District Commissar along with Mrs. L. which had also been educated in Germany. Surely their delegation has returned empty handed, but their good intention has tuned into an action, and he has been awarded with the position of the main physician of the hospital, which does not bring any advantages or disadvantages, but he surely has been receiving material benefits from it. This physician had a grudge against me. After Jasaitis had returned from Moscow, he received his old position back: The Head of the Health Department in Shavli. He then found out that I had been left without a position at any of the medical institutes in town – are I refer to the period before the Nuremberg Laws were adopted in our region – and the new physicians B-N and G-Ski had been working at the external ambulatory in town. Then Jasaitis decided to dismiss B-N from his position and to grant that position to me, whom he had known for so many years. B-N had been working then at the war prisoners’ prison, and he therefore had been sure that he would not be taken to the “black” labor. I, who desperately needed a job in order not to be considered as a wonderer, and I had been the manager of the polyclinic after I managing the wards in the municipal hospital for more than sixteen years, did not reject Jasaitis’ offer, and had thought that I was more suitable to continue providing my services in a municipal institution than someone who had just arrived into town and who had already been holding another position. And what did B-N do, when I received his position which I had been deserved as the former head of the institute? He snitched to all our friends that I was the one demanding Jasaitis to grant B-N’s position to me, as if I was the one who could make the decision. Since then he has been hostile towards me, this Dr. B-N, and whenever various meetings were being held in his house, I was never invited; I therefore have distanced myself from public work. And when I was one of the six physicians who were appointed, again with the help of Jasaitis, as lab technician in various medical institutions in town, he was not one of those six, and also his position in the prison house was cancelled, and so he was enraged, and decided to tell the manager of the work police and to one of the clerks of the ghetto that our positions were fake, fictive. Once, in a meeting of the physicians of the ghetto he attacked me as always, and Dr. G. responded to him that if the horse trader in Klaipeda, and now the manager of the work police¹⁴⁶, is discussing the nature of our jobs as lab technicians, it is only the fault of B-N. He snapped out of his place with rage and after insulting Dr. G., he rushed and left the meeting. He understood that I do not like him as

¹⁴⁵ The Klaipeda region had been attached to the independent Lithuania after and a result of World War I in order to provide it with an opening to the Baltic Sea. Similar to the entire population of the region, the German language was also the cultural language for the Jewish people of the region.

¹⁴⁶ The meaning was for a German from Klaipeda, Strengė; who was formally called the head of the work police, the head of the Arbeitsamt.

well, and since then he has been trying to avoid me even more. And when they started organizing the hospital in the ghetto, and needed a manager for this hospital, they started pointing in my direction as the former manager of the wards of the internal and contagious diseases in the municipal hospital for more than sixteen years, and surely I had gained a lot of knowledge and experience in such a position. The chief physician apparently contemplated these two points at first, but finally turned offered me the position of manager of the ghetto hospital, and he promised me a permit for leaving and entering the ghetto a without any time limitation, so I would be able to be late to the laboratory after the morning rounds in the hospital and then leave the laboratory early in order to return to the hospital. And in that way I would be able to spend my time at the laboratory as needed, because as a matter of fact, now I stay a little bit more than needed in the laboratory. That and more: the tendency for public work was still rooted in me. I therefore had decided to accept the position of the hospital manager, but my wife objected to the offer reasoning that that it would be difficult for me to go from the ambulatory to the hospital in the long and cold winter evenings. Also, some doubts had risen in me which needed special attention, I was afraid that the work police would not permit me to fill both positions, and it would release me from my position in town, a position which was very dear to me, especially that for that position I received my humble salary, and the position in the hospital would have been with no reward. Second, and this was one of my strongest hesitations, the days were to which the population of the ghetto was moved from one region to the other – and if I would be forced to walk twice a day to the Caucasus region, maybe they would decide that it would be best for me to move there from the nest I had arranged for myself in the Traku region, with difficulties and many adventures. And so in the end I had refused the offer, and the management had been given to Dr. P. who accepted it under my advice as he was much younger than me. I was hesitant at first but now I do not regret it, because I am sure that my work at the hospital would have harmed my work as a lab technician in the polyclinic; because the surgeons send their patients to me until the fourth hour. Also, I have some spare time and I dedicate it to learning the English language and I have advanced in this language more than I expected myself to. I can already understand a short story. If we would survive to leave the ghetto, we would try to immigrate to Israel, and my new English would become handy to me.

I also remember the pharmacy which was established in the ghetto – a very important factor especially that the pharmacies in town had ceased to give medications [drugs] to the Jews. A great value could be also found in the laboratory for various chemical substances under the management of a specialist such as Zigernick; where they make herbal mixes to substitute tea, dental powder, cosmetics and more.

K. The management and supervision of the ghetto

“How great are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” The streets of the ghetto sprawling onto hills and slopes have no floors [paving], stones and no sidewalks; when the snow is melting or after a heavy rain, they are filled with mud and slime; in the summer they are filled with dust; the houses are dense and cold in the winter, and in the summer they are very hot as the stoves are in the rooms. Also, the houses are filthy and filled with bedbugs, cockroaches and mice; the inhabitants are depressed and tortured; the food is not enough, the decrees are hard and new and change almost every day, the trouble of bereavement and death attacked all of us; and we are filled with sorrow and sadness. And despite these unsuitable and unworthy conditions, much could be said for the population of the ghetto, which succeeded to create a decent organization, and to extract from within a management and supervision which brought order and rule in the ghetto. The mechanism of the ghetto management is as following: the first position is taken by the representatives, that is to say the committee of the elderly people which act as intermediary between the ghetto and the authorities, between the Jews and the “king of Jews”, Stankus, the clerk in charge of all the Jewish matters, the pipe which brings the decrees of the Germans and the Lithuanians, their dirty executants, upon our heads. The various police clerks [administration] work closely with the representatives, this is the “administration” which implements all the given orders with the help of a regiment of young ladies who work in the office in matters of writing, accounting and books, and especially

with the help of the Jewish policemen “the arrangers”, which act as investigation police in the ghetto¹⁴⁷. The representatives are Mr. Leibovich, Cartoon, Rubinstein, Rabbi Hiller, Advocate Abramovich and the head secretary Katz (who was the director of the popular bank). In a place where there are no humans, they tried to be humans; certain people who had been seniors in the public services evaded the responsibilities of a public service for various reasons (as they were afraid of the Germans and because they did not have enough knowledge of the German language). But those who were not discouraged and dealt with the troubles and the burdens of the angry and depressed people. Their job is busy, hard and full of responsibilities. Not once did they have to stand up against various decrees and orders. That was the case in which they succeeded preventing the removal of the inhabitants of the ghetto in Shavli to Zagare, a move which would have killed them all as it had happened to all the other Jews of various towns which had been brought there and then had disappeared. Their job is multicolored: they have to attend to various and many needs of the ghetto inhabitants. They established two stores to provide food in the ghetto, an ambulatory, a pharmacy and a hospital to heal the patients, a sanitary department to supervise the medical matters, a department for woods for heating, a department for the “needy”, a department which negotiates with the work police for those who work in town but also for those who work in the ghetto, a department for the permits given to those who wish to go into town, a department for the salaries of the workers and many more. The representatives are responsible and have the power to deal with the taxes of the inhabitants of the ghetto, to punish the ones guilty of public disorder, to judge in matters between a men [civil matters], and for that a court room was established, which among other judges, there was one careless physician who out of anger had said that if “they would try to move him from his house to another apartment, then half of the ghetto would be removed”. He was not careful about his statement, pertaining to a very grave matter, as the listeners thought that a few families had been already removed from the ghetto to be killed because of the physicians and their apartments. (He had been the manager of the ambulatory unit and he had been removed from his position for three months); there were also many typical trials which I would not detail here, despite the fact that they were interesting and could add color to the general portrayal of the ghetto. Maybe I will write about them in one of those days. A very hard work, as the parting of the red sea, was the division of the contribution between the inhabitants; I have to say that the representatives fulfilled this job reasonably honorably. The office resolved as much as possible, the challenging and complex matter of allocating the apartments among the inhabitants of the ghetto; it was also successful in finding room for the ones who escaped various “hells” and apparently considered the ghetto as heaven. Surely, there had been many mistakes, sometimes substantial. The collar is hanging above the necks of the representatives and the clerks for several grave sins against many people, and they increased the taxes, or reduced them in an unfair manner; the apartments were also divided in a peculiar way sometimes, and they did not take care of the ones who deserved to be taken care of. They made sure that relatives and various members of distinguished families received apartments which were more comfortable and spacious, and they paid amounts of money which were less than what they were able to afford. But when the work is so versatile and exhausting, and especially when the conditions are so harsh and uncomfortable, there is no escape from mistakes, and so we must not complain about them, as they are drowning in a sea of troubles and their work is hard labor, and they do not receive awards for it in most cases. Therefore, we are obligated to forgive them for their mistakes and thank them with all of our heart for their hard work, which was sometimes dangerous and overwhelming.

However, it is hard to accept the rudeness, the over strictness and the bureaucracy in the offices of the representatives and the clerks, the manner of disrespect to elderly, to distinguished persons, with indifference to the wise and educated scholars, equal to the idiots and uneducated people – a Bolshevism of the “revolutionaries” in town, who allege that if a large matter had become small, and the worthless had become valuable, the small should automatically become big and the valuable worthless, but a sentence and its reversal are not always true.

¹⁴⁷ That is to say: the policemen in the ghetto are also investigators.

Still we can credit another large and important project to the representatives, that is to say, the organization of various laboratories [workshops] in the ghetto in order to provide employment and salaries to a large number of people, who without those laboratories, would have been left as wonderers and in danger. Among those laboratories, the most important ones are: the laboratory for chemical preparations; the workshop for underwear repairs and more, the laundry, the workshop for paper bags and boxes, the workshop for shoes repairing and many more. Let us mention their name in a positive light due to those institutes which had saved many men from being considered wonderers in the eyes of the evil.

As an addition to this chapter, we will mention here a few trials which took place in the courtroom of the ghetto, in addition to the trial of the physician who talked too much (this was a trial with closed doors).

- A) There was a story of a young man whose father suddenly became ill in the second hour of the night, and he went to call the closest physician. The latter was late home (they say he was playing cards until one o'clock in the morning) and did not want to get out of his bed so soon after returning home. The young man told him that if he would not be up in ten seconds, he, the young man, would shatter all the windows in the physician's house. And he did as he said! The physician submitted a lawsuit against the young man, and later they compromised; but the head of the police (the Jewish police in the ghetto) filed a complaint against the physician who denied help to a suffering man who had a heart attack, and against the young man – for disturbing the peace and order of the ghetto. The physician received a discipline and the young man was fined with 30 mark: 15 mark for the damage, 15 mark for the representatives.
- B) There was a story about a young woman, one who had a talent for the speculative art. She was born in Galicia and wondered here with her husband and her children. This woman began selling in town various items of the ghetto inhabitants, and this kind of trade earned her a certain profit. [She charged] flat percentages from the selling prices or earned the excess above the price she paid. One day she received several items to sell them in town but decided to keep the items for herself and claim that no items had been given to her. The courtroom investigated and pursued the matter in the light of the request of those who suffered, and the woman was forced to return the items to their owner and was also fined and arrested.

It is important to mention that there is a guard in the ghetto, a prison house which was used quite often.

Conflicts and arguments resulting in blows and beatings were resolved there; also, small thefts, resisting the orders of the representatives and the police, were also behaviors which brought clients to the prison house. Even the Germans who caught Jews with small quantities of food, prefer the prison house in the ghetto for those people, and not the general prison house¹⁴⁸.

Among the trials, the attention of the inhabitants of the ghetto was drawn to two matters concerning physicians. In light of the decree of which pregnancy and giving birth were forbidden, one woman turned to Dr. G. who was known as a physician performing abortions and "stillbirths", but this man was not always careful in his profession, and several disasters occurred, like a wife of another physician who had toxemia of pregnancy and another young beautiful woman who lost her life. These types of cases are forgotten in the end, explanations and excuses are found and the people put their fate again in the hands of the same physician. It does not matter that the physician was eager to receive a sum of money promised to him, or if the woman had begged him – the fact is that he decided to stop her pregnancy with the help of a method common among the women from the villages, "the birth givers of angels" and in a crowded room he attached a "feeding tube". She "miscarried". But later she became ill with an infection of the womb for many months and lay in the hospital. And when she came

¹⁴⁸ This was the "red" prison house [in Yiddish: Dy Royte Turme; see footnote 66], which was next to the Traku region of the ghetto, and its appearance and what was happening within frightened the inhabitants of the ghetto days and nights.

out of the hospital she demanded a payment of him for healing. And so, she filed a complaint against Dr. G. – the court could not decide, was he guilty for her illness, or were there any other causes, as several days had passed without her having fever of any other symptoms after the draining of the womb. He received a discipline but was not obligated to pay money to the woman.

And a physician in the hospital to which the woman was admitted, the director of the gynecology ward, is one of the haters of Dr. G. and so the latter thought that the hospital physician was the one who convinced the woman to file a complaint against him. He therefore sought revenge and searched for a case which would give him the opportunity to blame the hospital physician with something which would involve the investigation and pursual of the court. And such a case arrived. The hospital physician, the gynecologist, who was also a surgeon, operated on a young woman above her left eye, and the surgery was not successful. For some reason a “Fistula” remained in the place of the surgery – a little cavity draining pus all the time. The young woman herself was gullible and a big fool, but her oldest sister was smarter and happened to work in Dr. G ‘s house, helping his wife with various house chores. Dr. G. apparently influenced the ill sister and the latter to file a complaint against Dr. L., the surgeon. It was found that the surgeon had done everything as it was supposed to be done, according to the advices of the town surgeons – and this trial too was left without results. (T.N. – there is a repetition of two rows from before (the footnote is also repeated), the current chapter was not finished.)

10. The continuation of the decrees in the ghetto period

An entourage of angels of destruction sits on this canister tube and ponders the question: “Let us outsmart him”. The people who hate us aspire to make our lives bitter with various orders and decrees. First there is a need to end the Jewish schemes to find food in town by buying it from acquaintances or speculators, or by the trade of various items for food. For this it is needed to forbid the Jews from wondering the town, from visiting the Christian houses and the stores, to be very strict with the ones who try to bring provisions into the ghetto and to arrest everyone who shows even the slightest resistance to those things. And so, the following decrees were brought upon the inhabitants of the ghetto:

- A) All the people working in town are obligated to leave the ghetto until the eighth hour of the morning and to return into the ghetto at the fourth hour in the afternoon, and from the eighth hour of the morning until the fourth hour in the afternoon no Jew shall be seen or found on the streets of town without a special permit. “It is sufficient” to see the Jews only when “there is no other choice”, when the professional workers needed by the Germans, are going to work and return from there, and nothing more.
- B) The workers are required to leave the ghetto and go to their workplaces in town in small groups, in a military order: as if they were small regiments, with a Christian director along them, who would supervise that the workers would not leave the regiment and walk into a private home. Up to 5 people were obligated to walk like geese: one after the other; up to 15 people – in pairs in a row, and more than 15 people, in rows of three. Our haters like the military regime and the discipline, also there is a matter of humiliation here, to bring ordinary people to the degree of prisoners.
- C) The general direction of those decrees was finally stated in a memorandum which was issued a little bit later: “it is forbidden to buy anything from town”. Along with the other orders: to go in regiments

with a Christian, and the fact that it was forbidden to walk in town as individuals, this decree was designed to execute the aspiration of starving us, and to remove any possibility that the superior Aryans would be discriminated by the filthy Jews in matters of provisions.

D) All the working Jews comprised one category, without differentiation of education, professionalism and experience. A Jewish physician, a lab technician, a radiologist, an engineer and similar are in the same category as a woodchopper, a digger by axe and the rest of the “black workers”: they all receive one salary: one mark and a half for a man and a mark and three pfennigs for a woman; the salary will be received only for the working days, not for Sundays or holy days, those are out of the question. A very simple Christian worker or a simple servant receives twice, even three times more, and for the month, not for the days. This decree does not require many explanations: it was designed in order to pay us as little as possible, to humiliate us to dirt, to give us an opportunity to continue our horrible existence in starvation, because as everything became more and more expensive, this salary would only be sufficient for dry bread and some hot water (if we would find bread and wood for heating).

E) The owners of the workshops and the various institutions, which employ Jewish workers, are not allowed to pay the latter their salary directly, from hand to hand, as it was until now and as it was costumed. The owners are obligated to transfer the salaries to the German work police – and here is an interesting fact – according the allotment of the Christian workers from the same kind, and the police... (T.N. – missing part)

The Germans wanted to dilute us, depress us and to bring us to contrition [according to Psalms 90, 3]. The decree constituted a great danger for many of the Jews of the ghetto who work in town. Until now, the Christian workshops owners utilized the possibility of cheap Jewish labor, now their representatives are obligated to transfer to the police, the same amount which they would have paid for a gentile worker, on behalf of the Jews. Therefore, why would they want Jewish workers in that situation? Additionally, certain Christian directors of various institutions listed their Jewish friends as their fictive workers, a fake, in order for the latter to avoid the forced labor in the aerodrome and many other reasons, and to facilitate their ability to go into town – and now, all the fake workers and those who are not needed as much, will be released, as there is a possibility of a loss. Now, only the real workers will remain, the experts and specialists of the various domains. One can assume that out of all the Jewish physicians working in town in the various medical institutes, only the dental technicians would remain, the radiologists, the skin laboratory technician and the real lab technicians – twelve people – and Dr. G. and L. will be dismissed from their jobs as lab technicians. Speaking of Dr. G. reminds me the adventures and the trouble he had went through until he had managed to build his house, a wonderful walled brick house on the main street, the location of the maternity in town now. His rival and competitor Dr. L. came and grabbed his apartment, a beautiful building, which Dr. G. had planned to buy from its owner and arrange a private maternity there. He had negotiated; and then Dr. L. had behaved like a typical Jew, as we had talked about the matter of competition and had topped his price, had managed to buy the house, and had formed a maternity there. This acquisition and the necessity for Dr. G. to leave his apartment and to let his rival and hater have it had created a dispute and ended in gun threats. Many arbitrary trials, many civil trials – all until Dr. G. managed to buy with much bloods a lot in town and to build a beautiful house there, a house even more beautiful than the one which had been “taken” from him by Dr. L., and two private maternities were founded in Shavli, and everything fell into place – but not well! Not after many days the Bolsheviks came, and nationalized both of those homes. In the house used to belong to Dr. L. they formed a children hospital, and in the house used to belong to Dr. G. they left the maternity as a branch of the municipal hospital,

and Dr. G. received a permit to remain and work in the hospital which had been once his home, as an assistant, and he was at peace with his fate. But the most horrible and terrifying changes occurred when the Germans came. And these, added to all the troubles and tortures brought by them, were the Nuremberg Laws¹⁴⁹, which among others forbid Jewish physicians treating the Christians, and they also brought the crowning glory – the ghetto – and so Dr. G. was removed and driven out [according to 1 Shmuel 26, 19]! That was when Dr. Jasaitis, the head of the health department, decided to help some of his physician friends and for various reasons tried to have them receive positions as lab technicians in various institutions in town. His efforts were successful, and he received from the District Commissar a permit for six Jewish physicians. And one of those physicians was Dr. G., as Dr. Jasaitis surely saw his moral right to work in the house for which so much of his blood had been spilled until he managed to build it. But all of these are true when there is no loss of money, as I mentioned before, but if the municipality is obligated to transfer in his behalf the full amount to the work police, then we can expect an intervention from Linkevicius¹⁵⁰, the cheap, strict, hater of Jews, the mayor, and Dr. G., who is not very needed in his job, would be dismissed again, because if it was not for the decree of the work police then we could have continued our work, which was much needed for free, as the integrity and morals of the mayor required, we were required to work for free, only for the right to be attached to some medical institute, and especially that the city budget had not foreseen expenses for lab technicians. And so the admonishment curse existed also for Dr. G.: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein with an addition which proves that it could even be more horrible: to kneel for a slice of bread and few coins of money: because working in one of the medical institutions as a lab technician for such a meager salary is equal to kneeling down for a slice of bread and few coins of money. Indeed, misery loves company and the ugly admonishment curse exists for all the Jews who built their homes for strangers.

- F) The contribution decree. This decree sucks from us [our people] all the strength and essence of life we had left in us. After most of our assets and properties had been taken from us by the Bolsheviks who had begun the process, and by the Germans who finished it, by the means of the looters and the oppressors, the official and unofficial ones, until we were presented as an empty vessel, this decree came as a thunder on a very clear and sunny day. Who would have thought and imagined that an amount of half a million rubles would be set as tax from the poor and lacking inhabitants of the ghetto? So many tears the inhabitants of the ghetto shed as they were trying to find the money for their portion of the tax by selling various items, a very difficult task nowadays, or with the help of other schemes. Apart from the tax, which was not reduced despite of the efforts of the representatives, they demanded us to give them the silver and gold items which had been miraculously saved from the inspection committees when the inhabitants had arrived into the ghetto, those official committees which had recorded everything; until now the contribution left most of the inhabitants with no money at all, and even more than that, some borrowed money in order to pay their portion of the contribution, and now they are slaves to their “creditors”, and they have not managed paying their debts until this day. In a time in which I did not have any money of my own and I have been obligated to borrow the money for my portion of the contribution, as we have been living already for some time off the items we have been selling. Surely, this has been the fate of many and most of the inhabitants of the ghetto, all except for the speculators whose number has been reduced by the various orders and decrees.

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 60.

¹⁵⁰ The Germans appointed him near the date in which they entered town [July 10, 1941]. Actually, he was already the mayor of Shavli in the days of independent Lithuania and the regime of President Smitona.

G) The hidden robbery and oppression, officially and unofficially, the inspection and confiscation committees, the contribution – all of those were not enough for the leeches who were never satiated and chewed our blood with every mouth they had. And suddenly, after all of those “fears” an interesting questionnaire appeared before us, a questionnaire about us, our clothes, our furniture, our money, our jewelry, our tools and more, and along with it, a norm [an allowance] was published for those things, together with the demand that all of those things which were above the norm were required to be recorded in the aforementioned questionnaire, for example if there is more than one chair for a person, more than six shirts, more than two suits, all needed to be written down without exemption, it was also required to write down the good beds and the beautiful mattresses, leather suitcases “in good condition”, good furs, “Karakul”¹⁵¹ hats, certain types of jewelry and so on and so forth, all of those written down in order to be of course delivered to the leeches. This questionnaire frightened us more than we can say, as in most situations, we were shown in the questionnaire that we have been left naked and with nothing to show for, according to the real matter of things. We were frightened that they would try to prove we had been lying in the questionnaire and as a result would come and search our houses, a matter which may result in unpleasant outcomes. The searchers could have found excess items, in their opinion, new items, and try to make it as they were items which were forbidden according to their list. Truth to be told, that this has been the single decree which has remained on paper, and has not been implemented, apparently they understood that the initiators of the questionnaire had been wrong, they have finally understood, that if our properties were robbed one hundred and one times, and if slowly our skin was undressed from our body and they left us with no means to provide for ourselves, with such a poor salary, which is not sufficient to live on bread alone, after all they had done to us, the masters had no reason to bother themselves and come to our houses in vain, because even if we are indeed liars and deceivers, we are not magicians, and we cannot make something out of nothing. This new attempt to rob us from our properties which had been already obliterated us is seemingly the invention of “the nation resembling a donkey”¹⁵² and its witty initiative, because the real vile people, the Germans would not spend to print questionnaires without a purpose and which were destined not to succeed. These evil and vile people trouble us and make our lives miserable with practical exploits, with undoubtable terrifying and known results.

H) It was forbidden for us to receive treatment for infectious diseases in the municipal hospital.

This decree was one of the most vile, outrageous and extreme decrees which had been issued by our murderers. The decree was issued along with the outburst of the typhus disease which began spreading in Lithuania and reached the town of Shavli. Our ruler has been aware, and it was a known fact in general, that there has not been infections among the ghetto inhabitants, and there has been no place to organize the quarantine house – a shelter for the ones infected. This disease has brought fear to all the inhabitants of the ghetto, who have been generally infected by the lice living in the dense and dirty houses, and which are, as anyone knows, the evil angels spreading this disease. We would not exaggerate nor sin against the truth to assume that this ban has been issued in order to put the inhabitants of the ghetto at risk, with the intention of causing the disease to engulf us all, and then having an excellent excuse to immediately dispose of the ghetto and all of the Jews remaining in town. This major problem which has caused so much sorrow for the Germans and the Lithuanian would finally find its solution, and no one would object to get rid of a plague. But what is the apparent reason for the excuse? Why is it even needed? Do they really need an excuse to get rid of a few thousands of

¹⁵¹ Processed lamb leather [from Russian] together with its curly hair; such a hat was considered expensive.

¹⁵² It seems as if referring to the Lithuanians, and we it could be assumed that this had been the opinion in those days, if from rumor, evidence or deduction.

Jews? Only a slight hint has been needed and the implementation would occur with a blink of an eye, as the savage Lithuanians whom we lived with for hundreds of years had already proven. However, “Blessed be the one who changes the times!” There are signs that in certain main streets of the Lithuanians they have been starting to search for reasons and excuses for their actions. In Kaunas an office has been established in order to gather information about the allegedly evil deeds the Jews had done to the Lithuanians! Abroad, the Lithuanian intellectuals justify themselves (and to those we would hold a special debt, and the time would come to collect)¹⁵³ that their hands did not spill Jewish blood, but the collar must be hanged on the neck of the winners. They say that the representatives of the Lithuanians submitted a memorandum to the German government and among others they complain that they had turned into murderers. The priests also submitted a memorandum with an apology from the Pope. To make a long story short, many of the Lithuanians feel that their deeds towards the Jews had gone too far, and they are afraid time would come for retribution, especially when first and foremost, matters are not as had been expected, and doubt and hesitations are showing signs in their minds. Moreover, the winners do not “pat” the heads of the Lithuanians or show any signs of affection and gratitude for implementing the entire Germans plans. Therefore, an excuse to kill all of us who remained, the inhabitants of the ghetto, is not unnecessary, and could bring no harm if it existed. And the excuse that a plague source should be destroyed, a source of danger to the entire population, is an excellent one and cannot raise any complaints, any questions. And so, our representatives and clerks has done a great job in keeping the plague outside of the gates of the ghetto, and they have taken all the necessary means, as shaving the heads of the children infected with lice, removing the linens outside as often as possible and especially the formation of a hospital in the ghetto. And thanks to all of those means, only a few cases of the typhus disease had occurred in the ghetto and all has ended well, without even one casualty. The fact that in such uncomfortable and anti-hygienic conditions, as the ones in the ghetto, the plague has not spread and has not controlled us should be regarded as a real miracle, and a sad consolation for us, one to be remembered. This way the hope of the evils has not been fulfilled, and they have not seen the disease spreading into the ghetto. Yes! The inferior race has showed the superior Aryans: they died like flies and we did not even have one victim of the plague. This decree which forbids to receive treatment for infectious diseases in the municipal hospital remained intact for a short while. Soon it wore a much more general form: an order was given that no Jewish patients should be admitted to the hospital, not even women giving birth or those require surgery. At the same time the pharmacies were forbidden to sell medications or any other merchandise to the Jews. And “a timely good deed was welcomed” as our representatives were ready for those orders and a hospital and a pharmacy have already been functioning in the ghetto! For now, we have not been defeated in this matter, and our haters have realized they had been wrong, to reject with the left and to accept with the right, to lock the doors of the hospitals for us and to let us establish a hospital in the ghetto, and they did not derive much pleasure from their actions or nasty schemes, because in the end they have not succeeded leaving us without a hospital. For their benevolence which has been filled with wickedness related to this vile decree, it was said “sin is a reproach to any people” [Proverbs 14, 34].

And the hateful person, T. K., the surgeon of the municipal hospital, seems to be among those Lithuanian intellectuals who realized they had gone a “little bit” to far with their hatred for the Jews and now they are regretting their actions to a certain extent, therefore his attitude towards the Jewish

¹⁵³ A known matter which had not happened even after fifty years and more. As a matter of fact, only few were left after all the Jews in Lithuania had been exterminated. The irony of fate: if and when the Lithuanians would be willing to pay back the few who could claim, the material debts they owe, the Lithuanians would be able to pride themselves that they were eventually fair. However, it seems like the author does not refer specifically to the material side.

patients has been more relaxed, more human lately. He has agreed to come to the hospital in the ghetto and perform two surgeries there, surely for more than a decent salary. In general, the Lithuanian physicians who escaped from the competition with the Jewish physicians, seized the opportunity to earn piles of gold for themselves, but not all of them. Some of them do not charge their rural patients at all and as a salary they request provisions: butter, eggs, chickens and so, and even from the patients in town they request “items of equivalent value”.

- I) Lately a decree has been issued, which has shocked the inhabitants of the ghetto and terrified them as well. That is the decree to transfer some of the inhabitants from the Traku region into the Caucasus region and vice-versa. When the inhabitants of the ghetto were able to relax a bit, at least from the housing point of view, this decree has surprised and enraged them. The entourage of angels of destruction which has been constantly seeking for ways to destroy even more, and which wishes to drive us even further out of our minds, has found it was necessary to transfer from the Traku region into the Caucasus region all the hard laborers, the elderly, the weak and disabled, which had miraculously saved from the “prayer houses” and to transfer from the Caucasus region into the Traku region all the professionals, the artisans with their jobs, and those experts who would be forced to live in the Caucasus region as there was no room for them in the Traku region, would have a street of their own in the Caucasus region. And this whole matter was strange and requires investigation. As the transfer of the workers into the Caucasus region and the transfer of the artisans and the experts into the Traku region could, one day, be explained by the need gather the same type of people in the same place and when needed it would be easy to find the one you were looking for easily, and without a need for a diligent search [according to Psalms 64, 7; a meticulous search] as it has been until now. But what was the purpose of transferring the elderly, old men and women and the wonderers to the Caucasus region? What is their relation to the hard laborers? A terrifying suspicion has risen in our hearts. Is this like when people had been transferred into the prayer houses and we all knew the horrible outcome there? Is this a hallway for the “world below”? Some say that the transfers will begin after the upcoming sixth day of the month of January, and it will be finished in a few days. A [late] remark: this concern was not fulfilled: these transfers did not occur and had no outcomes until today, the days of spring [1942]. The only result: sleepless nights and anger and more.
- J) The decree of the Jewish rural workers. This decree touched a relatively small number of people, but it was as horrifying as the extermination of the Jewish communities in the months of Tamuz and Av [=1941]. We amused our heart with the good news that from now on no harm would come to us, as there was the Goring decree which has forbidden to kill us any longer. Surely, no one has ever seen this decree, but even the workers of the office of the District Commissar have assured us that there was indeed such a decree; however, “the mouth which has forbidden was the mouth which has allowed” and there was a possibility that again we would be led to the killing. In any case, lately as we were wrong to think that maybe we were safe again, a disaster came upon seventy people from our nation, mostly women and children whose wick of life was picked in such a horrific manner, the same as when most of the urban Jewish population in Lithuania had been killed. About seventy people, mostly young men and women, women with their children, had made agreements with various farmers to work in their farm in the villages near Shavli. What were the advantages of living in the country, which was costly sometimes? First, the matter of nutrition found an easier answer in the country, in nature where the provisions come from the “source”, from the producers. Second, living in the country was more peaceful and quieter, far away from the decrees in the ghetto, its fears, sorrows and dangers, especially if they managed to find shelter in the houses of “known and friendly” farmers. In that way

the lady Zigernick managed to live along with her son and daughter in a house of a woman who was grateful to her for a deed she had done a long time ago. Mrs. Zigernick, the wife of the famous chemist, who was known as a professional expert and a wise student, was an excellent woman. She was a woman of valor, in the full sense of the word, and she was the one who had established the storehouse for chemicals and pharmacy provisions. This storehouse, under her great management, had become quite a “gold mine” and had brought substantial fortune to her and to her family. Later, she married Zigernick, the chemist, and their businesses had flourished and had grown even more. He had established a chemical laboratory, and also had acquired half of the largest pharmacy in town. As a result, they had been very wealthy and had built themselves two brick homes in the center of town, and even those had provided them with a good income. The businesses had gone well and unless the Bolsheviks arrived, they would have become extremely wealthy. And all of this had been possible only due to the great start of Mrs. Zigernick and her great entrepreneurship. This woman had an instinctive fear from the ghetto; she did not want in any way to enter into the ghetto, and when she arranged herself a home in the farmhouse of some peasants who wooed her and treated her well, she demanded that her daughter, who was living in the ghetto with her father, to be sent to her as well, and in the same village she arranged a place for the daughter of her sister – a young woman, and for her two brothers. Similarly, seventy people had arranged places for themselves in nearby villages, many “forced ones”, assimilating themselves with the local population, pretending to be Christians and hiding in the farmers’ homes. Those people spent several months in peace in the villages, based on the agreements they signed with the farmers to work for them, and suddenly a bad wind has blown over the District Commissar and he has commanded to arrest all of those people! Why and how come? Is it because he “has been informed” that the agreements were fake, deceitful? Do they deserve such a punishment for that? Was their iniquity marked [according to Jeremiah 2, 22] up to a point of arrest? They were kept for a while in various places, granaries and dairy barns as prisoners, and the arrest lasted far too long. Finally, a man was sent to the village of Staciunai¹⁵⁴, where they had arrested Mrs. Zigernick, to gather additional information about the fate of the prisoners. The man has returned with very sad news: “The prisoners are no longer in the village”. They disappeared in the same manner of the ones who had been removed from the ghetto and had disappeared. And then we received news which bristled on our heads: an order had been issued to kill them all and it was implemented to the letter. Our known Zigernick, which was working then in the German pharmacy, tried everything he could do in order to save his family, but all his efforts remaineth only faithlessness [according to Job 21, 34]. They say, that the District Commissar had issued an order to leave the Zigernick family alive, but the police clerk in the village of Staciunai was quick to murder all the Jews, and he apologized afterwards, as the order from the District Commissar arrived too late. He felt that for such a mistake, which apparently had not been his fault, he would not be disciplined. And this family had perished, and our friend Zigernick has remained a widower and bereaved. However, he shows signs of exceptional self-restraint and endurance. He is filling the position of a prosecutor in the court of the ghetto and he is very devoted to this position. He also has been also the manager of the chemicals laboratory which was established in the ghetto, his face are dull and old, and he is very thin; he is walking as a shadow, grim and depressed, but does not complain in front of strangers about his loss: his beautiful family had been lost, and his old fortune too!

- K) The deliveries decree. The Pharaoh had only given the order for the sons and our modern Haman asked to uproot it all. One day our representatives were invited to the “Security Police”, Sicherheitspolizei,

¹⁵⁴ This village was about 20 km east of Shavli, south to the road leading to Pakruojis, Juniskai, and Birzai.

and were given an order to announced in the ghetto. There are no words to describe the feelings and the thoughts we had when we heard the order: we felt infinitely helpless, hurt and humiliated, disgusted and dried out as dead skin, full of revenge aspirations, and complaints to heaven; The order was as following: a) deliveries of children in the ghetto are not wanted; b) artificial miscarriages are allowed and desired for Jewish women; c) ”delivering Jewish women will be punished severely”. Had something like this ever heard of in all the days of our bitter and miserable history? A scandal and disaster which were unheard of! Few had already smashed heads of our infants on the trees of Telsiai¹⁵⁵, and now they have decided to exterminate fetuses inside the wombs of their mothers, for the remaining Jews of Lithuania to expire and cease to pose a problem for them any longer. Perhaps they were afraid of the Americans, which each evil statement about the Jews has caused waves of shock and outrage in the papers [newspapers], but underground, in privacy, they continued to humiliate and smash us like mud on a street, and to draw our end nearer. And so, they will continue the killings of individual Jews, or the extermination of not so very large groups. And so in order to exterminate the Jews, they breached a rule common to all nations, in all of the countries, which forbids the artificial miscarriage of pregnancy, a dangerous matter for the mother in all stages of the pregnancy, and which brings to the loss of the fetus or the child (in later stages). How could those people harden their hearts like wild wolves and exterminate more than two hundred thousand innocent people¹⁵⁶? And this was not even enough for them, and they now wanted to bitter our lives further and bring the end upon us without leaving survivors. There is no shame and disgrace, no empathetic feelings, no shadow of humanity, related to the Jews, as the Jews are not humans! The father of the fathers of filth could influence the German nation, as the ground had been already fertile there in the land of birth of modern anti-Semitism. This murderer was not elected in vain by this nation, which was his herd, and if it was not for the Germans and their background, he would have not found a sympathetic ear for the disgrace and the sorrow he brought upon us constantly. And so, we are the lowest in the history of humanity, flees, bedbugs and worse, and we should not be considered as human beings. The day, in which our representatives were given this humiliating decree, a decree which reduces us to the level of cattle, needs to be remembered by each and every generation, this is the fifth day in the month of February on this year 1942 – the next step would be to castrate the men and women and then the decree would be complete, as now they were left in the middle of the road.

- L) Next we have a collection of small decrees and annexes to the existing ones, which sting and stab as a needle in the living flesh.
- 1) Jewish coachmen cannot sit in their coaches, when carrying any merchandise; As was ordered by the head of the work police, Strengė; apparently was sorry for the poor horses, which needed to carry the weight of the Jewish bodies. This was not right.
 - 2) All of the six edges of the Star of David need to be sawed into the clothes. Until now it was sufficient to attach the Star of David with a needle to the clothes, but there were many mishaps. There were cases in which the Jews removed those “scarlet letters” and went into the Christian houses in order to get provisions, and by that they took the food out of the mouths of the allegedly superior Aryans. Now, the deceiving Jews cannot do that anymore, they cannot find ways to satiate their hunger.

¹⁵⁵ Several women [five] which managed to escape from the horrible killings in Telsiai (about 70 km west to Shavli), related their story before the author.

¹⁵⁶ This amount was from the estimations made back then, because if we remove the few thousands left alive in Vilnius, Kaunas and Shavli, and the few who managed to escape to the Soviet Union – all the others were killed by the Lithuanians and the Germans.

- 3) The decree regarding Jewish patients was amended and completed: the Christian physicians were forbidden to provide any medical help to the Jews. And so Jewish people who suffered from diseases of the eyes or those who needed urgent surgeries, had no solution from that day. There were several cases in which the Christian physician rushed into the ghetto hospital and performed surgeries. From now on cases of severe infections of the small intestine, pressed fractures, bowel obstructions or cancers requiring operation –will have no treatment, and these patients would be destined to die in horrible tortures, as we have no Jewish surgeon of our own. In a similar way, we have no experts for the diseases of the eyes. The decree is valid also for the ambulatory, the dispensers [the clinics], the hospitals and the pharmacies.
 - 4) Several workshops were locked in town, workshops in which mainly Jewish people worked and now were left without jobs. And there was an additional decree, that in every remaining workshop, half of the workers needed to be Christians, for them to learn the profession from the Jews, and then it will be possible to get rid of the Jews once and for all.
 - 5) It was strictly forbidden to leave the ghetto and to return into the ghetto as individuals and without a Christian escort, for the Jews not to go into forbidden places: shops and Christian private houses, as there is always the issue of food. Now we must wait for a Christian leader from every institution and workshop, and in the evening the same leader escorts us into the ghetto.
 - 6) The beautiful placards.
There is an order to hang in all the streets of the city and on all the public institutes, a painted placard, and on it there is a Star of David and in its middle the face of a dirty Jew, winking his eye with deceit, with a very large and savage beard, and a face which makes one nauseous and repulsed, and under this excellent drawing several questions were written with the answer beside them: “The Jew, the Jew”. Such as: “Who had destroyed the Lithuanian country?” “Who had desecrated the Lithuanian women?” “Who had destroyed the factories in Lithuania?” “Who had lived in beautiful apartments and you had been left in the holes?” “Who had eaten the superior food and you had been left starving?” “Who is responsible for the war?” And many other insipid questions which made no sense, and they all had the same answer: “The Jew!” The placard was not very successful, and its exaggerations often made many Christians laugh.
 - 7) The confiscation of the horses and the carriages with the harness accessories from the inhabitants of the ghetto. There were ten horses in the ghetto, and their owners had earned a decent compensation for their work as coachmen. At the beginning of the year [1942], all the horses were taken from the owners of the carriages, along with their carriages. And so the means of living was taken for a group of the inhabitants of the ghetto.
- M) The reduction of the ghetto. This decree brought desperation to the inhabitants of the ghetto who were used to extreme calamities; one can compare this desperation to the feeling of misery which had attacked us, when they had started removing the Jews from towns and from the ghetto, the Jews who had been led to their slaughter. Our haters who wished to embitter our lives with new orders and decrees daily, have decided to reduce the area of the Traku region, as they moved the fence and the gate from their former location inside of the ghetto at a distance of three houses, that is to say: they took from the three streets which were in the Traku¹⁵⁷ region, three houses from each one, and gave them to their former owners or to other Christians. The former excuse of lack of housing in the town, which was had been used during the reduction of the ghetto in Kaunas, was no longer valid now, as

¹⁵⁷ The region which was called Traku (as the author pronounced, according to the Russian, the name of the town Trakai) consisted of an area of no more than 3500 square meters, and less than 1.5 square meters per soul. In the second region, Caucasus, the situation was similar.

many Lithuanians had been drafted, and there surely were enough rooms in town and nearby; the Lithuanians were not happy to be drafted and they protested. From Kaunas we heard, that the Lithuanian students burst into the theater and disturbed the order within and in the street, and it ended with bloodshed and human victims. Apparently, the Germans really need the help of the Lithuanians and wish to please them, and so they have decided to give them little “presents” in order to appease them and so they have taken from the Jews in order to give to the Lithuanians. That and even more, an excuse to reduce the Jews and their spaces has not been required. In any event four hundred people have remained homeless and the necessity to find a shelter for such many people in the awful density of the ghetto was hard and almost impossible to implement. The fear still exists and at the time these words are written (May 16) [1942] many of those people who are forced to leave their homes, are still looking for places to live in. several of them have succeeded finding a new corner, and they are already leaving for their new homes, mostly scattering their belongings in various places, because there is no apartment in the ghetto capable receiving new tenants along with their belongings.

It is also worth noting the manner in which this decree was given. One early morning a German officer appeared at the gate and asked the Jewish policeman there to call the representatives right away. When the head of the representatives, L.¹⁵⁸, arrived, and heard the details of the order, he tried showing the officer the horrible density existing in ghetto, which does not allow in any way reduction of ghetto area; the officer raised his hand and pointing to the lake in the distance and said: “There is still enough room for you – there!” “You were the ones wanting this war – he added – there you go!” After a little while thirty Partisans [Lithuanian murderers] appeared with their arms: there are no words to described the fear and terror that has fallen on the Jewish population; they thought they arrived in order to remove people from the ghetto into the prayer houses... that is to say, to kill them, just like in the first day after the ghetto had been established. The women and the children began screaming very loudly, and some of them ran and jumped through the holes in the fences in order to save themselves and escape from their killers...

Several groups of men who had been working in town, as they were returning to their homes, were informed by few Christians that there was no peace in the ghetto and something dangerous was developing there. The groups returned to their workshops filled with fear, and with great sorrow remained in town for a few hours more until it was clear that at that time no people were removed from the ghetto, but there would be a reduction of the ghetto itself.

N) The mobilization to work in the “predator’s” mines [=peat]

The echoes of panic from the ghetto reduction has not disappeared yet, you could still hear the moans of those wondering around who were removed from their “nest” to find a new one, that is to say a small corner to crowd together, and a new trouble, when much more horrifying burden, related to most of us and most of the sons of the ghetto inhabitants, has arisen. The entourage of angels of destruction who sit on a mortar and ponder the question: “Let us outsmart him” found yet another scheme, a decisive one landing a blow eight-fold stronger than the former ones, eliminating several rabbits at once in a single swing. This new last decree related to the mobilization to labor in the peat mines which would bring degeneration to all the families with sons, as they would remain without their sources of income; would humiliate to the dust the professionals of the free arts as they would be forced to perform “black” labor; would bring destruction and disaster to the hearts of families as parents and children would be separated, man and woman, as the work place is far from Shavli: in the

¹⁵⁸ Mendel Leibovich did not survive the war. He was killed in a Russian bombing near the time when the Traku region was destroyed.

surroundings of Radviliskis; it would obligate the Jews and especially the intellectuals to perform work they had never done before; the conditions would not be easy at all; life in a concentration camp in tents; nutrition is questionable, in our days in which food is hard to find, surely the attitude would be strict and anti-Semitic, as appropriate, and suitable for Jewish workers under the Lithuanian or the German wand, the work is hard, hard on the body, and sometimes demands tremendous energy, having to work in water¹⁵⁹ – a labor which causes grippe and rheumatism, and it would be even harder for people who are already ill with this disease or are inclined to it. The work mobilization is peculiar, and surprises us all: fathers of large families were mobilized, experts in various professions, physicians, pharmacists, chemists, people who work in public institutions and even the ones who work in the German institutions, old people are being mobilized, which surely have been afraid to reveal their real age in order not to be removed from the ghetto (and there was one man who was seventy three years old who declared he was fifty nine years old – now he was mobilized); and finally ill men were mobilized, who were not fit for hard labor. We should state that even the physicians under the wing of Dr. Jasaitis, and who have been working as lab technicians in town with a special permit from the District Commissar – even those were not excused. And one of them has been already mobilized. In vain had they amused their minds that the permit from the District Commissar would protect them, and would save them from hard labor, and in general from work not related to their profession which would distance them from their positions.

“Our masters” intend to mobilize eight hundred men and four hundred women, which is almost all the ghetto inhabitants who are qualified to work, starting from the age of fourteen for the men, and sixteen for the women. And ending with the age of sixty for the men and fifty for women; and so only old men and old women would remain in the ghetto, children and the weak, with known illness and who suffer from various disabilities. This fact has risen various fears and suspicions. These people are not qualified to work, what would happen to them, during our times, in which the food matter is so acute, and touches even our brothers who work hard for their living. Moreover, they would think it is unnecessary to provide men and women who eat and do not work. We all fear that after they differentiate the people who are qualified for work and turn them into Canaanite slaves, they would find an easy scheme pursuant to their common method and would get rid of all the “excess” luggage. In any event, this decree by itself, hard labor and insufficient nutrition under the wand of the conquerors would be a major disaster for the ones remaining in the ghetto, and the results might be horrific.

Tomorrow two hundred man leave by foot to Radviliskis to work in the mines of the predator and on the fourth day a second list will be published. I myself am almost certain that I am not one [according to Genesis 49, 6] among the people included in the lists, as I am older than sixty years of age, but my son surely would be; I am afraid that my wife, who is very ill, might also be drafted, and then I would do my best to speak on her behalf. If they would take into consideration the certificates and documents of a Jewish physician, I would surely be successful. The concern that the mobilization for work would result in a total cancellation of one of the ghetto regions [out of the existing two], I believe is not founded, as the workers would need to return to the ghetto in one of these days, but still there are no words to describe the fear and the terror which fell upon us when we heard the decree, which others see as the beginning of the end. Today (May 17) [1942] we were told that the number of people mobilized will be only 450 people men and women combined from both regions of the ghetto, and not a thousand or more, as they had told us yesterday. Generally, we would have to see how it will end.

¹⁵⁹ This is true, the peat in this region is mined out of pits, and the deeper they mined, those pits were filled with water up to the waist and more.

O) ¹⁶⁰The metals decree

A memorandum was sent to the people to donate copper and aluminum for the German army. It was demanded to donate unneeded pieces of metals, to the German army, which is fighting to free the entire mankind, including the Lithuanians, from the harsh world of the Bolsheviks, so it would be able to manufacture various instruments of destruction, in order to continue the war successfully. When the Germans had gathered warm clothes for the winter days, they had not turn to the Jews. At the time, the Germans needed to put up a show, for Europe and America, to show them how the citizens had liked them, and show as evidence, the latter's generous donations to the benefit of the German army of furs, wool socks and more, and so they had not taken anything from the Jews in order not to spoil the impression of generosity of the citizens, and their devotion to the German army. This was not true for the metals; here they used the known rule: "the end justifies the means" and when the collection of metal pieces was not successful, they turned to the "scapegoat" to fill in the shortage; and so the policemen and the Partisans came into the ghetto and forcefully took not only metal fragments, but also good metal vessels: heaters, thermoses, pots and everything they could find, and we had no time to hide anything. Apparently the second collection did not go well either and was not satisfactory for the Lithuanians or the Germans. And so, the second battle of the tragicomedy of forcefully collecting "donations" began. And one morning a regiment of policemen appeared along with the clerks of the police and wanted to thoroughly search the houses of the inhabitants of the ghetto. Then the ghetto Jewish policemen took upon themselves the mission of presenting the metal vessels, remaining in the houses of the Jews. And they began to wonder on the streets of the ghetto and to shout that all the Jews should give their copper and aluminum vessels for the benefit of the army, and anyone who trying to hide them would pay with his life. The commotion was horrible. All the inhabitants of the ghetto rushed out frightened out of their houses with various vessels in their hands. Soon an entire mountain of metals was formed in the garden in front of the representatives' office. The mountain grew larger and larger and the policemen and army men realized that this time the Jewish "donators" really exaggerated, and so they started allowing them to take some of the vessels back. The fear that the policemen brought upon the population was so great, that all the heaters and the pots and casseroles were taken out of the houses; the inhabitants of the ghetto thought to live only clay and iron vessels, but the clerks, as aforementioned, started on their own to let go of some of the items. Even more, the "alms collectors" [the beggars] from Taurage¹⁶¹ and from other place, whose number was not small at the ghetto, seized the incident as an opportunity to gain items as gifts from the clerks; and so they gained from the disaster of others.

The general overview of the late bloody events of the recent period is concluded. So much blood has been spilled! So many tears had our eyes shed in the last year; so many have died before their time and how few have been left as a remainder out of all the Jews in Lithuania! We no longer have the power to bear and to suffer the troubles and calamities which have come upon us from all directions, and who would know their end? Such horrible despair has attacked us as we saw that there is no escape and shelter for us from the fury of the one wanting to destroy us without leaving anyone behind. Eleven months have passed since the day the war began [June 1941 – May 1942], and no end in sight, the war is stronger than ever! The victories of both sides are not conclusive, and the trouble remains.

¹⁶⁰ As in the manuscript: ת"ו is this another defiance for the Lord who abandoned His people? (T.N. – the number in Hebrew should be T.V (ט"ו) the numerical equivalent of YH short for Yehovaha s (יהוה) is a reference to the name of the Lord, usually only (ט"ו) is used) because YH is close to the actual name of God and is not used by orthodox to indicate a numerical value.

¹⁶¹ Taurage was only at a distance of 8 km from the German border, and so it was one of the first town that the Germans conquered. The poverty of the individual men-women who succeeded to come and find shelter in Shavli was large.

When would the wonders [according to Daniel 12, 6] stop and we would find peace for our tired and tortured souls? Would we stay alive until the war is over? For now, we are between hope and disappointment regarding the news from the front¹⁶², and there is no peace, no rest and comfort! The strengths are about to end, and we would fall under the burden of troubles soon!

The general notes about the most horrible period in our troubled history are over. From now I will write down the events in the form of a diary. Clean paper is still needed for new decrees and orders which will not cease as long as we still breathe under the German boot squeezing our souls out of our bodies, as long as there is a breath still left in us.

Would I see the end of my notes in good conditions? Would I write a happy and encouraging “epilogue”, full of joy and rejoicing, after we are safe and sound? When would the wonders stop? So much darkness shall envelop us [according to Psalms 139, 11] from all direction, until it is hard for us to believe that a day will come in which the fog clouds will clear and a clear sky will give light to us, the light of a rightful sun, which rays will melt the horrible ice in our hearts.

I finished this note on the eighteen day of the month of May (I do not have a Hebrew calendar and so I cannot state the Hebrew date) in the year of one thousand nine hundred and forty two; and day of trouble and admonishment, a day of grief and sorrow, tears and endless moans. Today the first group of workers left the ghetto by foot for Radviliskis, for a period of two months. They were surrounded with policemen armed with rifles, as it was used for groups of war prisoners. Let us wait and see what their fate would be, and how it will all end.

¹⁶² The author worked in a medical laboratory outside of the ghetto, and there he managed to read (in hiding, of course) newspapers in Lithuanian and German.

Part D

11. From my diary

May 18, evening. This morning the workers who were mobilized to the peat mines near Radviliskis sent notes and regards with the help of the representative who escorted them. The first impression of the workplace and the clerks appointed to them was far better than they had hoped for, and the journey was good as well: they were not beaten and not rushed, they had the opportunity to rest; they were fed to satiation through the villages and when they arrived to “the place of destination”. There are reasons to believe, that things will walketh in their uprightness [according to Isaiah 57, 2] in this workplace. In any event, the panic of yesterday, the fear and the trembling, which engulfed all the population, were slightly reduced. At least we are sure that those who were taken, were taken for work and not according to the known formula, when work being used as a pretense, just in order to kill “allegedly.”

May 19. Today a new list of people destined for Radviliskis was published. In this list there are many young women and ladies. The confusion was of course high in the ghetto.

May 20. Another fifty men left for Radviliskis today and two hundred and fifty women who were also intended to go were excused for one week. Apparently there are no rooms ready for them. The news from the front are not very encouraging. After many denials from the British side, the Germans finally conquered the Kaartasi¹⁶³ port, and the city of Kharkiv¹⁶⁴, despite of the tremendous attacks, the upper hand is still with the Germans. Their power is not depleted, and they are still furious. Who knows when the end will come? And despite of the news which do not provide any satisfaction for us, there was a rumor today in the ghetto, that salvation and comfort are about to come. Not once have we been misled by these kinds of rumors, not once did we amuse our hearts with false hopes; and the results were disappointing, and then – disappointing again. Nevertheless, let us wait for the grand salvation, which even if it is late, it is bound to come in one of these days. The question is would we get to see that glorious day. There is no way that the black triple alliance will win. History would not do such a thing to us.

May 21. “And there shall be no day in which the curse is less than the one before”. Today I had a visit from the dentist, my neighbor in the polyclinic, and she told me that her father, who works in the Frenkel¹⁶⁵ factory, had told her that the entire ghetto is surrounded by German policemen and army men, and all of the houses are being searched, we thought they were looking for provisions and metal vessels again; there are no words to describe the fear which came upon us, as there is no house in which they cannot find something wrong; a metal vessel which had been left by accident of an electric iron, some provisions and so on and so forth. My concern was endless for my ill wife, whose hair turned white in the last several weeks from the daily concerns and fear. If, for example, she was to be arrested, she would surely die. At the same time, Mrs. Wirblinski, from

¹⁶³ Krech – the most eastern city and port in the Crimea Peninsula. A passageway to a strait [with the same name, 4-10 km] and the road to the Caucasus.

¹⁶⁴ Kharkiv was one of the biggest five cities in the Soviet Union, about 650 km south to Moscow. An industrial center of coal and metals, a railway cross in Ukraine between Caucasus and the capital, Moscow.

¹⁶⁵ The factory which belonged to the Frenkel family, maybe the biggest in the Baltic area, for leather production for shoes, clothes and more, was managed by the family at first, and its workers and professional staff were all Jewish. Later the production grew and another factory, a shoes factory, BATAS [the shoe], was attached to it. The Germans wanted to continue the production and even make it bigger. “The Jews in the factory” seemed important to them for such purpose. To a certain extent, their decision to leave a certain number of Jews in Shavli was caused from this desire to operate the Frenkel compound immediately and optimally without any delays.

the denture laboratory came as well, and all her bones were shaking; she came to tell us the same pleasant [with irony] news, as it reached her ears as well. Left in horrible sorrow and despair we were waiting for some clear news from the ghetto, as we sent there [to the ghetto] one of the students in the laboratory. Suddenly, my son appeared and told us all was well in the ghetto; they had been looking for seventy prisoners who had escaped from them, but they had no interest in anything else, and when they learned that there had been no “disappearing people” in the ghetto, they left. His statements were like medications to us, and our condition got better. Surely, our experience was merely a pale shadow compared to the experience of the inhabitants in the ghetto, as hearing is not the same as seeing, and it easy to guess the state of the inhabitants in the ghetto when seeing the Lithuanian and German policemen and the searches begin. Surely many items were hidden in the wells and provisions in the ground.

Now I have learned that today in the eve of the Pentecost (T.N. – Shavuot), the time in which we receive the Torah! And there are no signs of celebrations: no milk and butter, no eggs and meat, and the starvation await us.

June 20. I did not write anything for a month: there is no need to grind the flour, what can I write? Lamentations, and moaning, and woe [Ezekiel 2, 10]! There are no news and the troubles remain, the work in the peat mines is hard labor, and the attitude towards the workers is the same; the nutrition is beyond criticism; poor bread, 200 grams per day, a dish made from warm water with corn flour or barley; beatings and blows, horrible density in the rooms, bedbugs and cockroaches and so on and so forth. The salary for the work remained as before 15 and thirteen rubles per day. They make fun of us, ridicule the poor; this salary is not enough even to pay for the small portions of food we receive with the tickets. All the efforts of the inhabitants of the ghetto, all of their aspirations focus on trading various items for food provisions. Smuggling food into the ghetto continues and many fall in the hands of the police and they are beaten without mercy and arrested. In the prison house they are tortured by starvation, and with my own eyes I saw some of the prisoners swollen with hunger. The news from the front are very depressing. The English proved themselves to be worthless soldiers; they are unable to gain the upper hand on the Germans. First, when they had fought the Italians, they won victories and had conquered Abyssinia [Ethiopia], but when the Germans appeared on the battlefield, they began to see defeat after defeat, Norway¹⁶⁶, Dunkirk¹⁶⁷, Crete, Greece¹⁶⁸, and Africa¹⁶⁹. The Russians are far better. A whole year they protest [fight back] the Germans and they haven't lost, as the more famous and glorious nations as the French, the Belgians, the Polish and more, were beaten in a matter of weeks. The material condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto was bad, very bad. The moral condition is also very much decreased. Thefts, beatings and altercations became daily practices; and the physicians were no different from others. There are men among them who make us feel ashamed and disgraced. Tomorrow it is one year since the war started for us [June 22, 1941] and unfortunately the Germans had some “brilliant” victories near the end of this year, the one in Kaartasi, in Tobruk [North Africa] and the conquering of the great and adorned fortress of Constantinople¹⁷⁰. These victories excite the Germans and bring them courage and good hopes again. We are all drowning in sorrow and despair. We are afraid and have concerns regarding Israel. If, God forbid, the land of Israel would also fall in the hand of the Germans, then we would lose the last hope we still have! Who would be the ones to rebuild our loved country? Surely the Russian Jews are not

¹⁶⁶ The Germans invaded Norway in order to annex it on April 9, 1940.

¹⁶⁷ The name of the French port near the Belgian border on the English Channel from which on June 4, 1940 more than two hundred fifteen thousand English soldiers flee along with another one hundred and twenty thousand French soldiers on ships and boats as they left their weapons and equipment behind.

¹⁶⁸ In April 1941 the Germans invaded Greece, Crete with the remains of the Greek army and its government was conquered by the Germans in May 1941.

¹⁶⁹ The author refers to the successes of the German “Africa Korps” commanded by Rommel in North Africa since the summer of 1941.

¹⁷⁰ Was conquered on June 1942.

an alternative as they are the “depleted organ” of the body of our nation; the Jews in Europe are dying; one center would remain: the American Jews! Surely, there is anti-Semitism there too. And finally, many of the Jews in America would be forced to find their shelter in the land of our forefathers, and we would not lose our hope! In any event, if the Americans and their allies win, then the issue of the Jews would be on their minds, and the solution for this issue would be to find a territory for them. There is a need to get rid of the tiring and annoying Jews and not to make them sit [to settle them] in a new exile, in which they would again be a foreign minority and a burden for the citizens.

July 8. In the times of the villains we have become deceivers, thieves, alms collectors [=beggars], smugglers of food, oh, what has become of us! Oh, what has become of us! When would the wonders [according to Daniel 12, 6] stop? There is no more strength to bare! We have been afraid that we would have to spend the next winter in the ghetto as well. Cold and hunger, density and filth, tortures of the mind and body, how could we relive it again? Are we made of stones? The Germans march forward, in the U.S.S.R they captured Voronezh¹⁷¹ and they are heading into the Caucasus after conquering the Crimea Peninsula. What will our future bring us? There is a small consolation: the plague was stopped in Egypt for now. It may be that the other side [the Satan here] will not enter the land of our fathers. If they are beaten there, then their state of mind would not be so high.

July 11. For those you have drowned you shall be drowned, and those who drown you shall end up drowned. The simple and naive point of view on social life matters which is part of the song “Chad Gadya”, this point of view is true and fulfilled often in history, and in the lives of individuals. The existence of society as if there is no sorrow and in which sin is being punished, who would have thought that Stankus, who had been in charge of the Jewish matters [in the town of Shavli], the servant and the will maker of the Germans to arrest and exterminate thousands of Jews; who would have thought he would be thrown in prison after being dismissed from his position? Surely he was released after few months in prison, and after he was prosecuted by the Germans and thanks to his defense attorney Stankivicius, was acquitted from various accusations which had not been so clear. But he tasted himself the taste of the prison house, of which he had asked me when interviewing me after he had sent me to prison, and after four days he had been the one who had released me. Surely he had done more than little trouble to us, but when he was happy from wine he bragged that the Jews in Shavli need to write his name with gold letters in their history. Because in Panevezys¹⁷², for example, they had killed all the Jews and not even one remained, and in Shavli nevertheless five thousand Jews were left. The more appropriate example to justify the point of view is the story of Pozela, a villain who had spilled the blood of Jews like water. He was the one who had killed the Jews from Pakruojis and its surroundings. He had been also responsible for the killing of the Jews in Zagare and this good-for-nothing man had been also a thief and he had filled his house with properties of the Jews: their money, gold and furniture. The commissioner of Lithuania¹⁷³ was bragging that he had received an excellent advisor, the lawyer Pozshila, which had dedicated his days to fight the Bolsheviks and the Jews. And suddenly, a trouble which no one had thought of came upon him. In the N.K.V.D. archive, which the “comrades” had not burnt, they found a note that Pozshila had been a servant of the Bolshevik secret police. This killer was arrested, they confiscated his possessions, we were almost beaten to death in the prison house, and finally they

¹⁷¹ A main city as far of industry and transportation. About 300 km north-east of Kharkiv and about 500 km south-south-east of Moscow. More than two thirds of the German-Russian border to the cities of the Volga: Saratov and Stalingrad.

¹⁷² A district city, one of the largest one in Lithuania between the two World Wars, with a Jewish community of ten thousand Jews. It was famous in the Jewish geography for the Talmudic college called “The Panevezh Kibbutz” [in Yiddish: Panevezys Kibbutz] founded by Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov Rabinovitch in 1909.

¹⁷³ Theodor Adrian von Renteln, the General Commissioner, born in 1897 and a member of the Nazi party since 1928.

shot him. That is the way all our haters and murderers should end. In a similar way the lawyer Kalaksha¹⁷⁴, the killer of the Jews in Saukenai¹⁷⁵, was arrested, but he disappeared, and his destiny remains unknown. Let them be lost, let them be lost, all the other villains.

July 19. The workers of the peat mine came here on Sunday tanned and the appearance of their faces is not so bad; there are some who seem to have put on a little weight and look healthy. But the stories about the attitude of the policemen and the guards in Radviliskis towards the workers are hair rising [horrifying]. Blows and beatings with riffles and sticks, whipping until bleeding for sins like walking to the nearby village for a loaf of bread. Innocents and guilty beaten as one. The guards are Partisans who participated in the Jewish killings. One of them was proud to say: “Beautiful Jewish girls hugged my legs and I – one bullet to the head, and off to the pit! The adage that the Jews are indolent is still prevalent; the attitude there is as of towards hard labor convicts and the nutrition is faulty and lacking, and there is no one to protest or complain to. There is no justice and no judge for us, and the more one troubles Israel, and torture them, the better.

There was a “commotion” last night: the planes of a foreign country (surely of the U.S.S.R) passed over our town and honored its inhabitants with bombs. There are no known details yet.

For our tortures in the winter we have been rewarded in the summer: the food cascade, the remains of the sewage and the droppings were buried deep in the ground, and near every house you can find a garden, which brings joy to the heart and pleases the eye. The plantings, the seeds and the vegetable growing by themselves have turned out nice this year, and the inhabitants of the ghetto already have red onions, lettuce, radishes and more. We are also expecting cucumbers, turnips, cabbage, tomatoes and so on. The weather is not bad, even though the seasons have changed so much: in the month of Tamuz we had maybe five or six warm days, the rest were cloudy, and a cold wind was blowing. Soon summer will be over, and the horrible autumn and winter shall come! We have been horrified at the thought that another winter is waiting to torture us in the ghetto. The next winter will be a hard one: surely there would not be enough trees for heating, and certainly not enough food; cold and starvation will be our company. The Germans move forward in the eastern front but there have been no clear and absolute victories so far. The true and fake victories are to the Germans pit fall: partial victories, temporary, passing victories giving courage to the Germans to continue the war and to continue shedding the blood of their youth; without these victories one could assume that the military party would have ended the war at the end of the autumn as the father of the fathers of filth would have been removed by it, as he was the main obstacle in the path to the international peace. Now they continue believing in him and his victories and hope to finally win this war. In the end they will continue to weaken one another in a terrifying way, and America will keep its promise to be ready in the forty third year and it will come with new forces: new army and new weapons, and it will end the war along with the tyranny of the barbarians.

July 30. There is no limit to the Germans bragging of their victories. It reminds me their promise from one year ago to finish the entire Soviet army. Surely they are moving forward and sometimes succeed, but their victories are not absolute. If in the next four or five weeks they will not end the protest [resistance] of the Russians, then the autumn will begin and following it, the winter, and the conclusion will be postponed to next spring. If we will not die by then, it means we will have partial salvations and comfort – for now our bitterness is much.

¹⁷⁴ Was one of the commanders of the “Self-defense battalion” [SAVISAUGOS BATALIONAS], one of those which remained in Lithuania when the Russian army retreated in the end of June 1941. Their main actions were killings of Jews, while torturing and robbing their victims.

¹⁷⁵ Saukenai [in Yiddish] is about 35 km south-west from Shavli. One of the earliest Jewish communities in Lithuania. Before the war it counted one hundred families. The Synagogue in Saukenai was one of the most beautiful ones.

August 1. In the edition of today's Lithuanian¹⁷⁶ newspaper there is an article¹⁷⁷: "Bessarabia¹⁷⁸ is freed from Jews". The article is very clear: all the Jews in Bessarabia were exterminated! How many were they? Surely several hundred thousand. And in Poland we assume that one million Jews were exterminated. A total of more than two million Jews were killed in Europe. Would history really not revenge our blood? Will the villain really win? Surely the ongoing war kills the Germans and the aerial attacks also drain their blood, but this is not the kind of revenge we want: we cannot wait to their final defeat and then and only then we would be satisfied, and with a satisfied soul we will leave the European countries which are filled with our blood to arrange ourselves in a special territory and live there far from the murderers. May our dream come true in the land of our fathers!

I have two omissions I need to complete: the death of the lawyer Abramovich and the story of Palanga¹⁷⁹. The lawyer Abramovich was one of a kind. Despite of being seventy-two years old, he was full of youth strength as if he was laughing at the face of old age, which cannot control him. Two years ago, on the beach in Palanga, he had shown us several exercises demonstrating flexibility and muscle strength. Bathing in the sea every summer had been one of his biggest pleasures. He had played in the water like a young boy and liked to turn the sea into a "concoction". And then the troubles came – and he has declined so hard! Soon he had developed the hypertrophy disease [an enlargement] of the prostate. If the times were as they supposed to be, if not for the ghetto trouble which came upon us, and if not all our entire world closing on us, then there would be possibility to turn to surgeons, experts abroad, and they would surely have solutions, especially that his has been normal and healthy and there would have been a possibility to perform surgery. But now, no one can exit, and no one can enter, and such a great man who cannot be replaced was lost to us, in him there was wits and Torah and public service, in the full sense of the words. This man had so many talents. As he was qualified as a teacher, he had taught man and woman and sons for their matriculation exams. And then he had entered the university and had finished law school and become a lawyer. Even at in his old days he did not stop his learnings: he read very much each and every day; in the last years, as he prepared to immigrate to Israel he learned the English language and became a good speaker of it. His learnings were both holy and secular, and apart from the Talmud he was also knowledgeable in European literature, apart from being a basket full of books he was an avid public servant and he dedicate his heart and soul to his job. despite of his many bothers due to his job and his dedication to his family, his learnings, he dedicated all his spare time to public work as the "Head of the Association of the Eastern Lithuanians" and the "Chairman of the Community in Shavli" and the member of "Ezra" and the "Knesset Israel".

I worked with him for several years when I was the chairman of "Ezra", and so I found myself obligated to be part of the ones who speak beside of his grave. And this is what I have said: "In the collection of our old manners, the morals of Judaism and our points of view of our lives in the past, that is to say in the Talmudic college, there is a story: there was a story about a certain Rabbi, who was about to leave the world and the son of his sister came to visit him and found him crying. And he said: Rabbi, why are you crying? Is there a Torah which you did not teach or learn? Are there benevolent deeds you did not do? And what about all of the instances you served the people and did not hold back – as you were a public servant. The Rabbi said: My son, this is the reason for which I cry, that maybe I will be obligated to answer before Him that I did not do enough. This story proves us the clear point of view about the duties of our elected ones. That is to say, Torah and good deeds are not only for the individuals, but for the general public", the Torah and the work for the general public are the two pillars of our existence. The Torah is the culture that made its special mark on us and saved us from assimilation and degeneration among the gentiles, and the service for the general public benefited to our organization and formation, strengthened our institutes and gave us the power to live in exile, and to aspire to a new life in the land

¹⁷⁶ It seems he meant to the daily newspaper: TEVYNE, "Homeland" in Lithuanian.

¹⁷⁷ In Yiddish there is an Emphasize on the word "freed".

¹⁷⁸ The land between the rivers Prut and Dniester, the city of Kishinev and its surroundings.

¹⁷⁹ A beach town on the Baltic sea, mentioned in German chronicles from the fourteenth century; about 25 km north of Klaipeda. The community there before the war counted more than 600 people.

of our fathers. After that I talked about the deceased with his superior ideals: Torah and public service, I emphasized his devotion and the ways of his work without bias toward the general public, and I pointed out the loss which is of no return in this troubled times, as the future of the Torah [God forbid] is to be forgotten from Israel, as our nation loses the best of its sons, and their loss will be felt even more when we will shake the dust of the ghetto from us and we will live again.

The story of Palanga I will postpone for a different time. The story begins in the Bolsheviks times and ends in the ones of the Germans. There is no important news for now and still I feel some details are needed to be written.

August 15. I took a pause from writing in my diary. I am too tired to mourn, sorely stricken [according to Isaiah 16, 7] and to grind the same flour all over again. There is no change for the better and no spark of hope for the future. We are surrounded by darkness; the sorrow and troubles are part of us and the fear of death floats in the air constantly. There is no important news for now. The situation in the front is depressing for the soul. The superb districts in the south of Russia, the joy of each country, in the full sense of the words: the fertile Ukraine, the Donetsk district which was rich in iron, Crimea and the Caucasus – so beautiful, all were conquered by the bitter enemy, and the power of Russia has apparently failed. Some good news circled inside the ghetto, that a second front was opened as well; these are the kind of news which are created in the ghetto in order to find comfort, even a pretend one? Who would know how the war will end? Oh my, if they will win, oh my, if they will lose, and we still we hope that an end to this will come, even if this would mean the end for us. For now, we are being treated worse and worse: the arrests by the gates of the ones who try to enter with food became more and more often and they have been even some arrests in town. The ban to go without an escort became stricter. The openings of the houses in the Caucasus region of the ghetto which face the streets were closed with wooden boards, apart from the wires of iron, in order not to receive contraband [God forbid] through the openings and the hall of the yards – there are constant rumors about persecutions of the Poles in Lithuania and of the Lithuanians who have Polish origins. If only! Persecuted and beaten dogs, they had succeeded to bite us in Poland not less than the Lithuanians. They too have exterminated many Jews lately, and their hatred for us which had stood still in their cursed times lives again and is even greater.

The more trusted Lithuanians do not wish to return to us the possessions we had hidden in their houses. The evil woman R-N had taken at first some items from us in order to inherit them as she had been sure that her friends, the Germans, would exterminate all the Jews and surely we were going to be among them. And so she had come to us in person and had demanded to be given various items, and she had bothered to come with a full and heavy suitcase and I had been amazed. She had left Shavli with her German lover and our belongings were gone with no return. In the last days, so they told me, she came back to Shavli for a few days and she thinks about moving to Vilnius. It is interesting, that she could not remain in Baranovic¹⁸⁰ because of the Russian Partisans who were dangerous. There is no point asking her about our belongings. They told me that that too could cause bad and dangerous results, as she is involved with the Germans and could inform them about this, if she would be asked about the items we had given her.

Interesting is also the fate of the items we had given to D-S. With total indifference he told us that the “fox”¹⁸¹, the new portfolio [bag], the photography machine [camera] and several other items had been lost! Allegedly an evil tenant and a policeman, his neighbor, stole them. And so we had lost items in the worth of thousands of marks which would have assured us many months of provisions. And what could be said about our items if even with Dr. P. a good and honest man, our shoes, our shirts and my good suit were lost, the only suit

¹⁸⁰ Baranovic, a district city in White Russia today, a railway crossing, with a substantial Jewish population before World War II. Its surroundings are full of woods and they were the shelter and hiding place of the Partisans, who fought against the German and their allies, among them even Jews.

¹⁸¹ A fox fur, other the fur of arctic fox, which was very expensive and was considered a good investment.

which had been left for me after the Partisans [the Lithuanian murderers] had robbed me for four of my better suits and many more. Some of the items we left with them were transferred to their relatives and thefts were there as well, and surely some of our items were stolen as well. I am afraid that regarding the Jewish properties which were hidden in private homes, the owners are all properly thieves. There are stories about many allegedly decent Lithuanians who do not wish to give the foreign substance [properties, according to Jeremiah 17, 3] back. “Is it good for the gentiles to be killed”!

All our attention is focused now on the fact that yesterday Zigernick was arrested and was beaten very badly. He is one of the privileged ones in the ghetto: a wise student in the full sense of the words, an excellent expert in the chemistry profession, a man of actions and initiative; his fate was very bitter: his wife, a wonderful woman and his lovely children had been killed among those who were killed in villages. The reason for his arrest is not clear for now. They assume that the hand of his “partner” in the pharmacy, the prostitute woman K¹⁸², is at the center of it, as she has an enormous portion of his fortune and so she wishes to exterminate the entire family.

The news about his arrest astounded us. And we were all as struck by thunder. “The troubles of Job” are nothing compared with his troubles; as all his fortune, his wonderful houses, his beautiful laboratory, and his excellent pharmacy, all had been lost, and then he had lost his entire family, and now the villains took him as well. Such a horrible, horrible thing, and where will the end be? Surely our representatives will do everything in their power to release him: except the fact that he is the defense attorney in the courtroom of the ghetto, a position he fulfills so well. Thanks to his talent as an orator and his much knowledge in our literature and the European literature, he is still the manager of a chemistry laboratory in the ghetto which prepares necessary and excellent products which are affordable to all, and also provides jobs to many inhabitants in the ghetto.

Just now I have heard a rumor about the reason for which Zigernick was arrested along with a piece of good news that there is hope he would be released by Monday. They say that many vessels of silver and gold of his own and his friends were found hidden at the bottom of a barrel full with herbs, which was located in the “Glin” laboratory, and the quantity of the herbs in it was sufficient for several years, until after the end of the war, and one of the servants found the “tamarin” [the hidden things] and informed the “security police” about them. I am sure that this mess will be cleared and over in a few days. And we would be so happy to have him among us again.

Yesterday I had to tell the “Reward”¹⁸³ prayer. I bought in the laboratory some “black seeds” [blueberries], about eight liters: these seeds fulfill my needs for my intestine problems, lately the situation got worse and I got sick. And so I was very happy when I found those seeds. But now I had a problem: how can I enter such a big quantity of seeds into the ghetto, in a time when we cannot buy certain herbs from town nor can we received them as a present. That and even more: “the Colonna”¹⁸⁴ of the denture laboratory which I am a part of when I return home to the ghetto, hurried home yesterday under the orders of their director. We were in danger to be caught by policemen who does not know us. On the third hour at the gate there was a policeman who was known to “compromise and become reconciled” by hidden gifts which were given to him and he was also a patient of the dentist Dr. V.¹⁸⁵ who walks along with us. In order to come to the ghetto at the third hour, and the hour was still early, we began to walk very slowly, one step at a time, and we succeeded to arrive to the ghetto in the third hour, the hour in which the guards switched and we were hoping to find the desired policeman, and we were quite afraid

¹⁸² Kazlauskiene.

¹⁸³ Anyone who was saved from danger had to say the “Reward” prayer: “...who is rewarded for the good of all, for all my goodness”.

¹⁸⁴ Column, from Colonna [Italian], a sort of military column. In the local mouths: the group of Jews who walk together to their workplace and back.

¹⁸⁵ Dr. Virbalinski.

when we saw the tall policeman¹⁸⁶, the known villain, going along with another policeman to the booth of the guards in the gate! We did not have the possibility to go back, and they already saw us from far away. And so we decided to put our faith in a miracle and to continue on our way, and we approached the gate as he was walking in to the booth in order to greet his friend from the previous shift, exactly then our little “group” went by, which was armed with various provisions and we were very much relieved. Later when he took his place near the gates he began his nasty actions and arrested seven people, with whom he found a little butter, flour and eggs, he was given a good gift (five hundred marks!) and he still tortured the prisoners for a long time; we surely would have been arrested as well, but the time was right for us and we entered into the ghetto safely.

August 26. On the cucumbers we begin to see the little brown spots – the stems of the sesame wither and dry out, the days are significantly shorter. There is a vapor coming from the land – the autumn is about to come – and our salvation had not come yet. It is the end of the summer: a summer in which, even in the month of Tamuz, there were not so many torrid days – but now the horrible days of summer arrived: very warm and bright, and we, sitting in the middle of all the gardens surrounding us, get sometimes a feeling of a summer camp. But then we remember that the winter is coming, and we will still be in the same place, and the fear and the trembling come upon us: density, filth, cold and hunger will be ours. The Germans will take all to the benefit of the army, and we, who receive half of the portion of the Lithuanians, will really starve for a piece of bread. Even now sometimes we lack the bread, and the policemen near the gate become more and more strict. We suffered from the cold in a horrible way in the last winter – but in the next winter, when they intend to take all the heating materials for the benefit of the army, our suffering will be even greater! In the last winter the potatoes under our bed froze and became stones. But what is waiting for us this year? Which new decrees will be issued? The news from the front are troubling and shaking: the German army, in the southern front was quite successful: it conquered Ukraine, Crimea, and the North Caucasus. And now it is moving forward, and the Russians have no possibility to stop it. The Disnt [the landing] of the English in France suffered a great defeat¹⁸⁷, and this too had made us sad. Surely if they failed this time, they at least showed, that despite Goebbels promise they reached the shore, and maybe another time they would try bringing more forces and weapons. In any event, for now, the news from the front are very disappointing. Zigernick was released after ten days¹⁸⁸, surely due to the representatives. This is good too! I have no other details now. His condition is not that bad. The despair is far from him despite of all of his troubles. The Jewish optimistic type. Too bad that my own optimism is slowly dying and its place in my heart is taken with bitter disappointment.

There was a great commotion yesterday near the gate. The tall policeman who had been replaced from his shift at the gate in the afternoon, informed on the inhabitants of the ghetto that they enter various kinds of foods

¹⁸⁶ In the local mouths, in Yiddish, he was called “der meter aktsik”, the meter and eighty, which was a synonym to life threatening situations and horrible tortures.

¹⁸⁷ When he talks about the landing the author refers to the Dieppe on August 19. It was a combined force of five thousand Canadian soldiers, one thousand English one, fifty American commando soldiers and half of the above French. The landing costed the force more than one thousand fatalities and two thousand war prisoners. In the German media this win was blown out of proportion and they warned the Allies that no landing will ever be possible in their territories. And this is the way in which the author read and heard about it. Surely, there was no one to tell him that the purpose of the Allies in this landing was to examine various technics toward the big landing, which was about to come, and their attempt should be seen as a promise for what was about to come, a little comfort.

¹⁸⁸ Indeed, this case is typical to the behavior of the Lithuanians in this period: the Zigernick family, when the Nazis arrived, deposited a great amount of its fortune with a Lithuanian woman friend, or so they thought, until everything was going to be over. But this woman did everything in her power to inherit him (his wife and children were killed a year ago); she informed the police that he was hiding valuables in town. For such a thing the Germans and their allies will kill without investigation or demand. The representatives of the ghetto succeeded in talking to the German (!) head of laboratory in which Zigernick worked and he talked about Zigernick and his expertise. The German confirmed that his production is necessary for the war effort; and he was released but not before he was horribly beaten and tortured.

into the ghetto, and based on that several German policemen came and started searching the men and women who had not been warned about this danger before they had reached the gates. The German policemen arrested seven people, but finally we can say they were fairer than the Lithuanians. They released all the people they arrested, even the ones who was found with a rooster. They took the rooster, but the man was released.

September 4. There was a reason to write the events which happened in the ghetto lately every day and to describe our mental condition and our experiences of the last period in detail, so all will be remembered until the last generation; however, due to the intestine illness which has attacked me lately quite hard, and due to my weakness, I postponed those writings and I am bringing them onto the paper now, almost after the fact, and briefly. Our future readers which will surely have good and sensitive hearts, will see the bitter lives we live and our tortured hearts which took the better of us and will be amazed how much endurance and how much burden and suffering can be brought upon a weak creature called Jew.

Yes! The days of this week were “days of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely” [Isaiah 37, 3] for us, in the full sense of the words. Last Saturday, the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar] appeared in the ghetto in person (who had become our guest too often lately), and he had some good news: that again they will reduce the two regions of the ghetto and that houses will be removed from all the streets in the ghetto, even from Zilviciu Street, which is at the middle of the cage¹⁸⁹. The density was awful. Several families lived already in attics of various houses [under the roofs of the houses] and in winter it will be needed to find a shelter for them. In every narrow room there are four or five people, and there are no words to describe the difficulty to find new places for the ones who will be robbed from their homes now. And as the District Commissar saw the bitter souls of our representatives, he decided to issue a new decree just in order to make us like the dust in threshing [according to 2 Kings 13, 7], and he told them that in the ghetto, so he was told, there is more food than in town and that, as far as provisions, the inhabitants of the ghetto simply live the good lives and they have everything they need. The representatives did their best to deny the defamation about the “luxury” in which we live in, and to calm the mind if the “master”, who was responsible for spilling not so little blood of our brothers, and who thought that a life of Jew equals to a meaningless leaf. The great master left the ghetto and suddenly he encountered a group called “Colonna” by the inhabitants of the ghetto, of the Jewish workers who work in town and who on Saturdays come back at the twelfth hour to the ghetto and in all other work days they come back in the fourth hour of the afternoon. Lately, there was a very decent policeman standing at the gates, an indulgent man which looks away from those entering food into the ghetto, he was there from the ninth hour until the third hour. But after that, a strict policeman replaced him, one with an evil heart, and he was the one who welcomed all of those who came back from work at the fourth hour of the afternoon, as it happened in all days of the week. As a result, the speculators and all of those who wanted to bring provisions into the ghetto waited until Saturday as then they were coming home to the ghetto at noon and were greeted by the good policeman at the gates. Due to this reason, the group which met the District Commissar that day as he was walking out of the ghetto, was fully loaded: many kinds of provisions: butter, eggs, pork fat, vegetables and especially flour sacks which were carried openly and with very much cheekiness. And this was the company which was encountered by the District Commissar after he told the representatives of the ghetto about the abundance in it. Full of anger he stopped the Colonna and ordered to unload all the provisions immediately on the streets – not far from the ghetto. Shortly, in the cursed place a respected pile of provisions was created which was loaded on a carriage and brought to the police. The District Commissar who came along with some high ranked representatives of the secret police, gone home angry and furious, for the cheekiness of the Jews who dared to take care of their foods, and those who were a part of the “cooking” Colonna were written down by the Jewish policemen at the gate and all the matter apparently ended with the confiscation

¹⁸⁹ The cage = the Traku region. Four streets-alleys crossed its length; the eastern one of the four was Zilviciu, and he was near the area which belonged to the Frenkel Leather factory. And the Germans thought that this side is not blocked enough and secluded from the rest of the world.

of the goods. The fact that the individuals were not punished was very suspicious in the eyes of the wise men, and the matter of the ghetto reduction surely shocked us very much. The next day our representatives were invited to the office of the District Commissar, and they came back broken and nullified. They did not give us details about their conversation with the District Commissar, but our hearts foreseen a new wave of decrees and orders which was about to wash us all, and we were sure that because of the sins of individuals, all of us were going to see the anger of the murdering commissar. The representatives of the ghetto had a meeting which lasted the entire night and only few were invited to that meeting in order to find a solution to a mysterious problem, and all the inhabitants of the ghetto were very worried. On the third day, as we were going to work, the head of the representatives Leibovich and the secretary Katz came out of their meeting and their faces black as cauldron.

And then at noon some people from the representatives and the management appeared in the laboratories [workshops] in town and they started to congratulate one another and smile and say: "Mazal Tov"! Soon we learned about the details of the matter and all the inhabitants of the ghetto were very much relieved. Those details are needed to be written in a book, in order to never be forgotten, not by us and not by any of our children, and the memory of the murderer Gewecke¹⁹⁰ will be forever disgraced. What did this hater of Israel asked for in order to punish the ghetto? He asked the representatives that until the twelfth hour in the third day, they should present him with fifty people who would be shot! All night did our representatives discussed the matter, all night they tried to find tricks and finally they had a list of fifty men who were about to be killed! The list contained all the representatives, the management and the Jewish policemen, and this list was presented to the commissar. At the point of the story Dr. Ginter, the head of the work police, Arbeitsamt¹⁹¹, intervened, and he was one to have a positive attitude towards the work of the Jews, and he proved, that if the representatives of the Jews would be killed, the active ones who speak on their behalf, and in general if any of the inhabitants of the ghetto would be killed, then this fact would bring a lot of damage to the work of the Jews which is very much needed now. To make the story short, we do not know all the details of the negotiations with the District Commissar. But how the matter ended we know: The District Commissar cancelled his decision of cannibalism and decided instead to cast another tax upon the inhabitants of the ghetto – twenty thousand marks! And all the inhabitants of the ghetto were thrilled! As long as no one is going to die! A contribution in two installments! Thank God! Thank God! And what would they say when the first day of payment arrives? Surely all the inhabitants of the ghetto are living now on the expense of the items which they sell, and the implementation of those sales is hard now because the buyers bought enough of the Jewish assets; and also, the inhabitants of the town, the Lithuanians prepare themselves for the winter now, which threatens them with its food scarcity, and so now they gather provisions as much as possible and they do not have the time or money for clothes or jewelry. That and even more: there are many Lithuanians now who refuse to give back the items which were hidden in their homes, and they want to make them their own. In any event the distribution of the contribution would bring many adventures for the collectors and the payers. Surely now we need to pay two fifths of the first contribution. And so, it would be suitable that everybody should pay two fifth from the portion of the contribution which they were supposed to pay in the first place; but many changes and exchanges happened in the material condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto since then. Some are richer and more successful, but their number is small, and most of the inhabitants in the ghetto has become poorer and are starving for a loaf of bread.

There is one thing that is needed to be said, among the policemen who had been selected to be slaughtered [eaten, according to Psalms 69, 22], the ones who appeared on the list, was also my only son. Had the commissar not canceled his bloody decision, then I would have elected to sacrifice myself in his place, as he did not live

¹⁹⁰ Hans Gewecke, the District Commissar.

¹⁹¹ Suited for a German who wants to do his job well [and apparently a little less Nazi in his heart], he saw the Jews in Shavli as an efficient element for his mission, manpower – a worker brings benefits, and they were obedient and hard working. As he wanted to fulfill his goals he sometimes found himself defending the Jews and their efficiency before other authorities [even if he never forgot his personal gain: he was far away from the front].

enough and did not see many worlds, and I, I am old and ill. I do very much want to live and to see the end of the war and the end of our tortures, which must come, but still, I would have not hesitated to take the place of my son among those who were going to be slaughtered.

September 12. “Rosh Hashana” (T.N. – The Jewish New Year). A sad holiday! There is no meat and no fish, there is no wheat bread, and fruits or vegetables. And the mental state! “If we begin to write there is no place for us”¹⁹². The horrible shaken soul from the danger which is always over our heads “to sacrifice fifty souls for you” as the District Commissar ordered; the contribution payments, which is the ransom of those who were about to be killed, and which added even more to our tortures and troubles, which cannot be covered by the items sales – our only source of living; the constant angry nerves and the endless sorrow from the decrees and orders which come upon us. The walking in the middle of the street on the fallen stones [they move from their place when you step on them] and the plagues; the entering and exiting into and from the ghetto in front of the suspicious eyes of the hostile policemen; the work for a salary which is a “disgrace”, the contempt and the shame which are everywhere; the walking along with some “gentile”, including an idiot, fool and little; the lack of food needed for the health of the body; the concern to find bread and to enter into the ghetto with it; the distancing from the cultural life; the radio, the cinema and more, and so on and so forth. And in order to fill everything with sorrow we have the rumors which come from near and from far: the tortures of the workers in the peat mines in Radviliskis, who are treated like slaves and they are being beaten and whipped for nothing at all; the fear that they would remain there until the winter in order to dig a channel; the sad news from the front which state that the Germans and the Romans step forward into the south of Russia, and the Russian efforts to stop them are being left unanswered [faithlessness; according to Job 21, 34]; the exile of the Jews in Europe: the Jews of France, Belgium, Holland and similar, from France eight thousand Jews were taken. To where? And why? Before the war we could have assumed that it was in order to convert their religion, but now as we are “dealing” with the blood of the Jews, which is hopeless, maybe they were killed as well – maybe they are being turned into slaves and servants, because the “little” believes that he will fix Europe and leave it without their Jews. The poor soul! And what would become of Christianity? As long as there is Christianity there would also be Jewish influences on it, and to get rid of Christianity, the religion which had been emptied from its content and had become cracked, would not be as easy to get rid of.

The autumn is coming closer; the days are short and the nights are long; the mornings are dark and foggy; the evenings are coming earlier, cloudy and cold; the days are still warm: “the spectacular melancholic time” according to Pushkin is still here, but we can feel the rains which are about to come and the end of the warm days. The gardens are still full of crops, but it is no longer growing, and it is awaiting to be harvested. Days of cold and hunger, poverty and shortage, we can feel them coming, and there is no salvation for us yet!

The second day of Rosh Hashana: some thought “for a good day” (a line in Russian, by Nekrasov). “There is a king in the world, this king has no mercy, and this king is the hunger”. This cruel king already came upon us and we are already feeling his long and strong arm: all the faces are pale and skinny; all the souls are empty and sour. There is not even sour bread – not to mention meat, fish, butter, milk and sugar, and what black days would come upon us in the upcoming winter? The hunger king will make us wonder to find food to bring it into the ghetto, and the supervision will be strict and superb – then many of us will fail and will fall into the hands of the Lithuanian and German policemen, and many of us will be surely be shot as they promise – and there are so many

¹⁹² ... even we (and not only Hananiah Ben Ezekiel and his party – from the generation of the second temple) have so many troubles but what can we do if we begin to write there is no place for us” [the Babylonian Talmud, the Shabbat tractate, sheet 13, page 2]. This was the reaction of Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel to the claim that Hananiah and his party wrote the “Scroll of fasting, which described the days without trouble”, that is to say that they had to count the so many troubles of Israel but still leave room for days of glory and rejoicing. The author was referring to the association of the holiday and wished to direct the reader that even during the holiday they had troubles.

reasons to believe that the danger of death is still upon us. The District Commissar is already an expert in spilling the blood of the Jews.

The work in the peat mines was not over, and there is a new labor which is ready to begin: a construction work and inspection at the weapon factory in Linkaiciai¹⁹³, they promise that the work conditions will be better there, as well as housing. We will see how things would turn out, at first they also had said that the conditions in Radviliskis are good as well, but eventually it turned out that those conditions could not even be compared to evilness. The punishments of the body were very frequent there, for no reason the workers were beaten to near death, and even in the middle of the night, and the policemen threats of shooting were even more frequent and ready to be fulfilled. It is miracles and wonders that none of the workers had been killed there as some dared to open their mouth and protest that their sleep is being disturbed, and hard labor was awaiting them. The Partisans [Lithuanian murderers], the evil and villain ones, intended to indeed kill the latter, and it was a miracle they were saved.

The Germans had demanded that the workers in Linkaiciai will be escorted by a physician. All the physicians have discussed the matter and we decided to send the physicians in shifts of two weeks each. Dr. Razovski has been excused due to his weakness and age; myself, I have been excused as well, due to my intestine illness, and the other physicians have been obligated to go, starting the ones who were not at the peat mines and ending with the ones who were in the mines, but the trouble was that those who had been forced to leave their jobs did not receive them back, like Dr. Lichtenstein and the lab technician Levin whom the work police¹⁹⁴ do not agree to give them back their positions. This kind of danger exist also for Dr. Fineberg, Pesachovich and Wolfert. During the time of their absence, replacements could be brought from Kaunas and then surely they would not receive their jobs back. The Christian physicians who are managing of the institutes in which the individual Jewish physicians work, are amazed as the representatives annul their effort to care for the Jews; they feel that the representatives should do the opposite, and try to make all possible efforts to strengthen their positions which have been so hard to gain. This amazing fact, in my opinion demonstrates the negative attitude of the representatives towards the physicians in general, which is derive from the hatred in the hearts of intellectual Jews who “had not been cooked as much as needed” toward Jewish physicians who are allegedly arrogant. Our representatives are among intellectuals, and they make efforts to repress the pride of the physicians and to humiliate them as much as possible, which is outrageous!

A wave of fear of God washed many of the ghetto inhabitants before the “High Holy Days”. Repentances, public prayers, keeping the Shabbat and Kosher foods had been matters important to many of our brothers of Israel, in the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana there have been no fires on the stoves of most of the ghetto houses, not for heating and not for cooking, one: as a gratitude to the Lord for the salvation of the fifty people who were saved from extermination, and two: as a “repentance” before the “High Holy Days”. The troubles that we had been trough had not sufficient to prove to the sons of Israel that for them there is no justice and no judge, and that the Lord is concerned with them as with the snow of last year.

A similarity between the Rosh Hashana Holidays for us in the last few years: in the year 5699, we had been free men and women, had everything we wanted, just had come back from our summer vacations in Palanga, the war between the Germans and Poland had begun. And we had prepared many provisions for ourselves: “cinters” [a measurement unit of 50 kg] of sugar, flour, salt and more. We had not known to cherish our situation and we had not known how many troubles were coming our way. In the year 5900 [should be 5700] I had gone to Vilnius to talk to the rector of the university to accept my son into the establishment. It had been the time of the Bolsheviks; I had been the manager of the polyclinic. There had been few unpleasant details, but we had been happy, respectable and full of good hopes regarding the future. And in the year 5701 our world fell apart; most

¹⁹³ A little town near Radviliskis, a total of about 30 km south-east from Shavli.

¹⁹⁴ The author talks in the same way about the police: “the work police” for the German Arbeitsamt, and not as it should be translated “the office of manpower”, as for the Jewish population they were policemen in every sense of the word.

of the Jewish community in our town was arrested and removed from the ghetto and from town. We had no way of knowing, we had no way of believing that they would kill so many innocent people in such a large quantity, and we came into the ghetto humiliated and ashamed, tortured and robbed. And this year we have reached the end of our tether and a horrible desperation attacks us, and there is no light to be seen, no sparkle of hope. Our only comfort is that the Russians are holding up and the autumn is coming and along with it the rains and winds, mud and darkness. In few months' time the advancement of the Germans would be stopped, and the American and English strengthen themselves and then maybe the Germans would be defeated at last, or at least would not want to continue the war forever, and they would end the regime of the villain and the bloodshed and destruction on the world.

We pray that the in the next Rosh Hashana we would go from slavery to freedom and we would have the possibility to leave the valley of death and go to the land of our fathers. Surely our brothers in America would help us financially as they would establish a "charity foundation" for us.

September 29 (the holiday of "Sukkot"). A horrible disaster happened yesterday. One of the women working in the rail tracks was killed, the second had her right hand crushed and the third, the right foot and the fingers of the left foot. These women were under a cargo carriage and they had to gather the scattered coal. Suddenly an engine came and pushed the carriage [wagon] with a lot of force. It ran over the women who were underneath it: one woman was killed, as I said before, two were badly injured and their organs smashed, and several more suffered light injuries. The injured were left there bleeding for some time. After many negotiations with the District Commissar he unwillingly agreed to transfer them to the municipal hospital for surgeries. In the hospital they performed the surgeries and removed the damaged organs under a horrible condition, that the next day they would leave the hospital! Woe is me! These women were damaged as they were working for the Germans, and the Commissar had no shame and horribly conditioned their entry into the municipal hospital, because they are Jewish, when would our troubles stop? Our blood freezes in our veins as we think about the way the Germans treat us. All we have now are disappointments and disappointments again! In the last year we have been putting our trust in the Russian winter which would bring the murderers to end, as it had happened to Napoleon in his time – our hopes have been in vain. We hoped for decisive events in the spring, we hoped for a second front – again a bitter disappointment, we thought in our hearts, that after the hardships the winter had caused to the German army, which the Russian were more accustomed to, they would be no longer able to fight, and in the summer a counterattack would finish them, but in the south of Russia they have been moving forward with giant steps, and have conquered all the districts in the south and now they have arrived to Stalingrad, burst to the city and they are about to conquer it as well. Surely, they have to fight for each and every house, and the war is very hard. This confrontation was one of a kind, even for this war. It is compared to the Verdun¹⁹⁵ siege of the Great War when the forces of the Germans had failed. Surely, here too the number of fatalities is countless, but their might hath has not failed [they were not stopped, according to Jeremiah 51, 30] and they will surely conquer the city. The moral defeat would be crushing. The glorious city named after the "Father of nations" would fall in the hands of the enemy! And so, the winter had passed, the spring too, the summer was ended and there was still no salvation for us! The English and the Americans are not yet prepared to open a second front and who knows if they would ever be, if the cargo ships would suddenly be lost at sea. The enemy and its allies are so mighty! However, the Russians show miracles too! They are holding up against all Europe! But surely in the end their power would run out as well, if the English and Americans would not present real help to them. Such a

¹⁹⁵ Verdun, a small city in the Lorraine region. In the hills around it a great battle took place between the month of February and December 1916. They were fortresses in this not so big region (about 150 square kilometers) which switched hands up to even 15 times. The fatalities of both sides were assessed to 750000 people. The Germans were prevented to move toward Paris here as they had planned. In the years after the war more than one hundred thousand skeletons were removed from here. Those are housed now in a special place built in the middle of the battlefield. The site is a pilgrimage place now.

horrible thing! We would surely spend the next winter here in troubles and tortures, and we wait for the next spring with anticipation, when at last England and America would finally be ready as promised to gain their upper hands on the villains. Would we finally get to see our hopes?

A happy phenomenon which many inhabitants talk about, mainly those who had seen it and heard about it: the fleeing of the German soldiers, nearly every day we see fleeing soldiers walk through the stations without their army belts and army equipment, this is a good sign! If this phenomenon would continue to develop, we would surely see a change in the mental state of the commanders which would be left without soldiers, and who could tell where something like this would lead. We are so tired of waiting, we cannot hope anymore, we are so tortured and depressed, we cannot even think about the possibility that good days would come, a wind of salvation!

And the policemen at the ghetto do not take into consideration our troubles and disasters, and they are adding to the distress. Yesterday, when the disaster happened they took seven people and dropped them down to their knees and all were beaten with rubber sticks, and they then sent them free to the ghetto, and for what? A few potatoes and several slices of bread!

And several Jews were removed from the prison house, few speculators¹⁹⁶ among them few who had removed the Star of David from their clothes and started wondering in town to find provisions for sale, but most of the prisoners were innocent, and were only “guilty” of a slice of bread, and all, as they were promised, were shot. They also shot many Lithuanians, who refused to follow the orders of the Germans to go to work or to be transfer to the front. Perhaps some of them protested against the demand to give their best crops and animals, milk, butter and eggs to the Germans.

Another peculiar order is the fact that the inhabitants of Kaunas, whose living is not necessary in town, are required to evacuate their homes for the army and the Germans who come back from Germany, but how could one state that the living is necessary or unnecessary. Almost all the inhabitants could work in their professions in town: physicians, sellers, artisans and more.

We heard various rumors about irregularities at the front and the cities of Germany. I wish those rumors were true and not only the imagination of those who find their comfort in made up stories.

“Simchat Torah” (T.N. - the festival celebrating the completion and re-start of the reading of the Torah). A day full of nostalgia and despair. It has been a whole year that the District Commissar has not come to the ghetto. Prior to this year he would have appear in the ghetto quite often, and anyone of his visits would have brought us a new order or decree: the reduction of the ghetto twice, the demand for fifty victims after the inspection of the inhabitants of the ghetto and finding food in their pockets, the victims were traded for a contribution and no peace! The inhabitants of the ghetto continue to look for food, “for their mouth compelleth them” [according to Proverbs 17, 26], the hunger tortures them, because the “portion” which is half of the Christians’ portion, is not enough even for a child. And the commissar is fighting us for a few potatoes and several slices of bread. He invited again all the representatives to his office and warned them again, for the last time, that from now on he will not be merciful with the accused of “provisions” smuggling – “we live with our portions (allegedly!) and you must live with yours. The representatives wanted to answer him, but he announced that the interview was over, and that they would be responsible for the ghetto with their own blood, if the inhabitants of

¹⁹⁶ The author was surely aware of the fact, that the word ‘speculator’ came upon the ghetto from the Nazi terminology as part of the extermination method they developed: to distort, to cause to become loathsome, to incriminate, to be a burden, to divide, to cause disputes and more, that way they forced upon the inhabitants of the ghetto an ‘economic system’ which only the Satan could have created, as the author tell us, that in order to provide for himself he was forced to sell everything he had, and in the same way, those who did not bring their valuables into the ghetto, were forced to put their lives in danger in many peculiar and strange ways, in order to survive. When he chooses the term ‘speculators’, it seems that the author thinks that the latter are exaggerating with their exchange rates, as he understands the action of smuggling various foods into the ghetto. In any event, the fact that the author uses this term, shows that not only the body was worn down in the ghetto, but also the moral and mental resistance to the deviousness of the Nazis’ system.

the ghetto are accused again. Since then the inspection at the gates was done also by the Jewish “policemen”. Yesterday they felt all the pockets of those who were coming back from town, I also went through this inspection yesterday and today. This fact is so humiliating and insulting! Our son will be also obligated to perform searches in the pockets of those who want to enter the ghetto for food contraband! As he is a policeman as well. He suffers much soul torments due to his job, which he holds as a concession to my wife who, for various reasons, begs him to stay in it.

Smuggling food into the ghetto has become impossible for now, and the results of this fact make us very miserable. We are all very hungry, starving for bread, with no bread, because one hundred grams per day per person are less than poverty bread, it is ridiculous.

The last speech of the “devil from hell” left us with a depressing and horrible impression: the old song about the Jews’ aspiration to exterminate the Aryan could make anyone laugh, except the fact that he has already exterminated more than two million Jews in Europe, and the hell continues. “The Jews will no longer laugh” he promises in his speech. Yes! He lives up to his principles regarding the Jews. In this front his right one hundred percent. If we skip his promises and his full aspirations, allegedly, love for mankind and friendship and brotherhood between all nations and such demagogies which have no basis, there are several parts in his speech that draw attention: first of all he very much laughs and ridicules England and America who succeed in failing and who have no military skills whatsoever, then he talks in length about the victories of the German army which are truly exceptional and in the end he announces that he will know no grace [according to Psalms 77, 10] for traitors and resistance in his own nation. This addition shows that in Germany and even in the army there are people who think that this has become a burden and a heavy load. An interesting phenomenon that if it would continue to develop then the “driver” [leader] would face difficulty. In any event, the impression of the speech was horrible, a substantial part of it unfortunately relates to facts and actions which cannot be denied.

“Isru chag” (T.N. – the day following Sukkot). In the Shemini Atzeret day an event occurred in the Caucasus region which shows how many dangerous outcomes are derived from the new ban to enter the ghetto even five potatoes and similar as the Jewish policemen thoroughly search the pockets of the inhabitants. That day the policemen at the gates of the Caucasus region followed their orders and searched all the people who were coming back from town, and they confiscated even the least they found. And in this region we can find all the “villains and the wretches”, and some of them, pushed by the speculators attacked the policemen and injured them badly. Then the policemen from the Traku region came to the aid of their brothers, and a war started in the Caucasus region; until the word arrived to the ears of the Lithuanian police which interfered and the people involved were punished with beatings and blows and they are about to face investigations and trials. “The hunger king” [according to Isaiah 24, 8] is beginning his actions.

Yesterday, in the day of the “Simchat Torah”, our light was darkened, and the mirth of the land was gone [according to Isaiah 24, 11]. Our representatives read a decree in the streets of the ghetto, under the sky. And the “appointed” orators spoke in order to warn us and to announce that no one should try and smuggle provisions into the ghetto as a danger of death is upon all the heads of the Jewish population remaining in the ghetto. Many insignificant things which are not worthy to be heard were heard, but the equal part left a depressing impression on the listeners and they demanded us to bare and suffer the hunger in defiance of our haters until our salvation would come.

October 8. The story of Dr. [Wolf] Pesachovich¹⁹⁷. One incident out of at least a thousand in which a testimony of the extent of hatred of our enemies towards us. Dr. Pesachovich who works at the tuberculosis clinic passed by the German “security police” with a Jewish policeman from the ghetto who had the disease and needed

¹⁹⁷ Was released and immigrated to the United States.

a treatment of “Pneumothorax”. In the clinic the physician had prepared the treatment and was about to administrate it to the patient – suddenly two German police clerks appeared and arrested the physician as he was ignoring the decree regarding the ban to treat Jewish patients in public institutions and they arrested the patient also, for daring to come to such an institute. Dr. P. did not deny the fact that he was about to help the patient, as a Jewish man is allowed to treat another Jewish man, and second, the work police has always given written approvals for these kind of events, and he was sure that he was going to receive one as well but he had not had the time to do so. And walking into town was difficult for the Jewish man, the policeman had official businesses to attend to in town, and at the same opportunity he finished [decided] to go and get the needed medication, and to get the permit later. The policemen were accepted this answer and did not punish the physician. But when they began investigating the patient he was very afraid to admit the truth and began to frame deceit [according to Psalms 50, 19] and said that he did not come there to treat himself but with an official business sent by the ghetto hospital which was managed by Dr. Pesachovich. His statement did not fit to the explanation of the physician, who had not had the opportunity to agree on their stories. Then the two policemen hit the patient twice on the cheek and he was so stunned, and later they took him into the basement where he was whipped twenty-five times! This is the way they treated an ill man who needed Pneumothorax, who was afraid to tell the truth. And on the other hand, even if he had said the truth, he would have still received a punishment – because if there is even the slightest flaw in a behavior of a Jew, if there is even a hint of something to be demanded from one, then the villains would not let him go, even if he is a patient at risk, and what do they care, if the situation of the Jew would get worse and even if he would die. We should thank them they did not kill him immediately. The sheep cannot justify itself before the wolf. And the hour is not a good hour for the Jews. “The minister of demons” eats his own vomit again and again regarding the Jews who want to exterminate the Aryans and he has promised over and over again that this fight would end with the extermination of all Jews. We find this senseless song in all his speeches and in all the newspapers, and the villains are upset. Their fury is growing due to their failures at the front, especially the Stalingrad attack, which looks more and more like the “Verdun” siege, I wish they would get what they deserve.

Dr. Pesachovich eventually received the approval from the work police and with the help of the manager of the clinic presented it to the “security police”, and the storm has passed for now. Surely, Dr. P. with his lack of caution could have been a landmine for all other lab technicians, as the German policemen could have opened their eyes and watch us too and be interested in our work – and this is of course not wanted.

October tenth. This is the fourth day without wood and without potatoes. We cannot make a hot dish and there is nothing else to eat. This is the perspective to all the winter days. How many of us would die from cold and hunger. How important is the issue of woods for heating and cooking! A good thing is that I have little provisions left in the polyclinic and the possibility to cook some potatoes as well, and last week I shared twice my lunch at the polyclinic with my son. Yes! There are many good points in the polyclinic for us: we received provisions for our services, sometimes even a wage besides the laughable salary – and especially the possibility to eat our lunch in town: there I have some bread, eggs, butter and sugar. But I cannot bring them into the ghetto now, and in the ghetto the horrible wind of hunger starting to frighten us; in our house in the ghetto there are no potatoes, no eggs and no butter, and our neighbors do not have even bread today, and the tremendous shortcoming is felt by us all.

October 24. A week had passed upon us, the veterans of calamities, which would not be forgotten so soon. Two German clerks came into the ghetto and burst into the homes of formerly wealthy people known to have the means to gather provisions, and robbed them of everything they had: provisions, furniture, clothes, various items they fancied, suitcases, mattresses, sewing machines, strollers, but all of this was done with hard blows and beatings, with fists and whips with no difference between men and women. All that they had the possibility to carry on their own, they did and for all the rest, they sent carriages to take their bounty and bring

the belongings into town: their teacher was “The new organizer of Jewish matters”, an evil man, who promised to visit all the houses in the ghetto along with the police in order to seemingly stop the speculations of the Jews. Very much frightened and filled with terror we waited for a few days for those visits and we were extremely depressed. We are used to being afraid of various surprises, but now the terror and fear had no limits, as the robbers took everything they could think of, like new buttons, chess pieces and similar items, which were to be found in almost every house, items to be placed in their vessels, moreover, they took the rest of our provisions, and we were waiting to be beaten to death, due to their famous cruelty.

We will all think fondly of Dr. Ginter from the work police who respects the Jewish workers and has spoken in our favor a few times before. This time he also rushed to our help and retrained the beasts who took the sleep from our nights and our rest for a few days. At last, those murderers and robbers were forbidden from appearing in the ghetto without a special permission.

We did not have enough time to find rest for our tired and casted souls [according to Micha 4, 7] from the experience I have mentioned and here a new event came and shook our hearts again. One German was furious with a young Jew, a good worker, for not receiving the solicited answer to an insignificant matter and he hit him on the head with a wooden stick. The beaten one fell to the ground without any signs of life, and the killer continued the beating with the wooden stick. Later, when the young man was examined by the physicians, they found out that his skull has been crushed in one spot and he suffered a major concussion. A surgery was performed and now the young man is between life and death, and the hope of life is questionable. This fact, which is a testimony to the worth of Jewish lives in the eyes of the Germans does not require an additional explanation.

As of now the city of Stalingrad has been yet to be conquered¹⁹⁸. The number of the secretly angry and complaining men is growing and growing. Who would have thought that the Russian would hold themselves before the Germans and the Italians and all the other tough ones in Europe? The critics of the Bolshevik regime have always said that the results of this regime were “nakedness and nothingness”, and that nothing good could come of it. Surely there were enough flaws and we all have been aware of them! Over cruelty, unnecessary one, lack of preparedness and continuity along with the lack of “needed professionals”; the destruction of an entire class, hostile mistakes and more, but on the other hand, we should admit that as far as defending their country, as far as the army and their weapons, the Bolsheviks had many good qualities and they are – for now – the saviors of mankind from the smashing boots of the German barbarians. Surely the decisive news which would end the terrors of war, would occur in the next spring, when America would be able and ready; however our strength is coming to an end and we become as men that hath no help [according to Psalms 88, 5] but to wait and anticipate.

October 27. Sorrow and distress! Horrible rumors regarding the fate of the Jewish population in Poland terrify us by day and take the sleep from our eyes by night. The cup of poison which has been spilled upon us in the last year is now the fate of our brothers in Poland. Exterminations of entire communities, killings of hundreds of thousands of Jews. They are telling us that tens of thousands of our brothers had been killed with poisonous vapors [gases] like bedbugs and cockroaches – they had chosen a beautiful death for them! We amused ourselves with the thought that they have been already tired of killing and exterminating us, and here the storm came again and the promise to exterminate all the Jews in Europe is being fulfilled. The extent of the madness of the leader in our regard, can be seen in a telegram he wrote to the Duce¹⁹⁹, for the twentieth anniversary of Fascism. Even in time of celebration, when greeted his friend, he found it necessary to remind him that the Jewish nation, the Plutocracy and Bolshevism will be defeated in this war. Among the enemies which this villain fight, the Jews are

¹⁹⁸ The end of October was already the third month of the battle of Stalingrad, and from the author we can see that he takes hope from this information.

¹⁹⁹ Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). In the month of October 1922, he was successful to get appointed by the King of Italy, then Victor Emanuel the III, to be a Prime Minister, and as a Duce he established a government in which his party, the Fascist party, had the decisive majority.

to take first place! Such a destruction of the Jewish nation was brought by this madness. The fruit of imagination of this liar and lunatic!

And we sit without wood, shivering from the cold and from the dampness of autumn, and hungry for something warm. Most the inhabitants of the ghetto constantly, without stopping, experience a hunger sensation, starvation, and a sensation of an empty soul. We lack meat, milk and fish in our provisions; we eat wheat bread and potatoes. The proteins from our diet were gone and there is nothing to replace it with – and so we are always hungry and starve for healthy food which we lack. After the news we received from Poland, two questions trouble us: wouldn't they exterminate all the Jews in Lithuania without leaving even one behind. What if the killings in Poland were permitted again and the propaganda of the leaders and the heads did not stop, and the leaders would even gain more power? And the second question: would we be able to survive, to fight the cold and the hunger, the tortures of the body and soul, which would surely come upon us in the upcoming winter? At the moment there is no better hope for our condition.

November 7. A slight snow fell upon us yesterday. The first snow, and the weather got colder – today it is even colder. One can assume that this year as well the winter will come sooner than expected. A good thing for the front. But we – the inhabitants of the ghetto – sit without wood, and the cold tortures us. However, the cold, due to the lack of wood and the hunger are related, as there is no wood for fire and there is no wood for cooking. All the yards in the ghetto are now bare and dirty, because all the fences and pickets have been removed during the night and were eaten out [according to Isaiah 5, 5].

We received some good news from the Egyptian front. In the official information from the German army they slightly admit that for strategic reasons the German-Italian army retreated into planned locations for this type of situation. They state that they have suffered a decisive defeat. Oh, how we wish the rumors were true, that the Italian army base has been defeated and that the greater portion of the German army base has been taken as war prisoners²⁰⁰. Every defeat they suffer has a great value, material and moral. And the city of Stalingrad is still standing, the winter, the friend and ally of the Russian army, has arrived!

November 9. The mood is excellent. Happy news, encouraging, come to us from the African front. The Americans performed a Disnt [landing] in distant Morocco and the French did not object; and so, the German-Italian army is surrounded from all sides and is caught up by the tongs. The American and English “aerial” forces outnumber their enemies, who flee from the battle “in haste and in panic”. A day shall be far removed [according to Micah 7, 11], but we are still amused by the hope that the German-Italian army would be exterminated and will be out of Africa, and then the Mediterranean Sea would be free, and the “second front” would open in Italy. For now, good hopes amuse us – at the same time, another speech came from the “evil tyrant” who once again ate his own vomit and threatens to exterminate all the Jews in Europe who aspire to exterminate him.

November 21. The danger of death has come upon us yet once more. An incident has occurred in the ghetto and who knows the results? One Lithuanian informed on his friend, that he had sold legumes to the Jews. The Germans came into the ghetto and found the farmer and his goods – three cinters [150 kg] of legumes, and additional various provisions. All of what has been found was gathered in a barn [storage house] near a laboratory belonging to the representatives. The goods were intended for the “privileged” people who divide those provisions among themselves and no other inhabitants of the ghetto were included, and the whole population was furious. The Commissar and his party [the ones who tag along with him] warned us, that if the inhabitants of the ghetto would once again be caught with provisions smuggling, there would be no mercy, and if in the first incident they had gracefully agreed to exchange the fifty victims they had demanded with contribution, this time they would

²⁰⁰ Those are news which arrived to the author about the second battle in El-Alamein, at the end of October 1942.

not be so forgiving. And now the times are already hard: the speech of the main tyrant and the speeches of his servants threaten to exterminate the entire Jewish population. Rosenberg²⁰¹ said that as long as one Jew remains in Europe, there would be no peace there. At this time the Commissar could follow his threat and yet again ask for human victims, and so we all are horrified.

In the evening we heard a more calming rumor, that what happened with the legumes would not be held against the entire ghetto, and only the speculator, the one who had bought the goods (Dubkin)²⁰², was arrested and he is indeed in great danger.

Good news keeps on coming from the African front: the Germans and the Italian retreat through all the points they had conquered before, and the Americans and the English are moving forward and are winning the battles. Important events also happen in France: Darlan, the deputy of Petain, betrayed the Germans and has joined their enemies, Giroud is also the commander of the French army which is fighting the Germans. The German General, Rommel is about to engage in battle in Tripolitania but there he would be between two army bases, from the front and from the back. One can assume that in Africa they would not have the upper hand, and then the real “second front” would exist! For now, the English and the Americans destroy the cities of Italy, happy is he that waiteth, and cometh [according to Daniel 12, 12].

Our only son left for Pvenčiai²⁰³ yesterday to unload the beets for the sugar factory. Sorrow, boredom and distress. He has been taking care of all our needs and shortages, and I am not qualified to fill his place in this matter.

November 28. Once again the searches at the gates of the ghetto has become strict and serious. Every morning when I leave the ghetto I battle with the thought that I might not be home today and that I might be arrested, because if I receive some provisions which I cannot miss, I would surely try to smuggle them into the ghetto, and then I would be in danger of getting arrested. I have been caught only once last year when I carried some meat in my basket under the potatoes and I was excused by the 50 rubles I gave to the policemen, but since then they did not search me properly and I have not failed anymore; but I am always angry about the issues of contraband [smuggling] and so we are always afraid and curse our souls and our horrible lives.

Near the room of the representatives an sign was placed with big letters regarding the accused Dubkin who had been sentenced to death by hanging for buying the legumes for a speculation price (in Kaunas there was a trial for a similar case in the ghetto for such a “speculator”), but as they have been convinced that the defendant has not dealt with speculation so far and that this purchase has also not been done for pure speculation – he has been pardoned this time and as a punishment he has been sent for hard labor in Linkaiciai. Of course, the announcement was finished in warnings and threats that those incidents should not happen again for death danger. All these threats will be forgotten, as the ghetto is starving for bread and food, and the hunger will always make us to try and smuggle food into the ghetto, and on the other hand the speculator would not stop and not sleep.

December 4. The potatoes saga which bitters our lives! The Cooperative²⁰⁴ has urgently demanded from the inhabitants to hurry up and receive the potatoes they are entitled to according to the feeding cards. The potatoes are frozen, rotten and wet. After we have thrown a third of the potatoes, as they were beyond repair, we separated

²⁰¹ Alfred Rosenberg (born in 1893). In all the years of the National Socialists ruling – 1933-1945 – he was the Leader of the NSDAP Office of Foreign Affairs: Reichsleiter des Aussenpolitischen Amtes des NSDAP. Since 1941 he was a Minister of the Reich of the Eastern Territories: Reichsminister fuer die besetzen Ostgebiete. Was trialed after the war with the war criminals and was executed.

²⁰² Was the provisions purchaser for the representatives.

²⁰³ A village near Kursenai, about 25 km north-west to Shavli, and there is a sugar factory there and a peat mine for its service.

²⁰⁴ The store which provided the provisions under the supervision of the representatives.

the second third and intended to cook them as soon as possible, and we have arranged the rest on the floor in our dense room in order to dry them. The potatoes raise vapors and make the room cold and multiply the moisture which we do not lack, and the potatoes intended for eating right away are also rotten and are about to be thrown as well as my wife and I do not enjoy foods made of bad potatoes and my son is not here. And the help, despite of the fact that she is an eater, would not have time to finish them. The sorting of the potatoes, their cleaning from the rotten parts and the stones which are among them, their drying, their smell, the increase of the density until there is no room to sit or to stand – all of those are seemingly minor matters – but we have been really tired of dealing with the potatoes after three days – just another little detail of our cursed lives in the ghetto.

And the war has surely entered a new period, maybe this would be the decisive one – but no one can imagine how much time this period would last. The Allies have a new army, they are tireless and have great means, but the ones in the Axis Power are courageous, experienced, and excellent in their discipline and their technique and no one could tell who would have the upper hand. One could assume²⁰⁵ that the parties would eat one another until there would be no winners and no losers – and then some third party would come and make the difference: the Pope or Sweden or Switzerland – who knows? In this kind of ending the issue of the Jews would not find a solution, which cannot be said if the English would win decisively and then they would show the power of their arm to the cursed Arabs and the land of our fathers would be given back to us – the only solution for the ones who remained from the extermination brought upon us by the damned tyrant! In the forefront of his war against the Jews he has followed all his promises – and the global integrity, the historical trial and the social justice – they are gone; they come late! would they come? Let us believe and hope!

December 19. No significant news, no decisive wins, and no end to our troubles. Horrible and sad news we are receiving from Poland: they are exterminating all the Jews! There had been millions there – and now so little have remained and they are being killed as well. The job had been done by the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians. And the Polish themselves are finishing it now. The sleeping hatred has awakened. The Germans had sent many Polish workers to Germany and their place has taken by Jews now; the crowd believes that these Jews had bribed the Germans, and it is also believed that the Polish Jews are speculators and deal with suspicious matters. The alms collection had spread, as well as the diseases and the lack of cleanness, and all of these make the Polish Jews seem evil and turn them into sheep for slaughtering in the eyes of the villains who wish to destroy them.

December 23. There was another commotion near the gates yesterday. According to their calamity the policemen needed money for their wine and drinks. Therefore, they began searching the ones coming into the ghetto even more zealously: even the women were inspected from head to toe, from the front and from the back. The ones returning into the ghetto said that near the gates the matters are tiring and that the inspections are strict. The ones returning started to take out their goods from hiding and throw it at the sides of the street: butter, fat, eggs, turnip and more. And some who didn't manage throw their goods away on time, or were unwilling to part from their goods which had been gathered in town with great hardship and in most cases with great speculation, tried their luck, were caught by the policemen and were forced to redeem themselves with large amounts of money. It is worth noting that I myself have failed and have hidden some things: between my underwear and the skin of my legs I had half of kilogram of soapwort – the policeman examined me briefly and did not feel my contraband. Due to my age, my position, my profession and all my past, at most times have protected me from being treated badly and from humiliation.

²⁰⁵ It was clear that the survival was conditioned with the end of the war, and the win of the Allies, as a granted. It seems that the knowledgeable people in the ghetto started to see in everything a sign that the war will be over soon. The doubters will react with irony as they would say that those are the dangerous news from the I.V.A. news agency (as opposed to Reuters, for example) [in Yiddish]: an abbreviation: The Jews want it to be so – “Idn Vidn Azoy”.

Tedik, my son, came back from Pvenčiai. The work there was hard labor. The unloading of the honey beets [sugar] from the cargo carriages to a known peat house of the factory. The job is mostly done by hand strollers and it is hard on the body and the soul. However, nutrition was good: a warm dish twice a day and the possibility the workers had to cook for themselves, also a known group was allowed every day to go to the nearby villages and beg for goods, and it mostly succeeded. The farmers have not denied the requests of the people and give them provisions and feed them.

The news from the front are encouraging: you could say that almost for the first time the Germans fully admit that in the surrounding of Voronezh²⁰⁶ they have been defeated in a decisive way. The English admit²⁰⁷ that more than twenty thousand have been killed and nearly thirty thousand have been taken as war prisoners. Aside from this defeat there are other signs showing that not all is well within the German camp: often through the Shavli station [the rail station] we can see rebels German soldiers who refuse to fight. The mental state of the Germans is very low. I wish for them to be defeated.

December 27. The other night we had a celebration in the ghetto – one year have passed since the hospital was established in the ghetto. One year ago, the Christian physicians were banned to treat Jewish people and the representatives received an order to remove all the Jewish patients from the wards of the municipal hospital, despite that among them were high risk patients with temperatures above forty degrees. This evilness and maliciousness, after all the troubles we had been through, did not amaze us much. The representatives came up with a great solution for the problem, surely not without difficulties: they immediately began to establish “a house set apart” [according to 2 Kings 15, 5], a place outside the camp, to house the high risk patients there, and there was no other place than the “purification room” in the cemetery!²⁰⁸ The room with the concrete floor was very cold during the winter, especially the last one which was very cold. There were no tools, no furniture, no linens, but the necessity, the resourcefulness, the generosity, the adaptation, the courage of the representatives, all of these prevailed and in a short while the purification room and the other rooms which had been used by the Kadisha members were turned into a hospital, surely with great difficulties. But in the conditions we had, it was moderately fancy and honorable. “How great are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” – Even in the ghetto, in spite the efforts of our enemies to put us down, us, the few who remained, we remained vital, and our talents of initiation and adaptation are still with us. Those who are tortured and depressed, those who are tired and crushed, those would shake off the dust and raise their heads to live and to act, when salvation would come, they will leave the ghetto and their bitter enemies. This was the first celebration since the Germans had burst into our town, and it left a nice impression like a line of light in the nightly darkness.

January 17 [1943]. We received many news lately in the ghetto, it was necessary to write many personal and general notes²⁰⁹, but since the beginning of the month of Shvat (January 7) our hope that the current winter would more moderate than the last, has evaporated. In our homes which were not properly prepared for the winter, and as the heating is low and very limited due to the lack of wood, you can feel the cold even more and it depresses the souls. It causes laziness and to hold hands in your warm clothes which very much limits your movements in

²⁰⁶ Surely Voronezh was released from the occupation only in January 24, 1943, but there was a decisive pivot in the front: no longer German movement from west to east, but Russian movement from east to west.

²⁰⁷ The author does not reveal, if this information arrived to him by listening to the radio, in hiding of course, in his workplace or via an alternative method. The author is very careful even writing in his diary, for the fear that it may fall into the wrong hands.

²⁰⁸ The Jewish cemetery was on the border of the Caucasus region and in that way it was possible.

²⁰⁹ Among others the author referred to the fact that in the last three weeks there had been few significant changes in the ghetto. All the salaries of the worker were transferred to the authorities and every worker received a daily salary of only 3 marks. The food was based on tickets, as well as clothes and everything else, under very strict norms; all under the supervision of the Gebietskommissar. This was another stage in turning the ghetto into a “proper” concentration camp.

the narrow and moist room. In one of those cold days we decided to purify the air in our room a little, to freshen the pillows and blankets in the yard and to sort all the potatoes from under our bed, to choose the rotten ones, and to remove the sprouts and the roots which ooze into the moist air. On the same day we had removed all the clothes hanging off the walls of the rooms, and it had been all full of mold. I had taken it out into the yard in order to clean it and I had not worn clothes to keep me warm enough. The cold had been strong, a penetrating wind had blown very hard, and the results of this unusual work were that I caught a cold and I was in bed for two weeks. I developed a pulmonary infection which was quite dangerous at my age. The disease has passed, and I've returned to my work in town which I of course stopped at the time I was sick, but I still feel a great weakness, especially in my feet and I still have a cough. And so, the conditions of our cursed lives in the ghetto became even more horrible.

A new matter has fallen upon the ghetto, a matter which will turn our lives around. The villains who constantly seek for new ways to bitter our lives and to depress us have decided on a new strange matter: to bring a "communist" order into the ghetto. The details are as follows: the working inhabitants of the ghetto receive their salaries from 37.50 [thirty-seven marks and fifty pfennigs] to 40.50. Since the official price of food provisions were had been set according to the tickets at seven marks per month (!), they have decided to transfer all the salaries of the Jews to the representatives, and the representatives are obligated to fulfill all the needs of the ghetto inhabitants: feeding, heating, housing, healing and so on and so forth. And to pay every family 5 marks, and 3 marks to a single worker, per month for unexpected expenses. It is obvious that in the poor life conditions this change will be for the better, as they will receive all their needs from the representatives for free, as opposed to before when the rates were set by the representatives and those rates were far more expensive compared to the salary of the poor workers, and the more wealthy ones, the ones who still had items to sell, did not take the low salaries into consideration even before and they would have traded their items for a variety of foods or for money and buy the items they needed, and they will continue to do so in the next days, even if the exchange and the sales become harder and harder. In fact all of the burden of this change will fall on the representatives who have many expenses: the Germans and the Lithuanians clerks and policemen – their grace and goodness is bought with gold, and the source for these expenses and for the management of the hospital was the expropriation of the rates²¹⁰ by the representatives in the Cooperative and the pharmacy and so on and so forth, now matters will be tiring.

February 5. Stalingrad! Stalingrad!²¹¹ This name will remain in the world history forever. The city with this name rules on the Volga, the most living vein in the south of Russia and the one which connects the south to the center of the country, in order to transfer the rich products of the flourishing south and the Caucasus' crude oil from there to here. And so, the Germans made all efforts to conquer this city and to stop the connection between the mentioned regions and especially end the crude oil supply, which are is one of the main needs in every war. In order to do so, they sent the best divisions of their army: the "Sixth regiment" along with the Italian and Slovak legions. They did not spare their people and their weapons and made every effort possible to capture the city which carried the name of the Russian ruler, and the ruler of the Germans has promised, as always as he had limitless self-confidence, that this city will be surely conquered. Surely the larger part of the city has indeed almost conquered after fierce battles. But they did not have the force to drive the Russians out of the city, because the Russians have shown great courage and wonders here. They turned every home into a fortress and from there they would attack their enemies and kill them. And here, the courage of the Germans has ended and the wheels have turned in such a horrific manner that no one could have foreseen! From attackers they have become defenders and the Russians surrounded then from all directions, and there was no way out for them. The Germans understood

²¹⁰ That is to say, they added the adjacent expenses to the prices for the management and supplies, a kind of a value added tax, which naturally was collected equally from everybody.

²¹¹ The German leader on the front, Von Paulus, surrendered on January 31, 1943; two days later all the soldiers of the sixth regiment which was under his command, surrendered too, in a siege in front of Stalingrad.

that there was no choice left for them, but afraid of their lunatic ruler they fought on and did not surrender. Finally, they have had no more food, and the ammunition has also run out, and twenty four generals have surrendered to the Russians, about two hundred clerks [commanding officers] and eighty thousands military men; and in the city, sieged, there have been three hundred and thirty thousand men and women! Two hundred and fifty thousand people have found their graves in Stalingrad, beside those who fell in the first period of the attack from the lines of the Germans. And so here the Germans have been decisively defeated, a defeat like no other in the Germans modern history. This defeat has astounded all the German nation and has struck them as thunder. They have announced about three days of mourning and have ordered a general mobilization of the entire German nation! And the press²¹² has started publishing articles with arguments upon arguments about defeats which eventually lead to victories and about the Stalingrad impression which would strengthen the German nation as a hammer which strengthens the massive iron [according to Ezekiel 27, 19]. The impression that this defeat has made on the Germans will not be soon forgotten. For all the Jews in the Baltic area they have killed, the revenge came in one single city, but for all the Jews in Europe, who were exterminated more than six million, the revenge has yet to come. And for the Russians, this victory has given them courage and might and a new wind of heroism has come upon them. And they have gone from victory to victory. Who knows, maybe this would be the beginning of our salvation? And the Jews have been reciting the “Shehecheyanu” blessing and the defeat of the Germans – comfort in our eyes! But still our heart is troubled: the general mobilization of the villains, the many battles which are yet to come, would cause an exceptional awakening for them, and the efforts of despair would give them the strength to turn the tables around with the Russians and take back the cities they are leaving for now. Days will come and soon we shall see! However, the endurance has ended, and our spirit is weary from waiting for the absolute salvation which is delayed.

February 26. After the victory in Stalingrad the Russians has achieved few more brilliant victories: they have conquered Kursk, Kharkiv, Rostov and several²¹³ other moderately important locations. These defeat has brought a panic state to the German army, and fear and terror has come upon them: morning announcements, general mobilization, the admission of the close danger, the division of the deceiving and evil enemy which had succeeded hiding its real military situation from all, and its preparations to defeat the entire European continent and to exterminate mankind’s culture, for which, allegedly, they are guardians. Since then their rage has grown even more, and the labor has become more serious. And they are ready to kill and to lose the remaining of our nation. Now they make efforts to show that their trouble is the trouble of the entire European continent and danger looms over the entire cultural world, and so they turn to all the European nations and ask for a general mobilization. Here also [in Lithuania] they have given back all previously confiscated assets to the original owners, from before by the Bolsheviks and at the same time, they have announced the mobilization of all men from the age of nineteen until the age of twenty four, for work at first, and for the front later. One could also assume that the poor people of the Baltic region would try hiding, or would try to fall as war prisoners, because if the “fists” [Kulaks] and most of the people had not been satisfied with the Bolsheviks, the workers are witnessing [according to Jeremiah 29, 23] that the Germans tongue frameth deceit [according to Psalms 50, 19] and they say that the Bolsheviks had done only harm, and the condition of the workers had been better than now.

News! Every inhabitant is obligated to list their furniture and to hang the list on the apartment door to make the inspection easier, when they come to inspect and verify that the list is true. The purpose of this order is

²¹² From here we can understand that the author was able to read the current German and Lithuanian papers at his workplace, not in the ghetto.

²¹³ Kursk: a railways and industry center, a district capital, about 650 km in aerial line west from Stalingrad and about 450 km south of Moscow, and its strategic importance was great; Kharkiv – about 200 km south of Kursk, Rostov, on the Don river. The Don Delta is indeed in the city and the opening to the Sea of Azov, and so it disconnects all possibility of a land connection towards the Caucasus and the crude oil field.

not entirely clear. We have fallen so far down from where we cannot get up! A common policeman hit the Dr.²¹⁴ on the cheek for daring to walk on the sidewalk! As far as the Jews they do not take age and education into consideration, nor the social status in the old days as we have no justice and no judge.

And a second policeman came out of his hiding and attacked Dr. Kn-H²¹⁵ who had received from a Lithuanian lady through the barrier surrounding the ghetto a package with few provisions sent to him by his brother. He [the policeman] demanded one thousand marks! And he did not bulge or discount, regarding the Jews, “the law has no pity”.

Decree, the Jews are forbidden from purchasing newspapers at the kiosks, due to an incident which had occurred in Kaunas where a Jew had been killed as he was buying a newspaper on the day of the fall of Stalingrad. The Germans realize that the Jews are happy with their defeats and that they seek in the newspapers news that are bad for the Germans, which are happy for us.

Recently there seem to be a halt to the Russian victories – too bad!

The second day of the intermediate days of Passover. Our strength is almost exhausted. The nerves are raging and tense more than ever; the troubles remain; there is no hope for salvation in the following days; no decisive events in the front for now; we have little endurance left. There have been many details I should have written about, but there is an acceptance of the soul, my hands are weak, and I have no desire to write, there is no “strength” and no energy to bother the tired and angry mind. Beside all these reasons, there are more important reasons for my negligence and my silence. Our only son, who’s good health condition had been a source of pride for us and he had been our comfort in the horrible illnesses, which I and my wife are affected by, has fell exhausted under the horrible living conditions of the ghetto and now he is sick and in bed with Pleura infection. The disease has been probably developed by the Koch bacteria and there is danger! Rest is needed, hospitalization in an excellent sanatorium – things we can only dream of and hallucinate about now. We have done everything in our power to do, and he is getting a little bit better, but it is already the third month since the disease began. His illness denied me my free time as I have been visiting him at the hospital every day, when he was hospitalized more than four months and all my attention was given to him. Aside this obstacle, all the events in our lives bear a stamp of a vigorous transition period which is yet to be over, and I have not consistently written it down in the diary, as I have been writing so rarely recently.

- a) After the fall of Stalingrad, the Germans announced a general mobilization of the whole nation and they have tried to also mobilize all the nations fallen under them. The Lithuanian nation has shown resistance and unity which we did not think was possible, and nobody came [answered] to the announcement. The Germans reacted with various repressions [acts of various limitations] and after several concessions there was a general assembly²¹⁶ of representatives from various segments, which have concluded that there is a need to fight the Bolsheviks and help the Germans. Those who want to fight at the front are few, and for now matter remain wary.
- b) The second decisive defeat after Stalingrad is looming. The deportation from Africa would end with retreat from Tunisia, if such retreat succeeds. Surely when the English and American planes and submarines attacked, there were quite a lot of casualties.
- c) And the Germans defeats enrage them even more, and they take their revenge on us. The propaganda against us is vivid, and we are to be blamed for everything.

²¹⁴ Dr. Directorovich, was released and even published some of his memories.

²¹⁵ Dr. Kanturovich, one of the most prominent physicians in Shavli before the war.

²¹⁶ The assembly was the initiative of the Germans. The Germans demanded to listen to oppositional voices who talked about an independent Lithuania and a Lithuania for the Lithuanians.

- d) And the attacks of the English and the Americans on the cities of Germany and Italy are extremely strong and powerful: it is enough to mention that the attack on Antwerp²¹⁷ (they also attack the Germans allies) had caused two thousand deaths! The city of “Essen”²¹⁸ had been almost completely erased from the face of earth. There had been also much damage done in Berlin and in other cities as well. And the villain [Alfred] Rosenberg had said that the hand of Israel is in those attacks as well and had advised the Germans to remember this fact and to react with “hatred and revenge”!
- e) And in the surroundings of Smolensk the Germans have discovered the graves of twelve thousand Polish army clerks [officers] [Katin]²¹⁹ who had been taken prisoners and killed by the Russians. The propaganda has been great, and the anger of the Poles have no bounds. And with every occasion in which the Bolsheviki are mentioned as evil, they also add the Jews, and in this event also, which is still questionable, the “Bolsheviki-Jews” are the ones who had acted.
- f) And from Poland the rumors are far more horrifying and troubling than what the heart could contain. On behalf of the radio in Warsaw²²⁰ they say that the ghetto in the city has been burning for a few days now, and that the Jews rebelled with stones and axes against the Germans who had decided to exterminate all the Jews who remaining in Poland, up to a point which the Germans were forced to enter with tanks into the ghetto. This news is not confirmed yet, but bad news is something we should believe in our days.

The third day in the intermediate days of Passover. Today it was very hot and unusual for this time in April, as if it were the month of July, and the first group of workers is leaving for the peat mines in Viciunai. This time the workers were selected only by the German head of the “Arbeitsamt”, and the opinions of the medical committee were not taken into consideration. He decided to send all the candidates, and only the ones who get sick there, would be released. Two physicians were also sent as common workers.

We need to take a lesson from M-L. Among the wealthy men of Shavli, the manager of the Fr-L factory. He had managed to accumulate a substantial fortune which provided him the opportunity to settle abroad most comfortably. But that had not been sufficient for him, and he had wanted his fortune to be even bigger and had believed that the shadow of money would protect him from all harm. I remember a conversation I once had with him. He made efforts to explain to me that the Country of Lithuania is in a very good political state, and that there is no danger for it as it is located between two large countries which would aspire to defend its neutrality so it could be a shielded from their competition and collision. With those opinions he had started building a big house with four stories and in each story, three apartments. He had invested most of his fortune in this building which had been surely one of the most beautiful in town, and he had hoped to see a good remuneration from his potential tenants, but he had not finished the building until the Bolsheviki came and he was forced to leave his home. But the real troubles came for him these days. The Germans have arrested him twice. In the second time he was in great danger as he was informed on that he letters to a Pole for the ghetto in Vilnius, a fact that has been sufficient to raise suspicion of espionage. He succeeded to recuse himself and he was released, but today he has been arrested again because he dared to sell his piano. He came back home in such a state, that he has only been able to lay on his front, as all of his back has been inflicted with injuries. This is the way in which the cultured Germans treat

²¹⁷ Despite the fact that Antwerp, on the Scheldt River, is about eighty km far from the sea, it had been developed with canals and piers and became the most important port in Belgium, and it is also a key point for the transportation of goods toward inland of Belgium.

²¹⁸ Essen, in the famous Ruhr region; one of the ten large cities in Germany; an industrial center and within the famous ‘Krupp’ factories.

²¹⁹ The Katin story, named after the place Katin, was solved only in recent years after the downfall of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the opening of classified documents.

²²⁰ The allies knew in real time about the events in the ghetto in Warsaw. However, none of the ones who knew was willing to take even the slightest gesture of help.

an old and honorable Jew, because the Jew is not considered to be a human being. The same has happened to his honorable position at the factory, which has been very important as he knows every corner of it, and he has been aware of everything which related to the work, this position too has lost its value now, and his downfall has caused the downfalls of all the other Jews who work there. In this way our nation has lost the fortune of the owner of the factory and after that, the fortune of its manager, as they would have been able to bring real benefits to themselves and to the land of our fathers.

The fourth day in the intermediate days of Passover. Yesterday we heard in the ghetto about the statistics of the German damages in the last four months. If the numbers are not exaggerated, then their losses are quite considerable: three hundred thirty-eight thousand have been taken as war prisoners, eight hundred and forty thousand casualties, more than one hundred thousand tanks and so on and so forth²²¹. Stalingrad, Tunisia, the Eastern front, the aerial attacks, all will not be forgotten soon.

One of the sadder manifestations of life in the ghetto is the spreading of the tuberculosis disease among the young generation. The density causes filth and lack of hygiene in the hard labor housing, the insufficient nutrition, the constant anger and stress, all these conditions are efficient in the creation of various diseases and especially the tuberculosis disease. I should also state that the death occurrences among the elderly this year compared to the last year increased substantially; fatigue and failure, loss of motivation and weakness attack almost all the inhabitants of the ghetto. Old age jumps on the oldest ones and the troubles and disasters bring us close to hell.

May 5. The writings of our endless troubles and despairs became sickening to me: I am tired to grind the grinded flour. The ghetto with its harsh exists and entries is still standing, smuggling provisions can be less dangerous sometimes, and sometimes it may bring arrests and beatings: the latter occurred already twice in public, and this fact is needed to be written – but we already seen so many other horrible things, that our feelings went numb. Surely, “all faces had gathered blackness” [Joel 2, 6] and all the inhabitants of the ghetto had been trembling before the implementation of the first beating punishment, for the sin of provisions which had been found with the workers coming back from their work. And still the impression had not lasted long, and the desire to write about the humiliating fact that old people have been beaten for smuggling food, this desire had also passed and was cancelled – because what is the meaning of this punishment if our lives are always shall hang in doubt before thee [according to Deuteronomy 28, 66] and we knowest not what a day may bring forth [according to Proverbs 27, 1], what is the value of this fact, if we were sold as slaves and servants and our body became abandoned and the hard labor is endlessly tiring us. And yet today an event occurred which annoyed all the inhabitants of the ghetto without exception and has awakened me to stop my silence and grab my pen again and write: today [June 6, 1943] a Jew was hanged in the ghetto! He was sentenced to hanging because they had found upon him more than thirty boxes of paper, a half of liter of chocolate candies, a new coat and a sum of money. Based on this evidence they had decided to trial him as a speculator, and he was sentenced to death by hanging. Nothing has helped and the verdict was carried on today. And these are the details of this disaster: Mezonatzkis²²², loaded with the forbidden items came out of the bakery [of Petersons] yard in which he works along with his friends. Suddenly the car of the German security police along with their Lithuanian helper, the policeman Bi[l]kas[t]is²²³, a long-time hater of Israel, appeared down the street. Mezonatzkis was afraid and stepped back

²²¹ It is obvious that the source of these numbers was not the Lithuanian press, or the German one. But the radio broadcasts from Russia and England.

²²² Betzalel Mazobiski, was approximately 30 years old when he died.

²²³ Need to be Billkastis. Usually in the search team the Germans let the Lithuanian do the chase, to grope and to discover “the contraband”; this Lithuanian policeman was often the head of the shifts at the gates of the ghetto, and his evilness was greater than the others.

into the yard. This movement drew suspicion upon him immediately. The Germans along with the policeman hurried up and chased him, and finally caught him; and when they discovered the forbidden items he was arrested and brought into the prison house. There he sat for a few days and the inhabitants of the ghetto believed that this had been his punishment, because as a matter of fact, non-valuable things were discovered: some candy for his little daughter and a small quantity of fat. He was only to blame for the paper boxes and money; however, nobody would have imagined that he will be sentenced to death for it! But the murderers have been looking for quite some time for an opportunity for public execution in the ghetto. Now, they have succeeded and found their victim, and they were about to slake their thirst for Jewish blood. The prisoner has not known about the execution until today. An order had been issued, and the policemen went from house to house and obligated everybody to come into the Caucasus region in order to see the execution. They have frightened all the people that the Germans would come and inspect their houses, so the population obeyed and went to the execution. A large of crowd was gathered in Caucasus, and among them Lithuanians, and in front were about fifteen Germans from the security police and the commissariat²²⁴. The hanging place was ready. And then the prisoner appeared in handcuffs. Everybody believed that in the last minute the sentence would be cancelled and after frightening the prisoner, they would exchange the execution with imprisonment. And the Germans amused themselves as they thought they were about to watch a Jewish coward who would be brought by force into the hanging place, and they were ready to fight him. And when the accused appeared, a handsome young man, tall as a tree, and he was laughing. He himself climbed up the little table which was under the hanging, he himself entered his head into the tie, nodded his head to all directions as if to say goodbye to the whole crowd, stared into the eyes of his haters and smiled in order to not please them – and he died the death of a hero which surprised everyone who present there. This man who had been afraid when he had seen the car, showed exceptional courage at the time of his death, and even the Germans were surprised. He wanted to say goodbye to his wife and to his mother, but the villains would not let him. Before he was dead, at the last minute he said: “Please stay calm, I will be a good advocate for you all” And so a thirty years old Jew had died, the victim of the troubled times, for nothing, just because of the insatiable predators, for the lives of the Jews.

However, we begin to see revenges of no small size to our enemies, and every day bring us a little comfort. From the day in which the Satan [Hitler, Damn him!] had taken upon himself to command the army, he manages [leads] our enemies from defeat to defeat: Stalingrad, the escape from the Caucasus and the Allies victory in Tunisia will never be forgotten: our enemies had not seen such defeats until now. In all their history, and we could have been satisfied, but unfortunately, our situation is turning from bad to worse following those defeats. In order to distract the public opinion in their country from those defeats, from the victories of the Allies and all other attacks, they have attacked the issue of the Jews as evil dogs which have torn its chain and now it is playing with it. The incitement is at its peak and we are seeing our deaths before our eyes and we do not know what tomorrow will bring for us.

June 10 (the second day of Shavuot). The air is fresh and clear. There is a garden near every house, there are no fences, as they were used in the beginning of last winter as wood for heating. Last year, working in the gardens was done superficially, but in the end the people saw that nothing was in vain, because the gardens granted those who took care of them with many vegetables, and so this year, the inhabitants of the ghetto take gardening very seriously and the whole the ghetto has been dressed with the colors of spring. Everything is green, everything is grass, but the hearts are still dark, a horrible despair has attacked us all and our souls are ruined, as for now, there is no good hope for us and the propaganda against us, filled with gall of asps [Job 20, 14] does not stop.

²²⁴ The S.D. team (the security police Sicherheitsdienst); as also the team of the Gebietskommissar, which for them it was an amusing show.

July 26! This day was a very happy day for us, and the whole ghetto was rejoicing, something which we have not known and have not felt since the day on which our modern Haman had come upon us. Mussolini has been dismissed! Finally, even the members of his party understood that he has brought the Italian nation to the gates of hell. By himself and with the help of his flattering friends he has become the partner of Amalek and now his defeat has been complete. The colonies had been lost never to be found again, the poverty has increased as never before, the best of the Italians had been killed in the Russian front. And the enemy was at the gate. Ante portas!²²⁵ Sicily has fallen, and its fall will take the entire Italian country with it. The partner of Amalek has fallen out of the sky and has been grounded! Let us hope that following Mussolini, the turn of Hitler [Damn him!] would arrive. The example is contagious as an infection. So many good hopes fill our hearts! The beginning of salvation! And all the inhabitants of the ghetto, the miserable and the poor, are all happy and rejoicing and cannot wait to see what comes next.

30. Mussolini and his friends have been arrested! The Fascist party has ceased to exist! The new government apparently announces that the war will continue. But the crowds demand peace! No help would come to him from his former partners. The Allies express three conditions: full and unconditional capitulation [in writing], the possibility of passing through Italy in order to continue the war against Germany and the cancellation of the Fascist party²²⁶.

4/IX [43]. I did not think even for a second that I would need to add another notebook to my writings. I was sure that I would finish my writings in this notebook with many good news, and that salvation would come before I reach the end of my notebook. For now, my hope has been shattered. Salvation is still far from us and the really long period tortures us horribly. Who could tell if this notebook would be sufficient. The events are unfolding painfully slowly, so slowly that the soul is running out. And the enemy is still fierce! His endurance is still strong despite his defeats, and if a miracle does not happen, he would endure for a long time from now on. And his defeats are decisive: since Stalingrad everything began falling apart. The deportation of the enemy from North Africa, and from the colonies which were held by Italy, and it spent its last forces on them; the occupation of Sicily, the pride and joy of Italy; the decimation of the aerial attacks, the defeat of Mussolini and the bankruptcy of Fascism! Italy looks like a butchered and plucked chicken! It still fights as it has no choice, because the devil imposes itself upon it. The body of the devil has fallen, and he will not get up, and there is a possibility that even the grand devil [Hitler, damn him] would drink from the poisonous cup very soon. We can only rely on miracles which are now actions every day, they happen every day: the fates of the rest of our brothers have been saved by a miracle; we are living now in a miracle; the defeats of the Germans are miracles; the fate of the minion and evil Italy which had stabbed the back of its sister France during its time of trouble – a miracle from heaven. And we are waiting for one complete and absolute miracle, which would end the life of Germany and would bring to our salvation.

-- Treasures and precious news to the depth of our hearts! The English and the Americans are in Italy! The Eight Regiment tells us that it has smelled enough gun powder and it has arrived there to show its strong arm, and the good news has not delayed. The English have already conquered three cities and three beaches! They

²²⁵ A common expression in the European culture, based on the story told by Livy, the Roman historian, regarding the fact that Hannibal was getting closer to Rome. Hannibal ad portas = Hannibal is at the gates [of Rome, the city gates].

²²⁶ This is the way in which the followers of Mussolini called themselves in order to describe their positive uniqueness. It comes from the word *fascis* [in Latin], they are the ones who sing the songs of whipping and they were the axe of the execution, the symbols of the authority and ruling, of the men in ancient Rome. In any event, the aspirations of the Fascists to govern, even beyond Italy, did not make them anti-Jewish in the beginning, not haters of Israel. Only when Mussolini joined Hitler the troubles began for the Jews in Italy, and even so not to the extent of total extermination as in Eastern Europe.

have broken the resistance [journey of occupation] of the Germans, they have destroyed the bridge from Austria to Italy. And the Italians gladly come as war prisoners. Miracles and wonders! And the Russian front, so many miracles and wonders. Who would have thought that the “comrades” would have the power not only to resist [fight back], but also to push the enemies off and destroy them. From there we also have wonderful news: the Russians are moving forward, and the enemy, backwards! Miracles and wonders! The head of the Amalek has been found to be the fullest of deceit and empty bragging of the leaders of all nations! Two years ago, he had promised that the remains of the Russian army would be destroyed soon, and that the Bolsheviks would not raise their head again! Then he had bragged, that if the German army succeeded and passed such a long distance²²⁷, then it would also pass the ten, twelve kilometers which would be left to Leningrad. Regarding Stalingrad, he had bragged that he already had occupied the city, and the part which had not been conquered yet is not honorable and is of no interest to him. Loud and grand statement he had made that the German army does not surrender and does not know capitulation, that it does not wither from conquered positions and so on and so forth. And he had told so many lies, and now there has been silence! The fourth anniversary since the war began has passed, the day of the beginning of the winter had passed as well, events which were supposed to open his mouth so he could greet his people with a speech, superficial and babbling as always. But now there is silence and not a word on his tongue! Now he does not speak, “like the dog of Yurka”!²²⁸ Apparently his friends do not advise him to speak anymore. “The front will talk!” He promised, the summer will come, and we will strike once more; “we will beat the English in any place we meet them”. Such great lies had come out of his mouth. Such great lies which came back to strike his face, and which bring him so much distress. I believe he hit his head to the wall more than once. Vare! Vare! Legiones redde?²²⁹ An historic call that surely frightens him and gives him a lot of sleepless nights! I wish that the tortures of his heart and soul grow bigger and bigger. Decisive victories he only had in the Jewish front. There his prophecy has almost fulfilled itself, as he himself had decided and he himself executed, as long as he still had power and authority. But there also, his prophecy has almost fulfilled, and not entirely. This fake prophet had thought that all the nations would thank him as he had opened their eyes of the source to all evils – the Jewish race, and for exterminating it. However, he has not succeeded exterminating all the Jews in Europe. There are still some who has remained, some who will revenge the blood of their brothers who had been killed for no reason at all – and the gentiles, surely they are satisfied of the solution of the Jewish issue, which has been something sickening for them – but publicly they have not attached themselves to the murderer and have not thank him. Even more so, his killings even regarding to the Jews are excuses²³⁰ for the aerial attacks which had caused so much casualties among the elderly, the women and the children. They cannot complain about the barbarity and the evilness of the “Allies”, if their own evilness has no limits, they who smashed the heads of the Jewish children into the woods with the help of the Partisans [the Lithuanian murderers] in Telsiai and many other places. If our situation has been more secure, more courageous, if we had not received such bad news from the ghetto in Vilnius²³¹, if the danger of death has not been upon our heads in any given moment, then we would have surely been happy and content, as we see the revenge: the defeats in Russia and Africa; the aerial attacks, the defeats in Sicily, all of these fill our hearts with joy and encourage us with good hopes that in Western Europe

²²⁷ From the Prussian border of Germany until the surroundings of Leningrad (=Sankt Petersburg), the distance is about 750 km.

²²⁸ A colorful saying in Yiddish, which describes the silence of a dog beaten by his owner, Yurka, the violent: “shveygt vi iurkem hunt”

²²⁹ The author refers to the famous react of the Emperor Augustus, when he heard that the three legions under Publius Quinctilius were murdered, and he said: “Vare, bring me back [in a more reserved way the author: where] my legions” [Suetonius, the life of Augustus 23], Vare, Legiones redde.

²³⁰ Indeed, one of the illusions which were believed by the inhabitants of the ghetto.

²³¹ News arrived into the ghetto in Shavli about a massive execution of the Jews in Vilnius who were working in the peat mines, a thing which brought yet again the fear into Shavli. And indeed, after less than a month, the inhabitants of the ghetto in Shavli learned, that the all the inhabitants of the ghetto in Vilnius were exterminated.

their defeat would be complete and that there they would find their graves. At last, the second front has opened! At last, we can finally see a light which will light our darkness and will show us a new path in these miserable lives we live now. Let us hope! Let us hope!

September 9. Such news! Such news! They are opening new horizons and filling the hearts with pleasant hopes. Italy has surrendered. Italy has fallen! The weapons and the marines are being transferred to the Allies: to England and America. The latter can use now the aerial fleet and the navy fleet in the Mediterranean Sea and their army for other projects and other fronts, surely Hungary would leave the battlefield as well. The Balkan Peninsula, Yugoslavia, and then all the nations in Europe would shake the Germans and all would be over. The “salvation” is near now. We can hope to be free until the civil New Year, that we would no longer be the inhabitants of a ghetto. Who could describe the joy? Who would get to see the salvation without losing their mind? Let us hope! Let us wait!

September 11. The Germans throw sulfur and salt on the traitors! And they captured some important points in Italy. So wonderful. Their heroism, their pride, their stubbornness has no limits. They always manage delaying it all. Even now they have succeeded, at least for a while, to delay the hope of the Allies that Italy was in their hands. They have promised they have fixed the weak points and sealed all the holes. We still hope that soon they would fall. But they have succeeded delaying the complete victory, for a period longer or shorter, too bad!

The bad food, the bread which is filled with straws and thatch, the lack of nourishing foods which could be digested, the density, the filth, the moral tortures, the constant fears, the various decrees, the war against the bedbugs, the cockroaches and the flies and so on, all had a very bad effect upon the health condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto. The number of people with pulmonary diseases has increased, the number of people with tuberculosis as well, the number of young men and women with rising fever at night, is large, and basic anatomic needs are lacking! It might be “latent” tuberculosis, hidden, or it may be an unbalanced vegetative system. The fever is rising due to an infection in the body. Additionally, the hard labor affects the young generation, with their physical development being tortured and depressed. I myself has been very sick lately; my old disease; my abdomen and intestines disease are at its peak, and my condition is dangerous. And the will to live is so strong now! Now, in such an historical time full of events. Such a great aspiration to see the outcome of “the battle of the Nephilim”, the battle of the giants, which has killed more than one third of our nation. We want to live, to see the revenge, and to propel ourselves into a new life. despite of the Germans heroism and their talent to greet the disasters coming their way, we are waiting now for their final defeat.

The Russian has played out well for our cause. They are backing off the entire front and especially in the southern part: the whole Donetsk district, the coal lands, Mariupol²³² is taken, and soon the Crimea Peninsula would be in danger. They state that they would back off up to the Dnieper River and there they would entrench themselves in, and in the north they would come up to Lithuania, and then we would all be in great danger. They would destroy us completely with their fury.

Hitler finally gave a speech yesterday. His speech was unlike the ones before, it was very short, about fifteen minutes. His previous speeches had lasted at least two hours, and now, in an unusual change of style, he did not shout, he was not hysterical, and the malicious tone was gone, and no mentioning of the Jews. He was mourning and moaning [Isaiah 29, 2] about the treason of the Italians and put his hopes in God. I wish that his speech would have the same amount of truth in it as the ones before.

²³² A city on the coast of the Sea of Azov. The port used to be a point of departure for the mines industries in the Donetsk region which is rich in coal and adjacent products.

September 18. I have restrained myself from writing: I have been waiting for decisive events after the capitulation of Italy. Those events have not come yet; and I have decided to wait until I could write about a real change in our situation. But there are certain events, even if not decisive, which are very important to us and they are required to be written. First, Mussolini has been released! The German initiatives, their courage and their determination are indeed wondrous. A division of heroes came with airplanes into the prison house in which Mussolini had been held in the mountains of Italy, they have frightened the Italian, who are cowards and traitors, the ones who guarded him and who were obligated to kill him in the case he attempted to escape; and this division of heroes succeeded to remove him from there and took him into a safe place. This plot costed them a great deal and grave danger, and the Germans are bragging about it, as if they have achieved a one of kind victory, and the Allies, who intended to move Mussolini to America with commotion and tumult and to throw a public celebration for propaganda and show off²³³, their hopes have been shattered and bitter disappointment has been their share. They say that the radio in England found some comfort and stated: “The Germans receive Mussolini and we received the Italian fleet.” Because the English indeed have received more than one hundred “units” of the Italian fleet. And Mussolini is unruly and bragging as he announces and commands, that their value would surely be like the one of the “Kikayon DeYona”. Because the Germans would not rule Italy forever and they would not be able to protect the fake ruler, the governor without people to govern. The second event was more important; its outcome could have been horrible for the American Fifth Division. This division had not assessed the forces of the Germans who had entrenched themselves in Salerno²³⁴ properly, and when they attempted conquering the beach they fell into an ambush which almost killed them all. The Germans started bragging that the Fifth Division had been entirely killed, that they had resisted the attack, and that there was no hope for it anymore, as the Eight English Division, the only one who was able to save the Americans, was at a distance of two hundred kilometers. And suddenly a wonderful miracle happened, and the division belonging to Montgomery found a way through the mountains and came into the aid of the Americans in time and the defeat of the Germans has been complete: they were attacked from both the sea and the land and retreated to the north of Italy, where their main forces were located, and there the final and decisive battle would take place, the one deciding who are the winners and the losers.

And the Russian front is also encouraging and brings good hopes into the hearts. The Russians surprise us with their exceptional attacks and their outstanding efforts. They are moving forward and the Germans – as they are surrounded and in a turmoil – are retreating. The Russian have excellent talent to learn and study their enemies. Since Peter the Great²³⁵ who had swallowed the words of his teachers: the Swedish generals, the war prisoners from whom, as he had told, he had learned the strategy theory, the war tactics. And now, they have learned all the German tactics and they have been using them against them. They are making efforts to succeed and achieve honorable outcomes by the time of the rainy season, until the autumn which is coming closer and will turn the battlefield to a swamp. And Greece has also been saved. These events are indeed very important and who could tell what would they bring upon us?

And the Jewish front, the front in which the Germans have had their most important victories, the front of which lately there have been no significant developments – this front was shaken yesterday and today down to its foundation, and all the fears have renewed. The inhabitants of the ghetto are embarrassed and helpless. Yesterday [17.XI.43] a German major²³⁶ appeared and announced himself to be the new commandant of the ghetto, and that from now on he will be the ruler of all the matters pertaining to it. Among other things he announced that there

²³³ All this the author learned from the Lithuanian and the German press. In order to glorify the achievements of the German, their press and the ones which were controlled by them exaggerated with the demonstration's plans, in which Mussolini was about to participate.

²³⁴ Salerno, the city and the bay on which it sits on, bear the same name. About 50 km south of Naples.

²³⁵ Born in 1672, was a king in 1689-1725.

²³⁶ This is the Hauptsturmführer Forster, the infamous one.

will be significant changes in the ghetto. This announcement bothered the population very much; we have all felt that if changes are about to come, they would surely bring us disadvantages and not advantages. And today the same commandant appeared and said that the changes had been dictated from “above”: first, there will only be five places left for the Jews to work in, one more or one less, and the work of individuals in town will be cancelled. This order will also affect me, and I too will be one of its victims, because my work in the polyclinic will be cancelled as well. What a disaster! My trouble is one that I could not have foreseen until now. The possibility to receive provisions and to more or less make money will be gone with no hopes for the future, that until the salvation comes – but what can I say about that, as I am an old man and my strength is leaving me, and if no one saves us soon, I would not be rewarded to see our salvation – the unique section of this order is the “kesarketin” that is to say living in the barracks! The work places will be tents camps, surrounded with stinging barbed wires and the workers will live there with their families: one hundred men in every tent, upon shelves, two or three [benches one upon the other]. The embarrassment of the inhabitants of the ghetto as they were hearing this was enormous, much like the one “at the time of the transfer to the prayer houses” which had been the pathway to the death valleys [in the end of 1941]. And so now, the imagination has been running wild, and most of the ghetto inhabitants’ ghetto have decided that the meaning of the commandant was to divide us into little groups and to kill all of those who would not die first from the degeneration and the exhaustion in the camps. Surely, the commandant has said that for now there is no need to worry about the “shootings” and the extermination. Considering this order all the ghetto inhabitants are walking as shadows, dark and trembling. The faces of the people have literally darkened, their statures have dropped, and a horrible despair has attacked us all. The villains are no longer satisfied with the calamities they had caused, and they are always trying to outsmart us, and finding new ways to embitter our lives worse and worse. As this order is a useless one: we have become Canaanite slaves and cursed servants. Without any resistance and public protest, we are doing anything they tell us to do, and we do not withdraw our hands from the hard labor which is a death trap that has killed several among us.

September 21. A little relief. The commandant has given his temporary permission for several workshops to remain in town. Surely the permissions are for workers who are directly related to the German army, but since several workshops have been given the permission, one could assume that he has power of decision, and that he could bring certain reliefs. Therefore, one could hope that he might be willing to discuss various details, and maybe be persuaded to certain concessions. For now, they say he never would, currently, he is not withdrawing the order to move into the aerodrome²³⁷ five hundred souls, and to house them in tents made of nothing but thin fabric with no stoves. He has demanded that this camp will be ready in five days despite the manager of the aerodrome’s manager assertion that the tents have no more room in them. And as far as the fate of the “lab technicians”, the physicians working in various medical institutes in town, here Dr. Jasaitis had already talked to the commandant and he expects an answer in the fifth hour of the afternoon today, but the results are doubtful: I myself have already given up: Dr. Wolfert and Dr. Fineberg have the advantage: the heads, the managers of the institutes and I have no “chief” [“head”] suitable and honorable. I am giving up. I will probably remain in the ghetto and fill the position of the head of ambulatory. Maybe even my medical condition would get better, as the roentgen poisoned my blood.

September 24. 387 people left for the aerodrome yesterday. Their faces white as whitewash, their eyes filled with tears, sorrow and moaning, crying out loud and in silence, their despair was tremendous, and the fear of death has been always there. Some fainted, some almost lost their minds, and some escaped and hid in the farms nearby! A regiment of armed Germans stood on the peak [of the hill] before the ghetto and frightened

²³⁷ To the aerodrome in Zokniai, near Shavli.

everyone who thought of going out through the gates of the ghetto. There was no choice and the “suggested”²³⁸ were on their way. And today, today they tell us that the housing, the provisions, the work and the attitude [in the work camp of the aerodrome] are very comfortable. And many think that the state of matter here would be similar to the ones in Latvia²³⁹, that is to say that those whose lines are fallen unto them in pleasant places (!) [according to Psalms 16, 6] would be envied, as they are working under the supervision of the Germans who treat the workers more gentle than the tyrant citizens. And as far of the physicians working in town, who are called “lab technicians” – matters are very tiring. Dr. Jasaitis spoke forcefully with the commandant and asked him to allow us to continue our work in town, and he has had some success. And our representatives, who also had a meeting with the commandant, told us that the commandant has agreed to give us a temporary permission until physicians will be needed to work in the new camps. There was no limit to our joy! Because it is very important these days to stay in town for the most part of the day as opposed to the ghetto, which is filled with unexpected incidents. The work in town is extremely valuable right now as a shelter from going out to the various camps or joining the lines of the wonderers, whose fate is still unknown; and finally the link to town is important as well, as this link provides us with salaries and provisions, as gifts from the patients or by shopping. To make the long story short, our happiness has been endless indeed. And suddenly, our joy was over [darkened, according to Isaiah 24, 11]! They have assumed that a temporary permission meant until the end of the month! In a few days we will not be allowed to go into town, and we have been happy for nothing! However, when I wanted to thank Jasaitis for his statements and his efforts, he acted very surprised and did not want to shake my hand, as the commandant had not told him about the permission and had not given him a clear answer. And when he heard the good news we heard from the representatives, he was very satisfied and happy himself. But his disappointment from the “addition”, the explanation of the temporary permission would also be great. Maybe this information would harm us, as Jasaitis would no longer try to talk for us, but according to the current state of matters, he should be doing more talking. It is worth noting that several priests came to Jasaitis and asked him to talk on behalf of the Jews and wished him good luck; they also say that they threw “holy water” on him when he left for the commandant office. Today, the commandant was expected to come into my roentgen clinic in order to examine his abdomen, as there is a suspicion that he has peptic ulcer “of the twelve fingers”. I and Dr. Pesachovich waited for him an hour and he did not come. We were [later] told that he went to Kursenai²⁴⁰ and he will surely come tomorrow.

The eve of Rosh Hashana 5704. Horrible days! And not from the fear of God! Terror and fear have been brought upon all the inhabitants of the ghetto because of the commandant. “As poisoned rats” we are running around in the ghetto, helpless and ashamed. The “camps” and the fate of those who remained in the ghetto have brought terrible despair on all of us. The commandant ordered to send people and their families to five different camps: Linkaiciai, the aerodrome [the airport], Pointsiai, Daugialiai and Anyksciai, and he also increased the number of people working in the Frenkel and BATAS factories. To some extent there is a choice: one can choose the place of work. But the obvious question arises: what camp to choose? What is the nature of the work in one camp or another? How would nutrition be? How would the supervision be? The following questions are especially irritating and frightening: who would face the most danger: the inhabitants staying in the ghetto or the ones going to the camps? Most of the inhabitants tend to believe that the camps provide a better shield against any attempts

²³⁸ The author translated from the Yiddish which was spoken in the ghetto: “Verbirthe”, the ones whose names were on the list of the workers, that is to say the signed list.

²³⁹ The author talks about what he has learned about the end of the ghetto in Vilnius, of which portion of its inhabitants were removed to work in Latvia (in the last days many cargo carriages passed through the rail station in Shavli filled with workers from the ghetto in Vilnius) and they thought their fate might be better than the one of those who had remained.

²⁴⁰ Kursean, in the mouths of the Jews. There was a Jewish community in Kursean before the Holocaust, about one thousand souls. Most of them were killed in Zagare with the rest of the Jews from the northern part of Lithuania, at the end of September 1941.

of pogroms. In the ghetto, many invalids and children remain, with their fates remaining questionable, they are more fitted [expected for] extermination. And on the other hand, “living in the kesarketin” “barracks “, and the imprisonment in the ghetto and the strict ban to go into town – they all came to us at a time that the front is getting closer and closer to us. The commandant [Hauptsturmführer Forster], the one who will forever be named: the Dachau Executioner, told Dr. Pesachovich as clearly as possible: “there is an order from “above” to remove all of the Jews from this town, as surely you are not our allies”. “In a clean language” this means that the Jews are the enemies of the Germans and they are suspected of espionage and incitement, especially with the front being so close, and so “let us outsmart him”. For now, the commandant has promised that no harm would be done and that he is forced to follow the order of his superiors. But the problem is that he is following the order with great strictness hundred percent. One could assume, that if he would receive an order to exterminate us, he would not hesitate, and would not have doubt to follow the orders given to him. And if the main reason for the order was the front and the suspicion(s) coming along with it, then maybe those who are outside the ghetto, in the surrounding villages, will be hit first, before those who live in the ghetto, who would be closely supervised.

It is interesting to note that many of the furious ones have escaped from the ghetto and have been hiding in houses of acquaintances among the farmers. This detail is true mainly for the refugees from Telsiai. They already have the necessary experience with this kind of behavior. When they had left Telsiai, they too had been hiding in the farm houses. Now they want to go back. The policemen of the ghetto keep an eye on them. Escaping may cause additional and bigger troubles as it rises suspicions, because it decreases the number of workers and causes confusion and commotion in the ghetto.

Yesterday the commandant himself came into my roentgen clinic, after being invited by Dr. Pesachovich which is the head physician. We both examined him, but my position was the inferior one, one purpose. Since Dr. Pesachovich is in fact the one who is treating him – after we all talked for a while I left the room. Among all other things he told me the things about the front which I wrote above. Before he left he said: “Thank you!” for my work without shaking my hand as the fool P. did not introduced us. The impression which was left by him is not a special one: a thin German, slightly hunched, with normal face, not unattractive, not rough, shows that its owner is not a fool, “we are not thieves” he said.

Apparently tomorrow will be the last day in which we can go into town! The managers of the polyclinic were very outraged because I will be banned from continuing my job. For now, there is no one to take my place. An experienced radiologist which also knows how to examine the abdomen. Also, my work has been cheap to them. I work just like a Canaanite slave for 4 marks and 40 Pfennig per day, which are being transferred into the accounts of the German “work police”. To make the long story short, the ban for me to continue my work will bring financial damages to them, by the fact that the work will be stopped and by the necessity to pay a decent salary for a Lithuanian substitute, when they find one. Therefore, they have decided to submit a request to the commandant so I would be allowed to continue my work. I am sure I would see no favorable outcome here. The “dental clinic” had also submitted such a request, and he did not pay any attention to it, and did not accept it.

The second day of Rosh Hashana. A secular day for our oppressors, a working day, and I am locked in the ghetto: the ban to go into town was published yesterday, and all of those who have not been sent to the camps, and who do not work in the Frenkel and BATAS factories, have been left in the ghetto like rats in a cage. What would be the fate of the elderly, the ill and the children? Yesterday and today they sent the last groups to the whitewash mines in Anyksciai. Piles of items are lined up in the streets: pillows, blankets, underwear and clothes. The furniture of course, the kitchen tools and the heavier properties have been left in the abandoned houses, and the ones moving in from the Caucasus region which is about to close, have come and grabbed it. How much from the assets of the Jews who remained has been wasted! This is our part for all the troubles we had endured in order to bring our belongings into the ghetto, and now most of them are going down the drain. And what trouble could we expect to see here from now on. “A general pot” for all the inhabitants: ill and healthy; the stop of

transportation [connection] between the ghetto and the town, which also means the stop of many provisions from the side. We are facing hunger and poverty pertaining to all basic needs. And those who are not qualified for work, and the children, what would become of them? The ones leaving the ghetto do not know what is waiting for them, and the ones who stay, even more are not aware of their future – and so it is impossible to describe the mental state of the ghetto inhabitants now. Dark faces “as black as the night” bearing the stamp of horrified internal experiences, in the eyes you can actually see the fear of death, the infinite embarrassment and despair. Those are not poetic phrases and I do not exaggerate! My pen is weak, and it lacks the talent to describe our horrible feelings. My head is spinning around, my ideas are ashamed, my strengths are leaving me due to my old disease which is torturing me so much. And I am writing according to my abilities now, as I cannot restrain my desire to leave a memory, even if it is an unclear one, according to our present experiences. There is still a spark of hope inside, that maybe we would see the end and salvation, and then the joy in our hearts would grow as we would remember the days of our poverty and our humiliations, and everything we had gone through, as there is no other nation like us, which had endured so much without falling and losing all hope; and when we would read the gloomy pages our heart would flourish and would be amazed by the one single gentile, whose several remains and refugees carried in silence and paralyzed the sigh of trouble and tortures which had found them. But when does the salvation come? Surely the political news tell us that the end of the war is near: the retreat from the Russian front, the fact that the latter are taking over some important points: Poltava²⁴¹, Chernigov²⁴², Smolensk²⁴³ and more, the revolution in Yugoslavia which is a success, the commotion in Italy where the English and the Americans concentrate and surely there the Germans would suffer a decisive defeat. All of those are the signs of the beginning of salvation. But when would the end of salvation come? The Germans are retreating as they want to protect their army, which would be concentrated inside the borders of their country, and then they would defend their country with all of their strength and perhaps, in a time of surrendering, which would come in the end, they would receive better conditions. And in town the roentgen clinic is closed today, a fact which is whipping the pockets of the participants of the polyclinic and disarranges their work, and is annoying them as they are incapable in their seemingly independent country to do anything to spite the Germans wishes, and especially that the matter involves the Jews. Jasaitis himself promised me that he would go to the commandant and ask him for a permission so I would be escorted by gunmen to the polyclinic, all on the expenses of the polyclinic. I am sure that all the questions and all of the requests would find one single answer regarding the suspicion of espionage and sabotage and that would be it. I think that Jasaitis would send Bazaras [his deputy] again. It is interesting that the commandant had told Bazaras in his first interview about me: “I know him, well, well!” Surely both of us: Pesachovich and I had examined him – maybe this would benefit me somehow. Let us see how things would develop. Surely, I can tell you it is a “scandal” that the fool P. did not introduced me to the commandant when he was in my roentgen clinic.

A definitive answer: the commandant ordered that no Jewish physician goes into town: “Finita la comedia!”²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Poltava, a district and industrial city, about 150 km south-west from Kharkiv and about 300 km east from Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine; an urban location already from the twelfth century. Has a name in the Russian history since Peter the Great defeated here the army of Karl the XII, King of Sweden [more than thirty thousand men], in July 1709. This is a date which was taught in all the schools in Russia, and the author remembers to mention it, in a similar way, as it has the same meaning of a turning point in Russian history.

²⁴² Chernigov, one of the oldest cities in Ukraine. In the year 5408 [1648] the Khmelnytsky bands exterminated the entire Jewish population of the city. A railway crossing and an industrial center. The city is located about 150 km north of Kyiv on an affluent of the Dnieper, Dzisna. Its conquering symbolized the front was getting nearer to the Dnieper River [about 40 km] in a wide deployment.

²⁴³ The conquering of Smolensk not only distanced the front from Moscow, but also began to threaten the supply lines of the Germans for the north region of their front in the beginning of the winter.

²⁴⁴ The tragic end of the opera *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo.

Simchat Torah 5704. After the commandant has forbidden us to go into town to work, I was forced to stay in the ghetto with nothing to do but managing the ambulatory [clinic] of the ghetto. At first, in light of my rest and the fact that I was no longer working around the roentgen machine, which has brought many damages to my health, I felt a little better, but later on, maybe due to my careless nutrition the condition of my intestines and my abdomen got worse, and in the last days I have been in real danger: horrible diarrhea, terrible weakness – after I ate some minced chicken meat, I was attacked by a real cholera: endless diarrhea, tendency to vomit, lack of appetite, sore legs and a terrible weakness. I have fallen ill and I have been in bed as a real sick man for a few days, and so I have not written anything, however the events require me to “write it down”, events which have shaken us up to the depth of our souls, and despite of my weakness and the devastating state of my health due to my life in the ghetto, I cannot be silenced about a few details which should be remembered.

- a) The death of Shzaimetishikis [Gershon]. A young man, 28 years old, honest, but weak and his speculator sisters had been on his case constantly. He had been demanded by them to stay for long hours near the stinging iron wire [“barbed wire fences”] and to buy from the farmers various goods which he had been supposed to bring to his sisters. And so he started to look for various reasons to escape the “hard labor” and he “became ill”. Once he complained about a disease in his stomach, and once about a disease in his bladder – once he had angina, and once a furuncle [festering swelling] and so on and so forth. And in this way he had not been working for many months and the physicians did not find anything to be wrong with him and they thought he was a “simulant” [pretending to be ill]. About two weeks ago he was sent to Anyksciai – to the whitewash mines – along with the last group who left the ghetto and Shzaimetishikis was listed in it. In the night before he was about to leave I was called to his house and found him complaining about a stomachache, I gave him some drugs to relieve his pain and reproached him about not working. On the next day, I was invited by the ghetto police to his place; Dr. Pesachovich was already in his room. He said that he could not find any reason to exempt him from the trip to Anyksciai. I agreed with him. And so the policemen came, my son was among of them, and forced him to dress himself and carried him in to the cargo carriage as the commandant was watching. Of course, that the commandant already had his opinion about this young man which was weak and simulant. The commandant escorted the group to Anyksciai. There he approached the young man who was lying down and asked him: “Are you going to get up?” And the young man answered: “I will not get up!” – After a while the commandant approached him again and asked him: “Are you going to work?” And the young man answered: “I will not work!” Then, without any hesitation, the commandant took the gun out of his pocket and placed it on the young man’s temple and pulled one and two and three [here this remark was introduced later]: ‘The young man had no strong reaction, he did not even get up. And then our commandant and the “Dachau” Executioner began beating him brutally and in the end shot him’. And instead of a young man full of feelings and hopes, was left a corpse, without any signs of life! And the commandant, as if as nothing happened, as if he killed a little flea, turned around from the dead man and continued issuing orders to the people in the camp after “this wonderful tale”. So, this is the value of the life of a young Jewish man now! No justice and no judge! Surely the young man was cheeky – but to shoot him – for what? This death is even more shocking than the hanging of Mezonatzkis, there we allegedly had a conclusion and a decision after a deliberation, and there we apparently saw the preparations and the celebrations! And here “the soul of a young man fled away”, as the chaff that is driven with the wind out of the threshing-floor [Hosea 13, 3]. The commandant, who already had beaten some people, including a young lady for no reason at all, has shown us now his true nature, the characteristics of his superior soul! And this attitude toward the Jews, Feldweibel [a type of a sergeant major], a rude and idiot German, cold and evil, and a hot-headed hater of Israel! Some small security officer who has risen as a “hound dog” and

a spy – some say that during the questioning the commandant ordered to whip the young man twenty times. This does not add or reduces his evilness.

- b) The death of Keselowski. A man, a woman and two daughters had decided to run from the dangers in the ghetto and move their family to Daugialiai – the camp where they work with clay and bricks. As an expert in the speculation businesses [smuggling], he had tried to continue this work of his in the camps as well, and in his free time he had been wondering in the villages near the camp to trade items for food provisions, “alms collection” – a term coined at the ghetto, meaning begging door to door to trade items for provisions with the farmers. Last Sunday, a hunting of the Partisans [the anti-Nazis] who hiding in the woods, was performed and so it was forbidden to leave to camp into the nearby villages. And Keselowski the man accidentally or intentionally left the camp through a gap in the barb wires in order to go into the nearby village. He was shot by the Ukrainian guard and was wounded quite severely in the leg. The wounded fell to the ground and let a scream from pain drawing the attention of the commandant of the camp who was nearby and shot him with a “shot of grace” seemingly to save him from his misery. And this was the manner a man died. A husband to a wife, a father to his daughters who in his life had never been content: in the days before the war he had been wealthy with many assets and extremely cheap. After that he dealt with speculations and deceits²⁴⁵ and finally he has been killed, as a victim of his own desire to hoard and get rich. But as a matter of fact, he found his end as a Jew for a little misdemeanor, and the punishment should have been light as well.
- c) The tale would be very lengthy and detailed if I told about the adventures of those escaping from the ghetto to the camps in light of the rumors told about the dangers about to come onto the heads of those who have remained: leaving their houses in the ghetto which were more or less arranged, throwing out the furniture and the remaining possessions, horrible tortures in the camps: cold and filth on the floor of the drafty tents. Even now we are hearing new rumors about new camps and the cancellation of the camp in Baciunai²⁴⁶. The new camp which is being arranged will remove from the ghetto the remaining people who are qualified for work, and all that will be left in the ghetto are just the elderly, the ill and the children. The fate of those weaklings brings up suspicions and it is frightening.
- d) There is a conference [gathering] in Moscow now of all the Ministers of the Allies, with the main purposes of bringing the end of the war closer and preparing the second front. However, the sluggishness of the English and the Americans has no limits. For three months they are trampling the lands of Italy and there are no limits to the preparations of their camps. Perhaps now they would start moving quicker. In Germany there was also a conference of all the ones managing the war. They say that this conference took place considering the serious condition of the German army in the Eastern front. Between Kremenchuk²⁴⁷ and Dnipropetrovsk²⁴⁸ the Russians have breached a large and deep hole in the German front and they have surrounded an entire camp, to the extent of which, if they would not be able to find a way out of the siege, their defeat in Stalingrad would be just a pale shadow of a disaster compared to the new one here. Perhaps soon – soon in our days we would receive decisive news. The endurance is gone and there is no more strength to wait anymore!

²⁴⁵ See footnote 33.

²⁴⁶ East of the Rekyva Lake [Rekyvos ezeros], 12 km south of Shavli.

²⁴⁷ Kremenchuk: a city on both sides of the Dnieper River, with a port on the river, about 270 km south-east from Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine.

²⁴⁸ Dnipropetrovsk, this is the name of Ekaterinoslav (= the glory of Queen Ekaterina, founded in 1786) since the Bolshevik revolution; a large city and a port to the Dnieper River. A big hydroelectric plant was founded near the city in the 1930s', which drove a very large industry. The distance between it and Kremenchuk up by the river is about 150 km. the Germans need to think quickly about a new arrangement for the upcoming winter.

**November eight. A revenge such as this, the blood revenge of a little boy,
even the Satan had not created.**

Death silence came upon the ghetto: there is no one on the streets, but from all directions you can hear mourning and sorrow; terror and despair, the bereavement and death have spread its black wings upon all the inhabitants and as birds of prey, have pried open our chests and torn our hearts out. Rachel is crying for her boys, mothers weep and sob in tears for the children who have been forcedly taken from them and they are no more. Has anything like this ever been heard of? Was it real? All the babies up to thirteen years of age have been kidnapped from the arms of their fathers and loaded as lifeless objects in cargo carriers, which had been ready for them, and when the carriages were full, the load was taken into the train station. The heart is shredded into pieces. The source of all tears is dry. Strangled howling has been left hanging in the air, and we have no strength to live and to suffer anymore – there is no more interest in life. If our haters and tormentors did such a thing to us – they took our children. Surely we are also sentenced to death soon. Living people should not be treated like this. Only if we are destined for death they should not consider us and the impressions they leave in our hearts. If they would have intended to leave us alive, then they would have not poisoned all our beings and would have not embitter our lives in such a horrific manner which will never be forgotten. They took our fine and clever children and removed them from the ghetto – and where to? The blood coagulates in the veins and the hair on the head bristles. Oh, what have we have! Oh, what have we have! The eyes are swollen with tears and the nerves have been paralyzed. We are considered as dead people in their eyes, and they can torture us as they like. Yes! This is the end! The final chapter! The mouth of oblivion has been opened and it is awaiting to swallow us. My work which I have worked on as I have been sitting like a prisoner in the ghetto, on my memories and all my lists, all are meaningless and have gone down the drain. Soon, soon – and these places will forget us! They still need our work, and so they still leave us alive for a while. The front is getting closer, and if they would be obligated to retreat – they would surely kill us. We should have all died, in the bitter and dark day – November 5! So many fears engulfed upon us in that day!

a) Pogroms. The Ukrainians who are accustomed with pogroms burst into the houses, shattered all the windows and the mirrors, the houseware and the bottles, tore up the suitcases, smashed boxes with their feet, caused an unbelievable disaster. The reasons: to institute fear, their love to harm the Jews and searches to find gold and precious stones, watches and chains and rings and so on and so forth.

b) Violence and robbery: they caused a disaster, instituted fear, beaten people, promised falsely to save, and they received all the jewelry, the money and the valuable items by robbing them violently and they were also given to them by those who hoped to redeem themselves and their sons. And this murderers were only sent by the Germans and only did what they were told to do – they could not do anything by themselves, but to deceive all of their victims, as if they have the power to keep alive those who are intended “to go to die”.

c) The bitter of death – so many fears. They sent us from our homes and from the ambulatory in the direction of the gates [of the ghetto – the cage]. And we were sure they would hand us to those who intending to finish us soon. Twice we were sent from the ambulatory and we came back. And in the third time they sent us to the mountain [hill] near the gate. The whole population of the ghetto was on the slope. We stood there waiting and we did not know what for. We were hoping they would select, between the capable to work and the invalid, that they would choose the active and leave the weak, but we were wrong. After a long time, they told us that in an hour we will be able to go home. We waited! And suddenly many military men arrived, all Ukrainians – and they surrounded all the crowd down the slope. We thought that they would begin a mass shooting of all of us, but again we were wrong. They sent us home. We went to our homes, the homes which had been robbed from our savings and loved possessions, we were poor, so very poor, and there are no words to describe the disaster in the houses! Broken dishes, broken glass, parts of mirrors, tables and chairs upside down, leftovers of food – a mess

and a disaster – and the little children, we did not find them. They were removed along with our souls and our hearts, and we were left as lifeless corps, defeated.

d) And Dr. Rosovsky, the oldest of us all [the physicians] which had been caught in the pits [the tricks, according to Lamentations 4, 20] of the Germans, is a matter by itself. A very short and thin man, ill and weak as he always was, and now, after an illness lasting for two weeks, his face was thin, and he looked like a sick old man. And when they sent us from the ambulatory for the second time, after the first time by the Ukrainians, the Germans took us back seemingly to work in the ambulatory, and by the opening where the Germans stood they saw Dr. Rosovsky who drew their attention, with his bad face and short stature, and one of them ordered him to come, and along with him they also caught the father of the physician Pn-Gtz., and they were both led into the car [truck]. There some people tried talking to the commandant telling him that Dr. Rosovsky is one of the nicer ones. And the commandant answered with evilness and deceit and cynicism: “If he is a good and beautiful physician, then we need him for the children!” I immediately announced I was a physician too, but no one listened to me.

Who was Dr. Rosovsky? A man honest as an angel, of those they say that “they would not touch a fly on the wall”, with rare and respectable moral status, with a deep national feeling, gentle and pleasant, and no one could be angry with Dr. Rosovsky – he was likeable by everyone who met him.

He read many books, especially fine literature, he was a knowledgeable of the Russian literature, was talented and wrote poetry, beautiful songs, sometimes excellent in the Russian language and in Yiddish. Among other thing he translated a few fables by Krylov²⁴⁹ into Yiddish with very much success. He also read Hebrew, not just a little, although he would not write in this language. He had knowledge of the beautiful world literature to a great extent. In light of his devotion to fine literature and his lack of time for medical literature, he did not have many advantages as a physician, but he was an experienced physician, careful with the health of his patients, and knowing his responsibilities, devoted with his heart and soul to his patients and he was afraid, always afraid (one of his shortcomings was the lack of courage, lack of trust in his own strength, the lack of knowledge in the new medicine).

The most prominent matter he was good at, was the musical talent. He came from a musical family: the son of Rosovsky’s brother, the public servant in Riga [the capital of Latvia], had very emotional musical talent and a phenomenal musical memory. Many times, we would hear a song in the radio and then stop and ask, who wrote the song. And in most of the time he knew the answer. Yes! He was a good friend, a trusted friend, honest, intelligent, and musical – and he is gone. How much time is it until my time comes, until I see you again? So thirsty for knowledge you always were! You always wanted to learn about all the events! The days of revenge and completion are almost here, and we will not get to see the end! The one who waits, will see the happy days, and we are sentenced to death! We will not live long! “The executioner of Dachau²⁵⁰” will bring our end to us. And my writings, what would be of them? Along with the rest of the pages of my books, they would be used to wrap salty snacks and peppers. Soon, the wick of my life would be over, and I would not even have time to write half of my memories. Our son is trying to escape. If he succeeds to escape and save himself²⁵¹, I would go down under more peacefully.

November 12. The Haman of our time gave a big speech in the famous basement in Munich, in the ninth day of this month, for the twenty years anniversary since the foundation of the Nazi party. So much spirited

²⁴⁹ Krylov, Ivan Andreyevich (1768-1844) was famous for his fables about the weaknesses of man and for the social criticism which he expressed with the help of his characters the animals, the birds and the reptiles.

²⁵⁰ Dachau, the concentration camp, the infamous KZ Dachau in the west surroundings of Munich, the capital of Bavaria.

²⁵¹ Indeed, the only son of the author, David (Tedik) Pick of blessed memory, was saved [he succeeded to escape from the ghetto which was torn apart] and together with his wife, Chaya nee Nodel, may she live long, were among the ones who founded the Netzer Sereni Kibbutz.

bravery! So many hopes for the future! So much pride and trust in the forces of the Germans! Does he really believe he could win after all his defeats? Was he saying what he said in order to encourage the spirit of his people? In any event, his proud and confident speech shakes us to the depth of our souls and all his statements are like swords. There is no sign of fear, despair and hesitation. Everything is clear, with no doubts and full of confidence! He even allowed himself to joke!

Along with Dr. Rosovsky they have also taken the wise man, the researcher of the Jewish law, Rabbi Rubinstein. Apart from his wisdom and his wide knowledge of the Talmud and rabbinic literature, which he shared in the many books he wrote, he was an outstanding man with his pleasant disposition and excellent characteristics. Such royalty poured out of his entire being and his face was illuminated with wisdom and understanding. Our neighbor Loria, a man who still had vitality, except from the bump in his back, has been taken along with his ill wife. He was a gifted man with a good mind and with certain knowledge. And Hunna Rudnick who had a movement disorder, he had finished the gymnasium though, and they say he wrote beautiful songs in Hebrew – about two hundred people, old, ill and invalids have been taken – and children, they have taken even more, six hundred. Among them the child of our tenant – “Mikele” [Meir, diminutive and with fondness] – an excellent child, smart and he had musical talent. So many tears we shed for his absence from our house. Even now I imagine and think about this little boy, three years old, who went cold without a coat, his bones floated from the cold, his little black eyes filled with amazement and fear, and he, the smart one, went with the Ukrainian to the car [truck]. My wife, like the rest of the gullible people, had thought that she would redeem herself and the child with a bribe and she gave them “everything we had of value before”, all of our fortune, of which I was proud of and which I had hopes of using, when we would leave for the land of our fathers after the war. The fortune has been lost, the hope had died, and our lives are hanging before our eyes each day.

There is no way to describe the commotion and the panic ruling over the ghetto. Each one of us only thinks about a safe place to run into from the ghetto. All of the has population concluded, that if they have allowed themselves to do something like that, then surely we are considered as dead men to them, and the hatred of death and the revenge feelings of all the fathers from whom they have taken their children, would go down to the grave with us, and about the souls of the witnesses of all of this terror, an entire book of sorrow and mourning could be written.

21.XI [43]. There is no more will to live and suffer. If from the day of the commandants’²⁵² government our conditions have turned to the worse, then, from the day in which they took our children and our elderly, every day is more cursed than the one before, and our lives are hanging before of our eyes. Who would describe the mental condition of the inhabitants of the ghetto, when bereavement and sorrow came upon them, and the terror of death is always constant before them. The attempt of Dr. W-T to escape from the ghetto with his ugly wife became a tragicomedy: two days they hid in a bed, two days in a basement and one day in the attic of a barn, and the people who had promised to come and take them, did not come. All the Christians, once trusted friends, are an unreliable support now. And the attempt of Dr. L-Z to escape from the ghetto became a tragedy: he and his family are in prison now and who knows when they would be released: the fury of the commandant is so enormous because he was not told that a respectable physician in the hospital is missing. Who knows what the results of such fact would be?

And a gloom and unfortunate job has fallen on my shoulders. As the manager of the ambulatory at the ghetto I am obligated to issue sick days for the workers who are not able to work. All the inhabitants of the ghetto are tired and weak, tortured and depressed – the skin diseases, furunculosis [festering infection of the skin], the

²⁵² In the beginning of the month of September 1943 the Jews in Shavli went under the direct ruling of the S.S., as costumed in the concentration camps. According to the structure of the concentration camps, the Jews in Shavli also received a Lagerkommandant; and even the commanders of the secondary camps, the working camps, were called “Commandants” from now on.

stubborn legs injuries are very much common, and half of the inhabitants do not have the strength or will to work. Therefore, an extra amount of strictness is needed when the releases from work are handled, which are followed by many complaints and crying and so much heartache, endless.

And again, changes and amendments which we have not seen coming! In the morning I was complaining about my job to issue “releases” for the workers who must stop working, and in the afternoon, the events took a turn! The new head of the “work police” – the Jew German Frasier²⁵³, who gained the affection of the commandant, and his adviser Burgin have decided to appoint Dr. Borstein to the manager of the ambulatory, a district physician from Klaipeda, also a German Jew. And the important job, which has also consumed a lot of time, has been taken from me – that is also for the best. But on the other hand, I have been appointed as physician in the ghetto hospital. What would I do there? And especially the dwindling number of the patients, the triple barbed wire, which is often cut off, the lunatic one, the fool, and I! And it would be a wonder if the commandant agrees to the new appointment. In his first visit he would ask: What does this old man have to do with the hospital? Yes, I am old! And the danger of [emptying] exile hangs over me. Surely I do not have the face of the poor Rosovsky, but my age is dangerous. As long as I was the manager of the ambulatory, my situation was strong, but now I will be an old physician, useless. That and even more: my wife has the fake position of the woman in charge of cleaning as she cannot clean the floor and similar jobs, and the nurses agreed to do these chores for her. And I, as the manager of the ambulatory, had the possibility to protect her, but what would happen to her now, and she is so ill; her heart is in a dangerous condition, and not just working, even walking, is hard for her. We shall see what else happens! The mental state is very low right now, but the sharp tip of the calamities became a little dull.

There is one more shocking detail we should state. On the day of wraths [according to Zephaniah 1, 15], when they kidnapped our elderly and our children, we asked: where do they lead them. Then the “executioner from Dachau” [Hauptsturmführer Forster] answered: if you really want to know, you could join all the [emptied] exiled. Will you go? (where?) But the fact is that they were gone, forced to go, and we do not know where until now. More than two weeks had passed and there is no news about them yet. This fact is so bothersome! The thoughts going through the imagination are so horrible and terrifying! These men were Katz and Cartoon²⁵⁴. The first, a young man with many talents and wisdom and a well “spoken”, and the second, an honest old man, gifted with a developed social sense and a tendency to public work. Too bad, too bad for those who are lost and not forgotten.

November 27. Three weeks have passed since the horrible day in which they took our elderly, our children and our chronically ill persons! There are no suitable words to describe the condition we are in. Such a bereavement and sorrow in a manner which “thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself”, as this is the reason why several thousand years ago had forbidden to take the chicks in the presence of the chicken. And here, that was exactly what they did, they forcedly took the sons from the arms of the fainting mothers; she was beaten and in the next day she was sent to hard labor! So much cruelty and evilness and cheekiness! There are no words, there are no words to describe the sorrow in our hearts. Since the day we fell into the arms of the commandant we are worthless, and our lives have no meaning! Every day is more cursed than the other, and new events are happening to emphasize the tortures in which we live. Dr. Lonz, who after all the troubles he had been through, has almost lost his mind, tried to escape with his wife and his mother-in-law from the ghetto. But he was informed on and now he is in the prison house. His absence is very much felt in the hospital,

²⁵³ Georg Frasier, a Jew who converted himself into Christianity and even marry a Christian woman. He was awarded with an excellence award in World War I, but was not accepted by the Nazis. He came into Shavli along with the Jewish refugees from Klaipeda in the spring of 1939. The deputy of Forster, as the ghetto commander, Unterscharfuehrer Shalif, was the one who appointed him as the Camp-elderly [Lageraeltester], as in the concentration camps, instead of Mendel Leibovich.

²⁵⁴ Aharon Katz and Berl Cartoon, two of the ghetto representatives.

where he worked as a maternity delivery physician and surgeon. So much troubles he had been through! His beautiful house had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks. So many adventures he had been through for this house, for which he had fought with Dr. Goldberg, and the conflict had been going on for a long time and many trials. The confiscation of his house and properties, his removal from the hospital in the days of the Bolsheviks, and then the general troubles in the days of the Germans, and at last, they took his fine little girl from him – no wonder he has almost lost his mind and has tried to escape. They say that the farmer whose house he found shelter in, had informed on him in order to enjoy the items he had brought – and now he, his wife and his mother-in-law are in the prison house! And who comes next? Next there was the matter of Dr. Fineberg. The “sentinel”, the German supervisor²⁵⁵, the spy who follows the physicians, informed the commandant that he saw Dr. Fineberg talking to a Christian woman when he went to the hospital. They have caught the Christian woman and she has told them that Dr. Fineberg talked to her about butter and eggs. As a matter of fact, he asked her if she could hide him in a time of danger. He thought that she told the police about their entire conversation, and when he was invited into the commandant office, he behaved as a baby or as a clown and he asked Leibovich in front of the commandant: “Should I say the entire truth?” and he asked that question in Russian, and after that he has admitted and has told them about the entire conversation, including the question he had asked her, if she could hide him in a time of danger. The commandant sentenced him to work as a common worker and also to be whipped. He tried to whip himself in the presence of the Jewish policemen and a real tragicomedy had happened. All this matter provides materials for laughter and mockery on the expense of the physicians and the inhabitants of the ghetto amuse themselves as they imitate the behavior of Dr. Fineberg and his attempt to whip himself. Of course, he was whipped in the end.

December 1. Today few prisoners in chains were brought to the ghetto, ones who had tried to escape, including the policeman Raize and his wife. This fact leaves a bad impression. They say that tonight few Jews from the ghetto in Kaunas were transferred through the rail station. Terror and fear and no way out! There is no escape or shelter! And the mental state of ghetto which is silent as death! There are no more voices of children – they are gone and are no more. The fine and clever children! They were taken from us with no return and the mothers, heartbroken, are lonely and sad, with no husbands and no children, killing their bodies with hard work. Yesterday a first group went to a new camp: in the exhibition square²⁵⁶. And what would happen to my wife? She is completely disabled without repair: her heart does not want to work anymore, and that is that! This is a concern which often gives me sleepless nights – I have been also defeated in a way: a permission to go from the ghetto to the hospital and back was given to Dr. Rosenthal and not to me. The commandant does not want to give so many of these permits so Burgin²⁵⁷ has decided to receive such a permit for young Dr. Rosenthal, who, in a time of need, could walk to the hospital much faster than me.

December 10. There are a few details regarding the conditions of our cursed lives which we will never forget, as it is unbelievable, that we, cultured people with moral principles, could have stooped so low, and we have become soul murderers and villains. The decree forbidding giving birth in the ghetto is still valid, and despite of the danger surrounding the entire ghetto for such events, there have been some cases of births in the ghetto, and few normal children have been born, to women who did not want end their pregnancies before their time. The living children, the healthy and the normal, we, the physicians are obligated to put to death (!) in order to

²⁵⁵ According to the concentration camp method, the Germans placed upon the medicine matter, the clinic, the patients’ room, the physicians and the nurses – a S.S. man who turn out to be a tyrant and a torturer even more than the rest of his evil German brothers.

²⁵⁶ Parodos Aikste in the mouths of the Lithuanians; the camp was founded to serve the “Clothing Ministry for the Army”, ArmeeBekleidungsAmt, or A.B.A.

²⁵⁷ Shmuel Burgin, one of the members of the management, was released.

save the entire ghetto from danger of death and loss. We are fulfilling this repulsive and despicable obligation by an injection of lethal and poisonous drugs. The child I was destined to end his life was a phenomenon which I have never seen in medical books: the child lived without food, milk or even water for seven days! And we (I and Dr. Borstein) gave him so many injections of Morphine and Heroine that could kill several grown men, how wonderful is life! Such a rebellion despite the necessity to uproot a flower and killing a child right after he is born! I did not believe that a child who has barely seen the light of day, would be clinging so hard to live! Such an experience is surely not something you read in books, because who would try to starve a child for seven consecutive days, the child laid down sad without food and water for seven days. After an injection of Morphine and Scopolamine, he received an injection of Heroine on the seventh day, and then he died! And that way they have forced us playing the role of the “angel of death”, of murderers, killers. Generally, we have hardened our hearts and became evil toward animals, in a way we did not think we could be. A few days ago, when my son brought to the butcher a live chicken to kill, as we are used to, and the butcher was not in the ghetto, we decided to kill the poor bird ourselves. I put its neck on the threshold of the hallway and my son took an axe and hit in such a quick and decisive manner, that the chicken remained alive and screaming. Fear attacked us! We finished the cruel deed and ended the life of the bird, but it is very hard to forget the twitching of the poor bird after the first strike which had not been a good one. To such cruelty did the conditions of our miserable lives brought us!

The banging tables, “the magic tables” – this magic action captured the whole ghetto and all the inhabitants are deep in the “séances”²⁵⁸. Every evening people sit around tables and start asking the tables for answers for certain questions, to try to speak to the dead, to dig deeper and find sneaks. Many believe the trickery with all their hearts and find comfort in the table’s answers. The tables allegedly provide them with answers regarding the fate of the children who have been taken away, about the end of the war and so on and so forth. The silliness us derived from the need to find comfort in troubled times. “Let the child play with something, so he will not cry”, the Russians say. The autumn is here, the rainy days began, the battlefield became mud and filth, in several places there is already heavy snow – and the battles and the fighting continue at the Russian front, the Russians apparently succeed and move forward, but very slowly, and there are no decisive victories. We hear various rumors about new actions, but the rumors are not based on much, and nothing would happen in the foreseeable future. There was a conference in Cairo, there was an exceptional meeting in Teheran of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill²⁵⁹, but we do not know the outcome yet. We will wait! So much is being promised. Unfortunately, the English and the Americans are still moving with “turtle steps” with their “sleepy” strategies.

The last days in December 1943. And yet again you can hear the crying from the north, from the mines and the whitewash stones in Anyksciai: “Rachel is crying for her sons”. On last Thursday the commandant visited Anyksciai and on Sunday (December 20) the commandant of the mines announced that he had received an order from our commandant to kill all the elderly and the children of which were more than fifty. They say this was a pleasant man and he had treated the workers of the mines with leniency and forgiveness. Dr. Berger, the dentist, who was in Anyksciai on Sunday, told us that she has seen him cry, and seek advice how to behave. Surely he cannot disobey the order considering the death danger, but he decided to limit the number of casualties as much as possible. And so he ordered the Jews to dig graves and the Ukrainians killed eight children and one old woman. No explanation needed!

²⁵⁸ Spiritual meetings.

²⁵⁹ Indeed, in Teheran, the capital of Iran there was such a meeting, first of its kind, from November 28 until December 1, 1943. In this meeting they talked about a coordination between the attacks of the Allies in France and a crushing attack of the Russians. They talked about the participation of Russia in the war against Japan and the establishment – after the war – of an international organization for peace. Although the victory of the Allies was already known, including by the Germans, the Allies did not have the time and initiative to address a public call for Hitler, or even an ultimatum which would draw repercussions, to stop the extermination of the Jews.

December 31, 1943. The last day of a horrible year, when our hearts and souls have been tortured without limits. But from the day we fell in the hands of the commandant and fell out of the District Commissar [Gebietskommissar], our fate has been far worse. We no longer live in the ghetto: our resting place is called a “concentration camp”, most of the old ghetto is connected to several camps: Linkaiciai – arms production; Daugialiai – building blocks; Pvenčiai – sugar factory; Anyksciai – mines, whitewash; A.B.A – clothes for the army; there are also workers in the old leather factory (used to be Frenkel), and the shoes factory “Batas” and in the brushes workshop, and several groups work in other small places. The physicians have been forbidden from working in town; near the gates there are German soldiers. The ones who work in the workshops are also escorted by German soldiers. All the orders and all the decrees are nothing compared to the fact that they took our children and all the ghetto was filled with sorrow and moaning. On the last day of the year we are standing in front of a riddle which is eating us from the inside out: what is the fate of the children they have taken from us? They all say and promised that the children have been brought to Germany. Where? And why? The questions are piercing our minds and we have no rest. This is the way the year is ending without a little spark of hope, of light. Not even the defeat of the Germans and the horrible and terrible ruins of towns do not bring any comfort to us. The end of the war is not near.

January 1 in the year of 1944. We are in a concentration camp under the supervision of the commandant and his servants from the S.S. there is no room in the camp for old and ill people who eat and do nothing – these kinds of people get exterminated. I am old and my wife is ill. Surely I do not wonder, and my wife is registered as the cleaning supervisor in the ambulatory, and still, if we will not see a miracle, we could wait for troubles and tortures this year. However, we are waiting for a miracle: the English radio announced the Von Pappen²⁶⁰ – the German representative in Turkey – suggested the conditions of peace: that is to say, returning of all the conquered countries except Austria, rebuilding of all the destroyed cities and replacing the father of the fathers of evils by Von Pappen himself. This information has been the most recent and it has been worthless and of no importance, and it has been accompanied with an explanation that the leaders of Germany surely had been aware of it, because if it had not been so, then a great punishment would have waited for him; and so the English and their allies are not dealing with the defeat of the Nazi party, as long as the latter still governs Germany. The conclusion is that the Germans are starting to think about the end of the war, and there is no wonder, as the aerial attacks became more and more horrible and cause more destruction, and the defeats in the eastern front are also frightening. They tell us again that the hole in the German front near Zhytomyr²⁶¹ is about three hundred kilometers wide and there a catastrophe is being prepared for the Germans, one which would be more dangerous than the one in Stalingrad. We can only hope this will be sooner than later!

The hospital of the ghetto is still located near the cemetery in the Caucasus region of the old ghetto, which does not longer exist. For now, each morning I walk with the lower level personnel escorted by a S.S. soldier to the hospital, and there I am work until the first hour [one]. In two weeks’ time, they will transfer the hospital into a new building in the Traku ghetto, and then, if I continue my work at the hospital, I would make few more serious arrangements. “If I continue”, there is a doubt: the commandant has already expressed his opinion that the number of physicians in the hospital is too large. Success had always showed me its good face: when I was young I was a famous teacher; I finished all my test in the gymnasium with good results; I finished the university in spite of many adventures and I managed to earn a good salary, I was a good physician in the south of France. I was a very

²⁶⁰ Franz Von Pappen, born in 1879, was the Chancellor of Germany in 1932; and in 1933-1934 the Vice-Chancellor of Hitler; later he filled positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like the ambassador in Vienna from 1936; and in Ankara from 1939 until 1944. In 1947 a court in Nuremberg sentenced him for eight years of imprisonment in a work camp, but he was released after two years [1949].

²⁶¹ That is to say about 150 km west of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine.

good physician in Shavli; I received the position of the manager of the wards of the internal and contagious diseases; in the Bolsheviks regime I was the manager of the polyclinic and during the German regime I managed to work as a lab technician for more than two years, all with good benefits; and in the ghetto I was the manager of the ambulatory. And, a revolution! From the day in which the ghetto was given to the commandants the tables have turned and I am in danger to become a spare man, a useless one. Surely my face is not like the face of Dr. Rosovsky who was caught by the Germans and I look younger than my actual age, and still, I am old, and I am ill – and success has turned away from me. “Old age is not happiness” says the Russian proverb. And if the war is over this year, I see troubles for myself and I see troubles for my wife. And Goebbels²⁶² is in doubt, whether the war would be over this year, let us hope! Let us wait!

And yet again there was a newborn in the hospital, a baby girl. The mother came from Joniskis²⁶³ where there are Jews from the surroundings of Vilnius from the two camps which were in Svencionys and Osmjany²⁶⁴, and they are working on a road (or a railway) from Lithuania to Latvia. The child was fat and healthy and all the inhabitants in the ghetto were in total danger if she would have stayed alive. Especially that the supervision on medical matters in the hospital and in the ambulatory has been given to a young “sentinel”, a young soldier, with a knowledge of medicine and disease as a chicken in humans. He has been obligated to sign the release notes given to the sick workers, to supervise the patients in the hospital, to see that there are no simulators [the ones pretending to be sick] among them, to sign the death certificates. This young man was a true spy and informer, apparently in order to be on the good side of the commandant, his master. In any event, this man was dangerous, and he visited the hospital often. He intended to inspect the fetus who the woman has seemingly miscarried, and he may have “encountered” a live child, healthy and fat and more developed than usual. So there was a need to ... kill the child, and to do this horrible action soon, before the visit of the sentinel. The injections of poisonous drugs, which could kill even a grown man, were left without any quick results, and the last child who received those kinds of injections remained alive for seven days without food and drinks! And here there was an urgent need to kill the little girl. Therefore, we had decided ... to drown the child! We took a bucket full of cold water and we put the head of the child in it, and we held her like that until there were death convulsions, and then it stopped, not more than six moments, twice as much as the time needed to kill a grown man by strangling. We took out the little girl, with her little mouth opened and white foam in her little nostrils, and we covered her with a blanket. It was a miracle that the sentinel did not come that day before noon. Therefore, we decided to bury the child – the supposed fetus, and we were so surprised when we took her down the grave, and the child was alive! Unbelievable! Children, one day old mock the profession of the medicine in a wonderful way and the killing aids of the grownups do not control them! Wonders and wonders! Surely, those kind of attempts the medicine does not know; to kill those children “by hand”, by injection, starvation and drowning, but who, with indifference and disinterest, could inspect and examine those cases in a scientific manner, those cases “which the devil himself had not thought of”, according to the words of Bialik.

There is news about the fate of the children who had been kidnapped and the elderly who had been removed to Taurage²⁶⁵. A woman was sent to tell us about the fate of the children. The carriage with the children arrived at Taurage on a Saturday, in the tenth hour. There were no men with them – they and the invalids had been shot in Paezerys²⁶⁶ – and the children and fifty women to take care of them arrived to Taurage. There the

²⁶² Paul Joseph Goebbels, born in 1897, the Reich Minister of Propaganda from 1933 until 1945. In 1944 was appointed to the Reich Plenipotentiary for the Total War Effort. He killed himself on May 1, 1945.

²⁶³ See footnote 6.

²⁶⁴ Svencioniai, in the mouths of its Jews in Lithuania north of Vilnius; Osmjany, 50 km south-east from Vilnius in White Russia.

²⁶⁵ That is to say, the old ‘removal’ method to Prussia, Germany: it was known that there were no Jews in those places, and it was assumed that they led them into the heart of Germany.

²⁶⁶ A little town about 70 km south-west of Shavli.

Germans shaved their heads and led them on to Germany, to Upper Silesia, with the women to take care of them and few German nurses. Among the children, twenty of them were sick. But they too were led along with the other children – but as I said before, no man has crossed the border – so the physicians Rosovsky, Cartoon and Katz were dead! Victims of the troubled times, respectable and honorable people: such a nice man, enlightened and with good taste, such a good friend and such an honest man was Dr. Rosovsky. I feel his absence so much! I had seen him almost every day – and suddenly removed [according to 2 Samuel 20, 13] and he is no more! And Cartoon – an old public servant, an ill man who never thought of himself and always was helping others, and young Katz, great and with many talents, honest and very devoted to the public in Shavli. This is one of the true victims of the ghetto: “Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried” [Isaiah 53, 4]. Too bad for those who are lost and not forgotten!

The tunes of the ghetto. My wife is laying on her death bed and she is afraid that there would be an inspection by the German “sentinel” in the houses, and he will find her sick at home without permit, she needs a permanent release permit and that is not possible in a concentration camp: here, anyone who does not work, is not allowed to eat. My son is ill too. Again, the suspicion is in his left lung, in the same place in which it was infected last year. He needs relaxation, he needs a sanatorium in order to repair his unstable health – who could even dare dreaming about such things in the conditions of our tortured lives!

There is some encouraging news from the southern front: the Russians are moving forward, and the state of the Germans in Crimea is becoming more and more volatile.

11 (44). It has been a long time since I wrote something. First, there is no important news and the troubles are the same, and second, the mental condition is so low, and the soul is so emptied [emptiness]²⁶⁷ and tired that there is no strength and no will to concentrate and to think. Living in a nightmare and doing everything like a forced machine without and will to live. The conditions in the ghetto won over, the constant fear and the tensioned nerves, the poor nutrition, all have brought me before death. I and my wife are very ill and there is no hope for us in the current conditions. We need a relaxation of the body and of the mind in an excellent sanatorium! Would we get to live to that? It is hard to believe: the enemy still has power and courage and the turtle tactics of the Americans and the English fill the soul with desperation and anxiety that their intention is to bring the enemy and the Allies²⁶⁸ too, to exhaustion. That they wish their job would be done by others in order to spare as many of their men as possible.

Today I picked my pen in my hand not “to grind the grinded flour” and not to repeat for the hundred time our troubles and tortures which are growing each day that passes, but in order to write an event which happened yesterday. The commandant invited Dr. Pesachovich and with much rage informed him that Dr. Goldberg with his wife and two sons had tried escaping from the camp in Daugialiai. He was very angry due to this scandal (!) which involved a physician, and which brought disgrace upon all the physicians, and so the latter deserved to be arrested in chains. So much cheekiness from our enemies! Surely Dr. Goldberg read the speech of the father of the fathers of filth which was published a few days ago and brought fear yet again to Jews everywhere. This mania, this madness which he does not let go of, cast terror upon the physician who was already very much afraid, as they took the children, and when he read the statements of the lunatic man that the Jews belong to a category needed to be exterminated, he decided to take his family and to escape to a place he had prepared for them. Who could blame him? Who could find a flaw in his actions, but our true haters who always blame us for everything? Is it not this logical to be afraid of our haters who have the power and means to hurt the Jews? Such a disgrace

²⁶⁷ It seems that the author wanted to base his sayings on Isaiah 34 11: the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness – that the troubled situation brought the soul to an existential emptiness, some mixture of dreariness, fear, destruction, emptiness and more: that is to say, that the condition was worse than before, and there are no words to describe it. The continuation of the sentence shows this essence.

²⁶⁸ The Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union as one.

and anger! As a revenge, the commandant has annulled all the permits to go town from all those who were doing that without an escort and they all remain in the ghetto: Frasier, Leibovich, Pesachovich²⁶⁹ and the policemen.

Today he was a little better: he has changed his mind and has given the permits back to their owners.

In the meanwhile, a very impure event happened: a young woman working in the shoe factory has stolen dozens of pairs of the upper parts of the shoes [uppers] and they discovered it in her possessions as she stepped through the gates of the factory. Now she is in the prison house. A young woman, her husband in very ill with a heart disease, honest and always modest, has failed before the attempt especially that the thefts are everyday matters, and everyone fails before them. In general, all of those who could steal [in the work places], steal: steal food provisions: rice, sugar, cheese and more. Steal items: wool bundles, wool shirts, leathers for furs and many more and some fell in the hands of the examiners and paid for the sins of all others!

February 6. Yesterday there was an official information in the German newspaper which is wonderful and excellent. The military report explaining the reason for the Germans retreat in the eastern front. It attempts to remove from the people's hearts the suspicion that the forces of the German army has left them and that it is weak. Not one and not the other! There is a second front now – the western one – which is first priority, because the entry into Europe is there and that is where the war would end, and the decisive victory would happen only at this front. Therefore, the Germans are obligated to concentrate a sizable portion of their forces in the western front and to deprive the eastern front. Surely, they could develop strong resistance in the eastern front as well, but they have chosen the tactics of a “nimble” defensive war, and they cede certain places with no value. That is somewhat like a game of chess. There you cede various pieces in order to defend the king and the queen. To make a long story short: the Germans admit that due to the new front, they are defeated in the eastern front, they also admit that there is an immediate danger that the Allies armies would enter Europe and finally, they assume that the war would find its true solution in the west – conclusions which have been annulled and denied by them until now. All of this is very gladdening and encouraging, but as far as for us, the Jews in the Baltic area, there are still many doubts, if we get to see the comfort and to live until salvation comes. The eastern front is getting closer and closer, and when the Germans are forced to leave the Baltic area, they would surely exterminate us all. However the winter is exceptional this year: it is February sixth and there is no cold or snow, today the earth is dry from the minor cold but in days in which the thin snow melts from the roof tops, all the water is drained into the street and mud and filth covers the streets of the ghetto. It might be that due to the mud and the filth in our places, our front is not near yet, and we are still alive. The near future will declare an opinion [according to Job 32, 6].

There was yet another interesting fact in the same newspaper about the disputes between Weizmann and Ben Gurion²⁷⁰. The first believes in waiting regarding the matter of the land of our fathers, and he believes that the matter would resolve by itself to our benefit when the Allies win the war, and Ben Gurion believes that all means needed to be taken in order to breach the advice of the English who decided to follow the orders of the White Paper to stop the immigration of the Jews to Israel at April first of this year. Ben Gurion went to America and he wanted, with the help of the Zionists in America, to make Weizmann step aside from the presidency, but by going he has only brought disputes and division to the party. Then he resigned himself from his position, and the dispute continues.

²⁶⁹ Georg Frasier, who was appointed to the manpower manager in the “concentration camp” without being annexed to Dachau, according to the new definition of the cage-the rest of the ghetto since the end of November 1943; Mendel Leibovich, the oldest one in the camp now; Dr. Pesachovich – the senior physician of the camp.

²⁷⁰ Chaim Weizmann, the one who a few years later (February 17, 1949) would become the first president of the State of Israel, and David Ben Gurion who was its first prime minister, had a dispute in those days regarding the ways which the Zionist Party and the Zionist settlers in Israel should take in light of the events. Do they continue to ensure a “Jewish Commonwealth” in Israel, like it was decided in the Baltimore Conference [the name of the hotel in New York where the conference took place] 1942, as Weizmann believed, and others.

18/II [44]. The camp in Anyksciai²⁷¹ satiates us with bitterness from its surprises. There they shot Shzaimetishikis, their nine children were shot in times of trouble for the local commandant's heart, the evil one who loved to make excuses for himself and to claim that he does all the evilness only by orders and against his will. There is a new commandant there, and the troubles continue. An event has happened now which is no less evil than the ones before, and as far as some details concern, the evilness is even greater than few of the events before it. When the women came back from work escorted by a Ukrainian guard, the latter was drunk and fell on the ice, the women picked him up, and to thanked them, he rose its riffle towards the workers and started shooting them. The latter started escaping for their lives, but the bullets hit some of them and two of them were badly injured in their legs. If the hands of the killers had not shaken when had taken the lives of ten people, even less so when injuring two Jewish women which were considered there as nothing [worthless, according to Job 24, 25], but the scandal is a different one: the women were wounded on Tuesday and they only were brought to the hospital on Friday, as the commandant decided that there is no permission to give means of transportation to the Jews when it is not according to the schedule, that is to say, on a day which the cargo carriage is not intended to go into Shavli, on Fridays. And so, the two wounded women, who had lost a lot of blood in those four days, were left with the bullets in their legs without the necessary medical help. In this detail – the entire center of gravity, the entire criminal sin of the new commandant! This scandal is outrageous, and it should be written and be remembered!

The wounded women were brought to the municipal hospital. The outcomes are unknown yet. It would be horrible if they will have to amputate the leg of the young Klugman²⁷².

The wounds were left for four days without medical treatment, and so they are suppurating, also the bones are shattered in several places due to the bullets. It is probable that in the end it would be necessary to amputate the legs of the wounded women.

There is one more detail to emphasize. One of the wounded women, Edelstein, has been sent to Anyksciai as a punishment along with her husband and daughter, as her husband sinned before the new leaders of the ghetto. Would the leaders have any remorse for sending a woman there to lose her leg? No! There will be no remorse: they do not know the nature of many human feelings, and many of those were paralyzed in the ghetto, especially with these leaders.

25/II. All is saddening regarding the event in Anyksciai. Both of the victims have lost their left legs under indescribable tortures. The Edelstein woman “lost all life within her” and died in the hospital, and the Klugman woman is now disabled and lies between life and death. Her wound is still very much suppurating, even after the surgery, and her fever is quite high. If there will be no general infection, she would remain among the living.

Yet again a true miracle has happened. The camp in Anyksciai had been annulled and all the workers came back here! The work there has been really hard labor and the attitude towards the workers was evil and horrible: the commandant who killed nine children and one old woman, has done everything on his own volition, as we found out later on: as a distraction! Entertainment! They say that after he was dismissed they searched and found many of the Jews belongings in his possession: money and valuable items – then he found his match and everything found a revenge – as a punishment they wish to send him to the front as a common soldier, so he killed himself by a gunshot. May there be many more! And the new commandant is even more horrible than the one before him. He and his deputy caused much damage to the son of Dr. W-Ski, who first became the head of the Jewish policemen and the manager of the camp. And when “a new king had come” they laid wanton charges

²⁷¹ Ascian is the camp which its workers were mainly employed with whitewash mining and the production of whitewash for construction.

²⁷² The daughter of the head of the Zionist Association in Shavli before the war, was killed due to her invalidity in the Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig [= Gdansk, on the Polish map after the war].

[plotted against him, according to Deuteronomy 22, 17] that he is a Bolshevik and his tortures were horrible. They say that if the camp would have not been annulled, then he would have been dead [gathered unto his people, according to Numbers 20, 24].

26/III. An unusual search in the A.B.A. camp had been conducted by the “battlefield policemen” [Feldgendarmerie] which are here now in Shavli and examine all the German military men to see if there are no deserters among them. Those policemen had learned that the workers in A.B.A. sometimes steal from the items intended for the army use, and to the repairs of the clothes and the shoes. The inspection took about four hours: all the workers were obligated to stay naked and barefoot in a cold hallway, on the cold concrete floor. The results were not that bad, as the German supervisors themselves announced the inspection and helped “to take out the leavened food”, and so no important items were found, and still, twenty five people were arrested, who had something suspicious in their clothes, as they used the army provisions, but they were quickly released. As a matter of fact, the manager in the A.B.A. camp lives by the “one who steals from a thief is exempted” rule, and everyone is stealing warm clothes, blankets, and more, sometimes in large quantities. One of the workers managed to steal an entire leather for a fur and he sold it in town for a decent price. Finally, we can revenge the vile and they will see their end.

1/IV [44]. There are important changes in the management of the camp: the true manager of the ghetto is now the converted Frasier, and his new main adviser is the rude and cheeky Burgin. The commandant has been dismissed from his position and the main representative M. Leibovich, the only honest man who ruled upon us, has been demoted to a simple clerk. Almost three years he tried everything in his power to help us, had the burden of the ghetto inhabitants upon his shoulders, and gave it all, and now he has been removed from the honor room, the management room, to the office, such a disgrace!

The second change is the dismissal of the head of the ghetto policemen, Genis. A man who was a little bit rude, not polished enough, a shouter, but he still fulfilled his hard and one-sided position with faith and devotion, but he was not on the good side of the honor chaser Frasier, as he did not flatter him as he had expected. And so, the latter has dismissed him from his position, as if he had requested to be dismissed, which was of course due to the attitude toward him, and from the desire to dismiss him sooner without a request.

The third change is my appointment as the sanitary physician of the work camp. My wondering from job to job are also the fruits of the minds of the manager and his deputy who want to be active. From the manager of the ambulatory, I became a hospital physician, the substitute of the hospital manager, and now, as aforementioned, I am the sanitary physician. As a matter of fact, my work is simple. The camp is divided into twelve regions, and at the head of each region there is a supervisor. All the 12 supervisors need to supervise the cleanliness of the yards and the toilets; they are also the ones who hand the working notes to the workers (there is a requirement of every worker, as they enter the workshop, to show their work note to the purposes of attendance, and if there is no working note, then the worker is missing). Lately the has supervisor received a new task: to visit all the houses in the camp, and immediately announce the police if someone is missing, and that due to an event: an iron professional, whose work was needed, escaped from the camp. He had a Lithuanian [Christian] wife who converted to Judaism and they had two sons. She left the camp long ago, and now he found out the hiding place of his family and he joined them. I am the head of the supervisors and I need to assure they are performing their work properly. In the evenings I have a temporary job to examine the heads of the ghetto inhabitants and to look for lice. And the itching disease on the back. In any event I am not busy more than two hours each day and the rest of the time I am free: for now I have used my free time to arrange a diary in Yiddish and to finish it²⁷³, and if not for my recent jot, I would have not succeeded to do so, and I am relieved I have finish it, as it already became

²⁷³ Exists now in the hands of the Lithuanian government. The “heirs...”

a burden. Now I can dedicate myself to a more serious task. But I am in doubt if I would be given the possibility to walk freely in most of the hours of the day. By the way, the physicians of the hospital received an order to be in the hospital from the seventh hour in the morning until the eighth hour in the evening, and one hour is given for lunch. Meaning, to be in the hospital for twelve hours per day! A very hard thing to do!

12/IV [44]. I have been waiting for more clear information, more detailed, about the horrible events which happened in the ghetto in Kaunas. The information had not yet arrived, but I still need to write! The fact is that the same thing happened to us on November 5, happened now in Kaunas. There, they had also taken the little children and had kidnapped the sick and the elderly and had brought them out into the square. The numbers had been far larger than the ones in Shavli. Also, there, they had searched for the children according to a list they had, and if the children had not been found, they took the parents. They say that they had a certain number of children they needed to take, and in order to fulfill this quota, they took the adults. There are many more additions [additional matters] which are not clear right now. They say that apart from the commandant, a special visitor had come in order to implement this murder (was it our friend Forster?). They also say that the Jewish policemen did not agree to participate in the scandal, and so they were roughly punished: some say they were arrested, and in the “Ninth fort”²⁷⁴, a place ready for pogroms, they were killed. And some say they whipped them. What can we say about this event now, so late, when the beginning of the end is so near? I have no words anymore.

For a few days, due to their Gentile feast [Easter], we read no newspapers, and had no new details. Today we learned many important news, but we cannot know how much truth there is in these stories. They say that Odessa, Kovel and Iasi²⁷⁵ have been conquered! They have also launched an attack on Budapest. If Odessa has been conquered, then all the southern front is finished, and Crimea is isolated without a land opening, and from the sea they would surely not pass peacefully. We are waiting for detailed news!

24/IV. 1944. We finished the examination of all the heads and the hands of the inhabitants of the ghetto for lice and Scabies. The men who were found with lice were obligated to cut the hair on their heads with a number one machine, that is to say, almost shaved, and the women were obligated to cut off their hair in a “Bob cup” [a short male shortcut] and to clean their head with drugs [compresses]. The “sentinel”, the medical supervisor, participated in the examination. It is interesting to state that a few women cried when their hair was cut off. They are not familiar with the Russian proverb: “when the head is removed, do not cry for the hair”.

The camp from Joniskis²⁷⁶ was attached to our camp – people from the surroundings of Vilnius, Mashminiai and Shimsha²⁷⁷. The family is larger now! In a few weeks from now Dr. Wolfert, the skin specialist, will go there for a short period.

²⁷⁴ The Ninth fort, one of the many forts built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by the government of the Tsar in Russia in order to protect the area of the city of Kaunas. The ninth fort was used as a prison house after World War I. The Germans turned in into an extermination site of the Jews of Kaunas and many other Jews who were brought by trains from the west. As part of the Nazi project to blur the traces, since 1943 the ninth fort had its own “Sonderkommand” – a group of Special Forces: in the ninth fort they hired Jews to discover the bodies and to burn them. With ingenuity and dare, this group of Jews escaped from the fort. Only a part of them were caught by the Germans who came after them.

²⁷⁵ Odessa, which port was the most important Soviet port in the Black Sea, today in Ukraine; Kovel: the city is located about 400 km west from Kyiv, that is to say the front already advanced about 150 kilometers into the borders of pre-war Poland; Iasi, an important city in West Moldavia (which was the capital of Romania until 1861, and now is a part of Romania), that is to say, an invasion of about 150 kilometers into the borders of pre-war Romania.

²⁷⁶ People from the Smurgainys area, about 80 km south-west from Vilnius, were the main inhabitants of the camp which at first counted five hundred men, women and children. They were at the disposal of the O.T. (Organisation Todt, the operational forces of the work arrangements in the Reich). Joniskis, as mentioned before, about 40 km north to Shavli.

²⁷⁷ See footnote 101.

Our commandant is on leave [vacation] for a few weeks, and his substitute came. What is the nature of this passer [temporary worker]? I wish he would not be worse than the first one, as we already talked about his mischiefs and lunacy.

10/V.44. Changes and amendments, commotion and embarrassment! The substitute of the commandant is uncivilized man, rude and uneducated. All days he is filled with insults and threats. For every little thing he threatens to shoot; his requests are mostly ridiculous. “A barking dog does not bite”, maybe he will be harmless, and he will not bring much damage. He is very strict regarding some issues. 1. In the fifth year of the war all the population is obligated to work ten hours per day without exceptions. 2. There are no holidays and free days for the Jews. 3. Without a formal release from the ambulatory no one stays at home. 4. An ill man can stay in his bed at home for no more than three days – if the disease continues, he is obligated to go to the hospital: there are no house patients! 5. All the gardens in the camp will be tilled on Sunday, and if not, there will be shootings! But our God Almighty denied him this order! The heaven opened its gates and there was a pouring rain all day – and so the order was cancelled.

The day before yesterday there was finally an appearance from the visitor we had been waiting for a long time: a visiting physician from Kaunas, which brought chaos among the physicians. He ordered to reduce the number of physicians in the camp to three. I am spare, and I am facing hard labor! When Dr. B. asked him what kind of job can be given to me, the “sentinel” said: “As far as I am concerned, he can be a coachman!” We will see how matters end! In any event I am facing unpleasantness and wondering.

One detail had made him very angry. Dr. Wolfert had been working in the Frenkel factory, as he had been helping and providing first aid to the workers. The visitor was very mad that a Jewish physician is taking care of Lithuanians, and the physician was already released from his job, and he remained as a black worker. Now, four or five physicians work as common workers. Soon I will be one of them! In my old age I will become famous!

Our new representatives undermined Dr. Pesachovich, the manager of the hospital – but his fame has reached Kaunas and his position has remained stable. All the responsibilities in the medical domain has been given by the visitor to him. Together with the representatives he worked on a list of physicians who should remain in the camp in his opinion, but its outcome is yet to be known. The visitor received it but until now, he gave no answers.

The visitor also visited the A.B.A. camp²⁷⁸, in which about eight hundred Jews are working, and he found one room which was not clean. He told the management about it. What did the management do in order to repair the wrong? Yesterday morning in the fourth hour they woke up all the workers and threw them out with no exceptions. Even the patients with pulmonary infections and similar, and they were left for a few hours under the snow and the cold rain. All of them thought they were about to be removed from the camp and the commotion was endless. They hid the children in the attics and the basements, and many adults were trying to hide as well. At about thirty minutes after the sixth hour, the group of workers came from the ghetto as in every day, and then the workers who lived in A.B.A. joined them and all was well again. Apparently as they were standing outside and their bones were cold, the rooms were cleaned.

29/V.44. The second day of Shavuot. The whole administration of the ghetto celebrated the “time of our freedom” as the substitute of the commandant has finally left our concentration camp. It is hard to describe the troubles and the tortures he brought upon us in these last three weeks. With curses, insults and swearing, with threats of shooting, he obligated all of us to work in the gardens, to transport stones, to clean the toilets, to uproot dry trees and all without any remuneration. The man is clearly a lunatic, he “honored” with those jobs also the physicians and the management members of the camp. When he ordered Dr. B. to arrange a pile of stones, the

²⁷⁸ The Clothing Ministry for the Army, ArmeeBekleidungsAmt.

latter dared asking: Is this a job suitable for a physician? And he was answered: “Shut your mouth – if not, your glasses will soon fall to the ground”. And to Dr. W. he said: “If your garden will not be organized until the fourth hour – your “form” will suffer”. As I was walking through the gates and my son was guarding the place, he grunted without any reason: “The Jews are pigs”. To make the long story short, he lived by one rule: Let them hate but be afraid!²⁷⁹ Oderint dum metuant. I was afraid to meet him, and so they closed me in my home, and I was really a prisoner in my own home for ten days. Our neighbor and our son would go to their work and my wife was lying in the hospital, and she succeeded to receive a bilateral pulmonary infection, a very dangerous disease for someone with a weak heart as hers. But she has a certain adaptation and practice for disease, and she is much better now. Tomorrow she will surely return home after eighteen days in the hospital. This disease of hers too, is a result of the conditions of our lives in the camp. Such an ill person like her is obligated to get up before six in the morning and to go to the workshop. Fearing the substitute of the commandant she worked for full days, and as she dug in the garden in the beginning of spring, she caught her cold – and our immunity is weak – I was also very sick lately and my abdominal disease is worse and worse every day – if our situation does not take a turn for the better soon, “the wick of my life will be over”.

30/V.44. They are resting in the eastern front – a calm before the storm, as many army men are gathered there and surely a brave attack is about to begin. And in Italy the Allies are finally awake and they are pushing the German army properly toward the north. The rumor today is that Rome has fallen. The resistance [uprising] of the Germans against their attackers is very strong. They are war heroes, very well armed, bitter hearted, who know that if they fall, their destiny would be bitter, and due to their vigor, their discipline and their incredible defense forces, they believe they can win! We are hearing a lot lately about the “invasion”, and everyone is confident it will happen, but the German try to seem as if it does not frighten them.

7/IV.1944. The event has finally happened! The results of this event will surely be decisive! The English-American army has broken into France yesterday! The invasion we have been waiting for days and for years has been implemented! The army chose the more fortified location – the port of Le Havre²⁸⁰, closer to Paris. The Germans had bragged that the defensive wall on the Atlantic shore is “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper [according to Isaiah 54, 17], and that there is no such power which could penetrate the defensive wall, and there came the Allies forces and in many places have taken it down to its foundation [according to Psalms 137, 7] the wall that the famous engineer Todt and his assistants had worked on for many years. The sixth in the month of June will be remembered by all the people of the world!

What value can we see in the little decrees of which purposes has been only to guide us to rest compared to our experiences in the days which had passed: the removal from the town into the ghetto after the robbery and the disaster. The demand for the fifty victims which had been changed into contribution, the removal into the prayer houses as hallways to the death valleys and especially the kidnaping of our children! Therefore, there is no desire to write about the everyday curses which are nothing compared to the troubles we have been through. But as I hold my pen in my hand I will only mention the decree brought to us from Kaunas, meaning that all the male inhabitants of the ghetto, with exceptions, need to cut their hair. The decree was followed, and now we all look like real prisoners! All the ones who had hair – now are bald [according to Amos 8, 10]!

[Ended but not over]

²⁷⁹ A saying which belonged to the Roman Emperors; was a favorite of the Emperor Caligula (ruled in 37-41); as told by Suetonius in “The Twelve Caesars”.

²⁸⁰ The landing was actually in Normandy, in the western shores of the Seine Gulf. Le Havre and its port were bombed, but the landing was about 80 km (in an aerial line) from its west; for example: north of Bayeux – [the English] and west in the beaches which were called since then Omaha and Utah by the Americans.

Appendix 1

Between the folds of the second notebook of the “Notes ...” the pages of this appendix were saved, written in Yiddish [except the last sentence]. It seems, that those are the words of a personal testimony that Dr. Pick took from a woman [the mystery: Dr. Pick, although he was a meticulous man, did not write the name of the woman] a little while after she had managed to sneak into the ghetto of Shavli. No other testimonies were found in the diary, not like this and no other. There is still a possibility that sometimes Dr. Pick wrote notes from people for the purpose of his lists. However, there is no direct reference in his writings regarding the method in which he collected his materials. And no one would be able to answer this question now.

The square brackets [] and what is between them belong to the translator and the one who made the remarks, David Golan. The round brackets () are in the original.

The translation of the appendix

After [the Soviets] confiscated the[ir] iron workshop in the town of Skuodas²⁸¹, they moved to Taurage; they lived there for 2 months. On Sunday [June 22, 1941] Taurage was on fire²⁸². They left and went to Upinia [that in the mouths of the Lithuanian Jews; officially Upina²⁸³]. They lived here for several weeks. [In the meanwhile, the Germans conquered Lithuania and the Lithuanians] took the Rabbi, obligated him to build a bonfire and sit [in it]. Fearing that the flames [reach] the huts of the Lithuanians around, they put out the fire – cut off the beard of the Rabbi and ordered him to run, shot him, injured his legs and his wife took him to a bigger town where there is a physician, no more details are known [not to the woman and not to Dr. Pick].

In Upina they stayed for 10 days; because the pogrom was approaching they moved to a bigger town – to Tryskiai; but about 15 km from Tryskiai²⁸⁴, near Luoke²⁸⁵, they were caught by the Partisans, robbed them from everything they had and brought them into the camp in Luoke [150 people]; ~ the attitude towards them was awful. In a barn, under constant supervision, they were beaten constantly, brought to work with whips: to uproot weeds from the flooring [of the streets], to wash the floors. 5 km from Luoke [actually 12 km] in a village called Kaunatavas, there were two Jewish families. They were brought to the camp in Luoke; one of them was the Ziv family – a father, a mother and eight children. The Partisans made searches; they found a red flag which they did not have time to dispose of. On that day there were twenty [end of the first page of the appendix]

People brought; and they took the men and began to whip them. After they had finished the beating, they led the new ones into the basement. They were tortured in the camp in Luoke until July 16. They had to procure food for themselves when they went working into town; on the 16 [of July] in the evening came two Germans from the S.A. and led all the men into the field and began to tortured them sadistically: to crawl on the abdomen, to beat one another, and they were beaten in a horrible way by the Germans too for an hour; and again they were led to

²⁸¹ The Jews pronounced the name of the town Skoud; is located in the north-west part of Lithuania near the border with Latvia. In the year 1572 it gained a status of independence in the management of its municipal matters [Magdeburg rights]; apparently not long after that a Jewish community settled in the town.

²⁸² The distance from Tilsit [now Sovetsk] which was then on the German border and Taurage was no greater than 30 km on the road of the king.

²⁸³ About 30 km north from Taurage.

²⁸⁴ The “bigger” city had less than two thousand inhabitants.

²⁸⁵ This town had less than two thousand inhabitants, and it is located south west to Upina. That means that they had no possibility to travel directly from Upina to Tryskiai, but they moved in more remote ways in order not to meet the one they met: “the Partisans”, the Lithuanian undergrounds who cooperated with the Germans.

the barn and separated from the women. One of the two Germans [was] Itmalinski²⁸⁶ ~ he went to Mrs. Davidov and asked her if she recognizes him; he told her that there is an order from Berlin to shoot all the men to death, because they have a lot of casualties and the Jews do not have. At the same night he began starting from 12 o'clock to take groups "I darba" [to work]; they held them in the basement, in the morning they were led 2 kilometers out of Luoke and they shot 80 men in pits who were prepared; 9 of them ran; 2 of them, said the Partisan, escaped. ~ They stayed in Luoke for 3 more days. After that the women were led to Viesvenai, about 15²⁸⁷ km from Luoke. There were many women there. 4 days they were in a destroyed barn, wet, dirty, rain; 4 for days in Geruliai, near Telsiai (10 Km) [which was famous. The Soviets] sent the estate owner to Russia. There, they lived in sheds which had been prepared for them, 2500 women. They established a committee of women, there was a manager Virsininkas, a Lithuanian who [end of the second page]

Gave permission to go and work in the fields. They received portions of food there: bread, milk, butter, and groats. There was also Dr. Blat, the only man. (Except from ten men who were dressed up as women, who later were recognized and shot – Rostovsky escaped). There were rumors that they were going to shoot the women too. They sent a delegation to Telsiai, to the District manager, Apskrities virsininkas and to Gewecke²⁸⁸, who came once a week; ~ they demanded a ghetto. September 30 at night, the Partisans came, demanded to give them everything, and they did not shoot as they said they were going to the ghetto and it was forbidden to take anything. They gathered everything and handed them. In the next morning, at six o'clock they led all the women into the open field. The District manager [the Lithuanian] said: to go and pack the belongings, carriages were about to arrive, to go directly to the ghetto in Telsiai. They had to pack in 10 minutes. The items which they did not have time [to pack] were left in the barns. The [Lithuanians said] not to wake up the children, to live notes regarding who is who, and they will send them. After 10 minutes they were back on the field; they were separated into two groups: right and left, one group of young women, more than 500, to Telsiai. The rest remained in Geruliai. The carriages of the Christians came, they loaded the items and the group walked. When they left Geruliai they checked the women who had children [if for those women, who were intended for Telsiai, they attached their children]; those were delayed in Geruliai. The rest of the 500 arrived to Telsiai. 2 lanes in the ghetto, fenced by boards, they felt [end of the third page]

That it was something temporary, no woods were given [for heating, cooking, warming]. All the women went to work. There was a referent [a Lithuanian supervisor], he took the money, [from the work of the women], gave food portions: bread, groats and potatoes. There were rumors from the Christians, that the ghetto will be destroyed. ~ And so they decided to escape from Telsiai [says the one who testifies, one of the few who succeeded]; the 2000 women from Geruliai were all shot; ~ those [the women] who were led in Telsiai heard the shooting, and saw the graves. They were forced to strip, and they were shot with gun machines and grenades.

The Partisans were very drunk – December 27, the rest of the 402 women from Telsiai were shot as well.

Any city which lacks ten of those things is not suitable for a wise student to live in: a physician and an artist (one of them) and a bath house.

²⁸⁶ One of those Germans who lived in Lithuania, and answered to the call of Hitler, damn him as Volksdeutsche, and now they returned to it as part of the tyrant mechanism.

²⁸⁷ Viesvenai is located on the road from Luoke to Telsiai. There were several Jewish families living in this village before the Holocaust, who provided for themselves from agriculture.

²⁸⁸ Gewecke was the German commissar of the District, the Gebietskommissar, and sometimes he was less evil than the Lithuanians.

Appendix 2

The speech given by the grandchild of Dr. Pick,
Aharoni, in his Kibbutz Netzer Sereni,
On the fiftieth anniversary of the release of the
Holocaust refugees from the death camps.

My friends, children and distinguished guests,

Fifty years ago today the soldiers of the one thousand years old Reich surrendered in front of the Allies armies, and the most horrible war in the history of humanity was over. Fifty years ago today the devilish mission of the Nazi tyrant was finally halted, and the extermination machine which wished to end the presence of the Jewish nation in this world, finally stopped. Fifty years ago today the tortured remaining of the cut off European Jews were finally released from the concentration camps, and they were free. The first week in the month of May 1945 will forever be remembered as a defining moment in the history of the entire world, and especially in the history of our nation. But for us, and not only those among us who lived to see the unique historic moment, it has yet another signification, which goes beyond the abstract historical level. For us, for all of those present here tonight, it also has a deep personal signification. Because in that moment – which at once and miraculously was a bridge between destruction and salvation, between holocaust and resurrection – has sparked the scion which later became a wonderful and fruitful tree – the Netzer Sereni Kibbutz.

And today, thirty-seven years ago, two weeks less, the Netzer Sereni Kibbutz celebrated ten years since it was established. Not far from the place in which I stand before you now, my father stood, and greeted the guests. And even if many years had passed since then, it seems that the validity of his statement was not lost, and they remained true and present, then and today. And even if the event which we celebrate tonight is apparently different, I found it suitable, as the representative of the generation of the sons of the survivors who founded this Kibbutz, to return to that day and to voice here and now, some of the things spoken by my father in that distant evening:

“This is a two-faced celebration for us, this is not only the celebration of the people present here tonight, them and their families, for whom this Kibbutz represents their life work, which folds within their years of youth and the best of their dreams, their days of disappointments and overcoming, their hours of depression and their hours of encouraging, their ups and their downs, their failures and their successes – the celebration of the Kibbutz constructors as ten years had passed since the beginning.

But surely this events is special and steps out of its narrow and defined domain and joins those hidden events, which in them and from them we hear the greatest retribution in the life of Israel in our country, and which in them and from them we understand the fate of a nation – the line from the fragments to the revival!!

(...) The first question which we need to ask tonight is: for what did the people of the Buchenwald Kibbutz arrived to where many and good have never arrived – to be the ones who founded and established and Kibbutz in Israel, one of the few, and maybe the only one, which was founded by the remains of the

concertation camps, the refugees of the Holocaust? The answer is given by two great daring, which indicate the way of the firsts in our Kibbutz. The first daring step was the foundation of the Buchenwald Kibbutz on the land of the tyrant, when the Nazi beast was defeated and the barb wires were fallen, and the ones who were sentenced to death – suddenly gained life.

A very large crowd stood wondering with no road ahead, with no plan and no meaning – except from one: to live. Part of this crowd were several Buchenwald men who dare to draw conclusions, in fact, to learn the lesson about the history of the people, a history which was lived by them, and to formulate a path and a clear purpose for themselves, a life of work, a cooperative creation while clinging to the source of life – the land of our fathers.

(...) There is no wonder that there were those who were full of doubts, who hesitated to see if it was possible – did the forces of creation survived in us, if it is better for us to aspire to rest, to be assimilated, to forget? And then came the conclusion, which was: to dare! To fulfill! To establish an independent project!

What was the motive to this daring? Is it that because of the horrible heritage, just in spite of our past – we saw this as a calling and as an obligation to place a living monument for those who did not win and did not survive. Was it the internal voice which whispered to us, that this was the only way to overcome the memory of death – to establish a project of life. Because this is a way to self-esteem, to self-respect – to reveal the creation powers within us, which all the troubles and the tortures did not kill – to demonstrate, in front of the entire world and in front of ourselves – that the pruned tree is alive and fresh, full of life and powerful, and ready to burst and flourish, to wear its leaves and to be fruitful again.

(...) And as we come to day to place a mark for the ten years which had [assed and to conclude them – let us not ignore the one question floating in the air, which is asked by doubtful people and heretics from the outside, and which is asked by each and every one of us in the secret places of our hearts – the fundamental question, the profound one: was it worth it?”

Those were the words of my father, of blessed memory. And even if his answer was positive, a big and echoing “Yes”, the question itself never stopped from remaining in the air of this Kibbutz and the secret places in the hearts of its founders, from then until today, and even more in our recent years. The event, which is marked by us today allows us, and even maybe imposes on us, to return to the essence of things, to the roots of our existence and uniqueness as a Kibbutz. And by doing that, it can reduce the troubles of the present, to put in a correct perspective all the concerns and the doubts, and remove from inside us, if only for a little while, the malicious sadness which consume us.

In this festive night, when each and every one of us returns with the thought to the beginning of the road, our eyes are opened again to see all the good and beautiful in this glorious life work called Netzer Sereni, the project which foundations were casted fifty years ago on the land of Germany, the one satiated from blood. And like that, with our eyes opened, we can say, and we are obligated to say today as well – to our parents, to ourselves and especially to our children – yes, it was worth it!