

SZYFRA MAJRANC PAPERS, circa 1910-1947
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Below is a translation of the diary:

[Diary – Notebook 1]

Around one o'clock at night I was awakened by a dull sound coming from outside. It kept coming closer, then distancing itself, but not stopping. Since I became concerned, I woke my husband.

- Do you hear what goes on outside? I am thinking what this can be, this noise...

Henek reluctantly lifted himself up on the bed and started to listen. But he was sleepy and soon became impatient.

- It's nothing. Probably planes flying over. It's not worth dwelling on it...

He fell back on his pillows and covered himself fully with the quilt.

- But, Henek! – I cried – this is not possible for the planes to be passing over!

Henek slowly started to take his head from under the quilt and, in a sleepy voice, said:

- Actually, you are right. Sanok is a town on the border and planes are not allowed to fly over.

Yet this low noise does come from above...You know, let me check it out.

He quickly crawled out of bed and jerked the window open.

The low noise turned into a loud whir.

He climbed onto the window ledge and began to look closely at the sky.

- Planes! Planes! A lot of planes – he called after a short while in a voice full of excitement.

- That must mean that something important happened – I called too. In two jumps I found myself next to him.

And thus, in our nightgowns, with our heads turned upward, we stood on the window, holding hands, our bodies shivering from the night cold. Although that June night was unusually bright, it was also unusually cold.

We could clearly distinguish tiny, black dots whirling around the pale sky. There were many. A lot of them. Some.... and now....[page ends with missing words]

...they disappeared behind the [??] and other ones appeared in their stead only to disappear to the East a minute later. And so it went on and on. The most fantastic shapes like zig-zags, kept forming themselves, filling the night's silence with their noise.

- What do you think about it, Henek?...

- There is only one thing this can mean. There is a war between Germany and Russia.

- Yesterday's newspaper mentioned nothing that would allow one to think that something was imminent – I said in disbelief.

- True – he replied. That is why I think that this is an unexpected attack on Russia by Germany. Same as they made on Poland in nineteen thirty-nine, a few hours before declaring war.

- All this seems quite unbelievable.

- Actually, to me too – answered Henek. But what else could it be?

- One can expect the strangest surprises during the war.

- Well, yes...

We remained for a long while watching the disappearing and reappearing mass of little black dots on the sky, way up above, until a piercing cold made us shiver and we finally closed the window and went back to bed.

We kept talking politics late into the night. We could still hear the airplanes; their noise kept getting more monotonous and finally put us to sleep.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

We jumped up simultaneously. Who above us is trying to get to our window? (We were living on the ground floor and our window was facing the courtyard)

Henek quickly pulled up his pants and opened up. Some of his friends and acquaintances were standing under the window.

- The war is on and you sleep as if nothing happened – said Anszel, Henek's best friend. Didn't you hear what was happening t night?

- So the war did break out after all – murmured Henek.

- Just a few moments ago the German radio broadcasted the news – said Siamek, another of Henek's friends. - Man, you should see what's going on in the streets! The army is everywhere. Barbed wire, anti-tank fences everywhere...The civilian authorities and the "Gestapo" just scrambled. You know, if we really wanted to, we could walk without the arm bands today...

And Anszel called out to me, leaning into the room through the window:

- You too get up, Sabina! Come out to the street. You will see what is happening...

- Good thing we did not know it earlier – I replied laughing.

- Why?...

- Because you would not have the pleasure of telling us about this sensational news – I said laughing and stretching my arm to get some clothing. – And now, don't look in because I want to dress...

- What do you think – I asked once I was dressed and was standing at the window, next to Henek - will our side go there or will the Russians come here?

- Ah, if I knew for sure that the Russians will come here, I would give a "bash" the like of which the world has never seen – said the rich Siamek.

- With all this, I forgot that my mother and brothers are still deeply asleep and know nothing about the happenings. I will excuse myself, my dear ones, and will run to them for a moment – said Henek.

- No, you stay and I will go – I announced firmly. A person likes to give sensational news and likes to see the impression the words make on the listener. I was not devoid of this strictly human quality and therefore did not want to miss this opportunity to derive pleasure. The fact was that we considered the outbreak of war as something very good for us Jews. We thought that even if Russia did not come over to our side at once it would still bring a quick end and subsequently a defeat for Germany. Germany is not yet strong enough to be able to fight for a long time against such empires like Russia and England. And there was no doubt that America would soon enter the war.

With a joyfully beating heart I walked quickly through the streets of Sanok. The movement of the army, fences, machine guns and anti-aircraft missiles left here and there, had a very exciting effect on me. My soul was filled with great hope.

My brother-in-law, Israel, the most agile of the brothers, opened the door and almost everyone sat up in their beds and asked:

- What happened?

- Didn't you hear anything at night?

- No...

- You must have been sleeping like logs. And didn't you hear anything now either? The noise outside? Even though it is only 5 a.m., all of Sanok has been up for a while.

- But tell us already what is happening – Lewi asked impatiently.

- The war broke out between Germany and Russia. - I hummed shortly while my eyes were feasting on the impression my words were making on them.

Actually, there had been a lot of gossip among the people about the probability of war, but nobody took it seriously, which is why it was a surprise to all.

My mother-in-law and the boys started to dress feverishly.

- Who knows what is waiting for us now – my mother-in-law worried. - Maybe the front will come here and we may have to flee...

- It does not matter. My youngest brother-in-law, Motek, was enthusiastic – We would have come under the Russian occupation and now this will probably happen.

- I would then be able to be reunited with my family which is what I wish for above all, I added.

A few minutes later we found ourselves all together in our courtyard. Everybody started talking and discussing politics. We were all strangely content. We were full of hope that perhaps in a day or two the Russians would march in and would liberate us from our bestial and despicable tormentors, the Germans

We made so much noise with our talk that the child woke up and, frightened, started to cry. I quickly ran into the room and sitting down next to my little Maryleczka I started murmuring into her ear words that of course she was not yet able to understand.

- Quiet down, my darling. You should rather laugh and rejoice now. You see, dear heart, it is the first time in many months we are facing a palpable rather than the previously nebulous hope that perhaps soon...

But the child kept screaming and crying louder and pitifully. Perhaps an instinct told her that mother was wrong...that it is now that one should cry...

Because wasn't it at that moment that the real, great and unheard of tragedy of the Jews in Poland began?

Actually, even up to that moment, our life had been rather tragic. Had the war ended then, the Jews could have written entire books about their terrible experiences. I do not doubt that such books exist already, somewhere abroad, written by those lucky ones who succeeded to run away from here. But what does all this matter compared to what followed the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia?

Our situation before had been very bad.

We were stigmatized people. We were forced to wear yellow bands on our right arms in order to be recognized in the crowd. (In the territories annexed to the Reich, instead of armbands the Jews wore yellow "patches" on the right breast and on the back) In some towns, we were confined to the "ghettos" and the Gentiles were not allowed to have contact with us, as if we were lepers. We were deprived of our identities. We were pushed out of our apartments. We were deported from place to place and as a result could become homeless beggars. We were forced into humiliating and unsuitable jobs for us, and our reward was pitiless, cruel beatings. We were baited with dogs. We were treated worse than slaves. No, worse than animals. We were sent to various camps from which hardly anyone returned. We lived in constant fear for our lives. Every few days there were notices posted for Jews and we read them with trepidation and kept getting more depressed..

But as long as we were allowed to live, we lived somehow, we even conducted business, we had stores – for the time being that was not forbidden. What did they care if the Jews made money which eventually would be "inherited" by them anyway.

This resembles the fairy tale about a certain witch who fattened the children with sweets so she could make a tastier roast out of them. But, of course, we did not realize it then. Our spirits were kept up by hope that some day this will come to an end after all.

And the world must have wondered and must have kept asking: How can they withstand it?

There were many reasons why we could. First of all, because man can withstand a lot. God forbid that he should be hit in the head with a load that he could lift [sic!]? Of course, those who did not live through it cannot imagine it.

Secondly, we, the Polish Jews, did not enter this phase of misfortunes totally unprepared. Everybody was aware of the anti-Semitism prevailing in Poland, especially just before the war.

The pogroms in Brzesc and Przytyk, the ritual slaughter, the bloodshed at universities, beatings on the streets, boycotts of Jewish stores, all that is not a secret. This prejudice was exploited by German spies to occupy the minds of Poles with the Jewish question, thereby turning their attention away from their threatening neighbor during the hottest and most dangerous time for Poland. Thus, instead of political articles, what stood out in the most prestigious newspapers were big headlines like: "Let the Germans be an example to us in the [handling] of the "Jewish" question. "We have watched long enough how the Jews amass big fortunes which could have belonged to us, Poles". (Of course, the fact that Jews born and educated in Poland were also Poles was never admitted by the anti-Semitic gentlemen). "All the law offices, all the medical offices are filled with Jews." "All the trade lies in the Jewish hands." "All capital lies in Jewish hands." And it was not seldom that huge black letters screamed: "Beat the Jews!" And it occurred to me: did anyone ever think that these were really not the words of anti-Semites but rather a hateful cry of envious people? Was it because people who were allegedly of a different race and faith were able to achieve a goal and get an education? If we wanted to keep listening to all their mottos, we would have no trouble to take a look under that very charming coat of an anti-Semite and discover the black, evil and base character hiding under it. Sadism as well.

Why "Beat the Jew!"?

But this is no longer the issue. The Poles are no longer anti-Semites because there are no Jews in their country any longer. Actually, they are in their country but buried deep down in the earth. So deep that they will surely never again achieve anything and there will no longer be any reason to envy them.

I am bringing up this subject only because I want to justify why I, a Jew and a Pole, cast such a shadow on my native country and dare to unmask it before the world. But, in fact, the country never concealed its anti-Semitism before the world – rather, it considered it an honor. And if this is so, then everything I will write about my compatriots will rather read like a hymn honoring them.

Poland is my motherland and, even though she treated me as a stepchild, I wanted her and I was disposed to forgive her for having poisoned my childhood, my youth and almost every better moment of my life with her anti-Semitism. But neither I nor any Jew will ever forgive her for the crime she committed against us.

In their country we were like an orphan taken in by a "kind" person under his roof; but then that person would unburden, on that orphan, his basest instincts and all his anger seething inside him against no matter whom. And although that orphan was not lacking food nor clothing, what of it? She was helpless and had no one to turn to. The self-preservation instinct kept telling her to live. Thus she lived and worked. And the fruits of that work, although to her advantage, were sprinkled with bitterness. Her tormentor was simultaneously her benefactor and she would never dare to stand up against him having seen murderous intentions in his eyes.

Based on my own experiences, I can ascertain that the majority of Poles was so happy with the defeat of the Jews that it regarded it worth the price of losing their country.

- How could it happen that they hate us so much? – we kept asking with horror. It is true that we did not expect much compassion from them. But to see them rejoice so much at our misfortune? To see them so assiduously collaborate in persecuting us with those who are, after all, their enemies as well and who also treat them rather unscrupulously? We were not prepared for that.

And when after the outbreak of the Russian-German war the general genocide of the Jews began, the Poles participated in it equally to the Germans and Ukrainians. This, of course, is a behind-the-scene affair of that dark tragedy, because the Poles insist on hiding behind the backs of the Germans. But I can, with a clean conscience, tear down this cover before the world. Poland is no longer my country. I have no obligation towards her and I hate her. My hate is so terrible that it is painful. Such hate can only be felt for something or someone whom one loved with all one's soul and was hurt and abused by that something or someone.

The female concierge who lived in the same hallway as we, let no one through to our apartment without growling: that the lousy Jews leave their doors open which causes a draft; that they close the doors which makes the air stuffy; that they produce garbage; that they bring in mud, and so on and on, endlessly. I had the impression that an angry dog was guarding our apartment and, with wild barking, throws himself at any one who wants to go in. One of her daughters, Ceska, eagerly acted like her mother, but the other daughter, Janka, suffered on that account and was ashamed of her mother's and sister's behavior. I will never forget Janka, as well as all those who, even to a small degree, treated us like people. Unfortunately, I cannot count even ten such individuals.

On the first floor, there lived a family with a little boy, Pawelek, who was Marylka's age and the two often played together in the courtyard. One time it happened that Pawelek got angry at Marylka and did not want to go near her. That is when his mother said to me, with satisfaction on her face:

- You see, the hate for your race is already imbedded in his blood and no power on earth will ever change it in him.

I wanted to reply:

- Your child has no notion of hate as yet and would never acquire it if his upbringing did not awaken it. Parents don't understand that by teaching hate to their children they awaken in them evil instincts which are dormant in every person, and that some day they themselves may fall prey to such instincts...

But I kept those thoughts to myself. I responded to her remark with silence. How can I discuss it with her when we live in totally different worlds?.

The second floor was occupied by Ukrainians. Those people did not stoop to address the Jews, not even with malice. When they passed them on the way, they turned their heads away with disgust and spat with a true Ukrainian coarseness.

When the shooting began, we found ourselves suddenly among all those people in one shelter. And we felt like a tiny animal in a lion's cage. They chased us from one corner to another, and yet they believed that "those lousy Jews are occupying the best spots." Whenever Marylka, a year-old child at the time, would cry, they gnashed their teeth and there was no end to their sneering at "that Jewish bastard." On the other hand, when Pawelek would scream, everyone was concerned if he was not in pain.

It was only Janka, who with her good, blue eyes, looked at us with guarded pity to which, nevertheless, she would have never admitted. .

One after another, the grenade explosions shook our house. We felt no fear of them at all.

- These are Russian grenades – we often thought with affection. We wished for them to keep shooting. Every interruption made us impatient, and every burst lifted our hopes. When they come, it will be the end of our sufferings...

But our hopes were shattered and became ruins a few days later. The Germans crossed San and began their march forward...

At that very time, there appeared a big article in the German newspapers describing a panzer battle which had taken place in Sanok and from which, of course, the Germans alit victorious, destroying 100 Russian tanks and taking lots of prisoners. Only the Sanok residents knew that no such battle ever took place in Sanok.

It was only when the Germans were far from Lwow that we began getting news from the "other side." (Part of Poland which belonged to Russia which, to this date, is still called "the other side"). That news was devastating for us, Jews.

The Germans, together with the Ukrainians, were perpetrating actual slaughters in every newly conquered town. They plundered and robbed apartments, while the blood of Jewish men, women and even children was running in the streets! In addition, hunger was prevalent. Terrible hunger. Without a possibility of satisfying it, not even with dry potatoes.

And it is precisely there that I had my parents and siblings, the persons closest to my heart.

- Knowing your father and his extreme fear of the Germans, I can vouch that he moved inside Russia together with the Russian army, taking the whole family along – Henek kept consoling me.

- What if they were not able to? What if they had no possibility? – I kept saying in despair.

-You always have to assume the worst, Sabina. In 1939 you were going crazy with concern and worry about them. And what happened? They were doing great under the Russian occupation...

- Well, while they were under the Russians, I was not worried. But now, now...

- Do you think that the news coming from that side is not greatly exaggerated?

After all, we were with the Germans for quite some time and yet, we are stilling living, although in great misery.

- Yes, but today they acquired pretext to murder...

The Germans, together with other anti-Semites—the Poles and the Ukrainians—were at that time spreading horrible rumors about how Jews, aided by Bolsheviks, murdered and abused the Aryan population. They spread such rumors in order to make their own crimes appear to be acts of revenge.

- A few weeks will pass and everything will straighten out, calm down and become clear—Henek was saying. – Till then you must try not to think about it and not worry yourself sick over it in advance.

Weeks went by. The streets of Sanok displayed huge maps of the East, heavily covered with little wooden flags with swastikas showing the number of sites in Russia already conquered by the Germans, and the great speed with which they were going ahead.

Those little flags were such an eyesore to me that I carefully avoided all those places where I might see them. It was not because I did not want to allow a doubt about the might of Russia, England and America to insinuate itself into my heart – no Jew ever had such doubts even at the time when the Germans were celebrating their biggest triumphs, and this is really characteristic. The Jews always believed that the Germans will suffer a shameful defeat and regarded their triumphs as merely a postponement of the moment so desired by the Jews.

Looking at the fluttering, red flags strewn all over the map, I had the impression that my bloody enemy is marching in front of me with his head high and a smirk on his face, showing me what a miserable worm I am compared to his might. I had the impression that his fat belly is bursting with pride. He holds his sides with laughter at my helplessness. At that moment I had a burning desire to cry out as loud as I could: "Do not rejoice before time! The time will come when we will roll with laughter at

your humiliating defeat! The surer you are today of your victory, the more humiliating will be your defeat!" That urge was so pressing that I could not trust my nerves and I preferred to avoid this temptation. It was not worth losing one's head over such an outcry. No one would benefit thereby.

The more the number of the little flags kept growing and the more they kept inching toward the East, the more frequent became our misfortunes.

The pogroms and sadistic murders on "the other side" became the order of the day. The Ukrainian sadism surpassed even that of the Germans.

Those who know about the existence of Ukrainians must surely know what characterizes that nation. Ignorance, boorishness and anger at the whole world. They come from fertile Ukraine and they believe it to be their motherland even though they never had it. Similarly to the Jews, they are spread around the world, and there is a great number of them in Poland where they have been treated by the Poles not much better than the Jews. They too have been taunted at every step and have not been admitted to any official positions. The world has no notion of how a minority was treated in Poland. And isn't it strange that precisely Poland, which for so many years suffered occupations by various nations turned herself into an oppressor? She turned out to be like a beggar who suddenly came into a fortune and, having closed himself in his selfishness, no longer wanted to see his fellow companions of the days of misery. Not only did not want to understand them (and who better than he knew the sharp claws of poverty) but kept sending them away from his doors and when they did not budge he set the dogs on them. Can anything good be said about such a rich man?

The Ukrainians did not extend their hands to their companions in slavery, the Jews, but instead their hate toward the Jews was terrible, as it was based on jealousy. They envied the Jews because they were able to cope better with adversity.

To act against the Jews was the only thing the Poles did not forbid the Ukrainians. But because they granted them nothing else which would allow them to raise their heads, the Ukrainians felt helpless and had to suppress their raging anger with great effort. Therefore, when their hands were untied and they were allowed to raise their heads, their anger exploded uncontrollably and found its outlet first of all in the Jews (they did not spare Poles either).

When the Germans entered Poland, the Ukrainian finally felt liberated and as mighty as the Germans. They enlisted in the German army, joined the German police and eagerly helped the Germans in everything, having been promised their dreamt-of Ukraine for after the war. .

They also helped the Germans in murdering Jews, a task in which they excelled, specially because they were armed while the Jews were not.

Eye gouging, cutting out teeth, tongues, noses, cutting up parts of their victims prior to death, all these were things well known and common to them. And although they have practiced them all along, they still managed to come up with an invention: a revelational invention, one that exceeded all the acts that had been committed by the oldest and wildest barbarians.

This is what it was: they took their victim for a nice little walk along the river, throwing him or her face down into the shallow water, holding him until he drowned while they experienced the great pleasure of feeling with their own hands the terrible suffering of agony of their victim. But if the dying took too long, they became impatient and buried the victim alive.

Many of my friends perished by these and other similar means, and many other friends witnessed these blood-curling scenes while awaiting their own turn which, in the last moment, they managed to avoid.

One reads a lot about cannibals and barbarians and about their horrific deeds which took place – of course, not in civilized countries and many ages ago - and which always filled us with dread. But when those cannibals are people presumed to be cultured, people among whom we live, and whose victims are our relatives and acquaintances, then, oh, what terror!...

These are then the terrible scenes I had before my eyes. Acquaintances who died this martyr's death appeared to me in my dreams and also when I was awake. They appeared at every step, coming from the night shadows as well as from the daylight. I was unable to escape them. Images with mangled body parts, with empty eye sockets blocked my way at all time. And no news yet from my family.

In the meantime, my child kept growing and developing. Free of worries, she moved around the room on her unsteady little feet, laughing and chatting merrily. Is there a bigger joy for a mother? Yet I was unable to enjoy her. A sorrow, a huge sorrow, kept pressing on my heart. How could I protect her from the fate which was approaching inevitably? A fate which I clearly felt. Can't we expect the things that happened there to happen here as well? Isn't the "boss" the same here and there?

I used to take my daughter for a long walk outside of town every day. Sometimes, I was accompanied on those walks by Pepka, my only friend that I had in Sanok at that time. She was in the unfortunate situation of having her parents and sister in Siberia, and only two brothers on "the other side." Just as I, she had no news from them yet. We commiserated with each other and consoled each other.

Earlier, when Sanok was Russia, something like a magnet kept drawing us to the river. With eyes full of yearning we looked at the other side where the Jews were not only Jews but were also human beings. We always watched the depth of the river and kept telling each other:

- What do you think? Could we cross the San today without drowning?

- What's the point? We won't cross it. Even if we succeeded in escaping a German bullet, the Russians would send us to Siberia.

- Do you know, Pepcia, I often think that we would be better off in Siberia than here. The Russians would surely recognize the reasons for our offenses and would not hold us there for long. Here, even though we already got used a bit to living like lepers, we always feel that the Germans have not finished with us yet.

- Maybe the war will be over before they do.

- Oh, how I wish to hold my child in my arms already after the war! Then I would know that she is safe.

And now, although on the other side of San there have been no traces of Russians anymore for quite some time, our steps kept turning to the other side, out of habit. The mountains and the woods which had appeared even more beautiful because they did not belong to Germany, now lost a lot of their mysterious charm.. And San itself seemed somehow gloomy and ragged. Still, we kept going there and kept talking about our loved ones who exist somewhere beyond San and who send us no sign of life.

Once, on a beautiful and warm fall day, I lied on the grass not far from the San, while my child was next to me in her carriage. I was gazing at the sun and steadily watched the lazily floating, spread out, little dirty white clouds.

And suddenly, from behind a thin cover, there appeared a tiny black spot and, as it kept approaching, it kept growing and assuming the shape of a bird.

- An airplane – I thought with indifference and closed my eyes while listening to the gentle hum.

For the first time in many weeks, I felt on that day a slight feeling of relaxation and a strange indifference and apathy.

The noise of the airplane kept coming closer and become more intense, and when I finally decided to open my eyes I saw the plane hanging low, right above me, and it seemed to be motionless. I sat up at once and instinctively grabbed the handle of the carriage.

Two German officers were standing nearby, on the road, looking up through binoculars.

- A Russian plane – I overheard their words, after which they fled for cover under the trees.

Guided by a self-preservation instinct, in the first moment I wanted to grab the child and take shelter somewhere, as they did, especially that the airplane was still hanging above me. But then I changed my mind.

- And even if?... I thought. – Even if? After all, isn't it all the same?...

But that airplane had no intention of acting as my angel of death. It turned around, performing some strange maneuvers in the air and finally started to climb higher and higher and to disappear...

At that very moment I noticed Henek, running on the road and searching for me with his eyes.

- Henek! Henek! I called to him.

He waived in the air a white piece of paper and kept running toward me, looking happy.

- A letter! – he cried from a distance. – You have a letter from your parents! They are alive and well! ...

I ran toward him, grabbed the letter from his hand and started to glance through it. Yes, it was their beloved handwriting. But I did not understand the words as they were jumping in front of my eyes.

Sobbing, I threw myself on Henek's neck and luckily no one except for the sky, the meadow and the mountain, witnessed this stupid scene.

Although I learned from the letter that my family was living in the country, in Kroscienko, suffering hunger and constant fear, I was not able to worry because I was so happy in the knowledge that they were alive. But as soon as I got over that first feeling, I decided to act in order to help them. Henek stood faithfully at my side and helped me all along.

There were already various occasions to send letters and packages to "the other side". Henek saw to it that they do not starve and, in the meantime, I began looking for possibilities to bring them over to Sanok. Legally, no one from "the other side" was allowed to come over, but many people came illegally. I tried to find out how they came, but out of fear they were so secretive that I was not able to learn anything. Thus I was groping blindly and could not find the way.

This was precisely the time when the pogroms began to slowdown and were replaced with the so-called "deportations" These were handled by the Germans only, and the first town they took place in was Lwow.

Jewish men and boys were grabbed off the streets and apartments, were loaded on freight trains and sent into the unknown. This fact was the most frightening to everyone. Until now there had been various deportations on our side, but mainly from town to town, or to camps, from where the deportees had the opportunity to give a sign of life at once. The Germans carried out these deportations rather frequently as it gave them the opportunity to confiscate Jewish properties and turn the Jews into homeless people and beggars. That was our big fear. Also frightening was the deportation into the unknown from where none of the deportees gave a sign of life for week. Nobody knew where they had been sent to.

Many thousands of Jews were deported in that manner and when the deportations kept taking place and there were no news, suspicions began creeping into our hearts...

People were saying:

- No. It is not possible that so many thousands of people at the same time...?

That was the only weak thread of hope...

I had a big family in Lwow: uncles, aunts, cousins and, above all, Minka, a cousin my own age, who was my friend and as close as a sister to me. She lived there with her husband and child and, since I had not had news from her yet, I was torn by concern about her. And she was the first victim from among those dearest to me.

This is how I found out about it:

A friend of my father's told me in great secrecy that there was a railroad man in Zagorz (a village next to Sanok) who for a lot of money brings in people from "the other side" in a locomotive. Although I did not have much money, I was decided to sell everything as long as I could save my family from that hell. Their letters had been desperate. They lived only on the packages sent to them by Henek, but one could not send more than 10 kg and not more than twice a week. Could that be enough for 5 persons? Added to that were the terrifying events happening almost daily even in villages. Men, old and young, were dying every day. They were dragged into the woods from where they would never return. My father and my 17-year old brother, Mendek, stayed hidden in the basement, deprived of daylight for weeks, in fear of being taken into the woods...It seems that the Germans favored the woods for their actions. Today, in Poland, there are many charming groves all over, hiding in them many tragic secrets. Like the Katyn woods which concealed the crimes committed on Polish officers. The place and the manner in which they killed the Polish officers was too similar to that in which they were annihilating Jews, so that there was no doubt that the Germans were the ones who committed that mass murder. We know well, too well, their tactics and ways.

The Jews were forbidden, under severe penalty, to cross the German border without a pass. But at the time when I wanted to go to Zagorz it was very difficult to obtain a pass; I would never get one because I had no valid reason. Under the influence of my family's imploring letters, I decided to go without a pass, not even knowing if I would find the railroad man at home.

Pepka was also getting desperate letters from her brothers, telling her that their were swollen from hunger and beatings received at work. They begged her to save them because they felt they would not last much longer. Thus, she went with me to Zagorz.

The day was exceptionally beautiful for a fall day. We went on country roads, hanging on each other's arms, and our conversation was full of hope...

The sun, with its dazzling brilliance, shone down with colorful brightness. The birds, taking advantage of the last days of summer, were flying around, drunk with happiness and carefree. In that atmosphere, our worries began to dissipate and disappear. We even forgot that we were risking severe punishment precisely because we were in the midst of those miracles of nature.

For the first time in many months we felt the awakening of our youth and we were reminded that we were only twenty-one years old.

That day everything was favorable to us. We found the railroad man at home and he agreed to bring our people over to us. Not everyone at once, but in installments. We left him a substantial deposit and returned home very happily. We made the trip without any mishaps. Henek awaited us at home and Marylka greeted me with one of her sweetest smiles.

In life, there are often days when everything goes extremely well, or days when nothing works. Thus, while all went so well on my first trip to Zagorz, two days later when I went there again, in the hope that I will take home some of my dear ones, everything went wrong.

Henek came with me, against his will, only because he did not want to let me go alone such a long way (Pepka had no reason to go yet). I felt that he should not take unnecessary risks. As a result, we had a fight.

The weather was awful. After all, there are often such sudden, drastic atmospheric changes in the fall.

The road was soft because of moisture. Our feet were sinking in the mud and puddles, while our shoes were full of water. The howling wind kept spraying our faces pitilessly with cold rain mixed with snow. This was a real "wet" snow storm while we, insignificant people, held in its power, were making our way with the movement of our hands similar to a swimmer in the midst of a raging element of the sea.

- You see – I kept saying, breathing heavily, - you see how unnecessarily you are plodding along in this weather...

- But I am alright – answered Henek snorting like a tired horse – much better than if I had to stay in a warm room knowing you are out alone in this storm. But let's not talk about it...

Anyway, talking was not possible. Swaying like a twig in the wind, we waded, step by step, fearfully glancing at the gloomy and fear-inspiring mountains.

- I keep going and going so that, after a two-year separation, this terrible separation, almost without hope of ever seeing each other again, I may meet with ...

I could not give it much thought because I had to keep fighting the wind in order to stay afloat. I was even grateful because if it were not for its fierce force my impatience would have probably driven me mad on that road.

Henek walked at my side panting and heaving. My faithful life companion.

It was only an hour later that I felt grateful for his presence next to me – when we stood in front of the railroad man's door and saw a big, black lock hanging on it.

The neighbors informed us that the man had not returned yet from the previous day and that his wife was staying with her parents in a village nearby. Both of them would probably be back at around five in the morning, at the earliest.

Suddenly, my heart found itself in icy, pitiless tongs. What can it be? He did promise that today for sure... Could there have been an accident?...

I really do not know what I would have done with this disappointment and despair having been exhausted and reeling on my legs, if I had not been able to lean on Henek's shoulder at that moment.

And he, not any less tired and concerned, succeeded to overcome the situation with a true virile energy.

He took me to a certain small Jewish house where they let us catch our breath and warmed us with hot tea.

- I won't go back- I declared – as long as I do not know what actually happened. I will spend the night here, but you, Henek, will go back. Darkness is approaching, so it will be safer. Just think of what your mother and brothers would feel if you would not come back today...

This time we did not fight.

He stayed a little while longer. He tried to lift my morale. And then he left and I accompanied him part of the way in the approaching, terrible night...

That had been the longest night in my life up to that time. (Later I did spend longer and more terrible nights.)

The kind landlord offered me his comfortable bed with a pillow and comforter, even in a separate room. But unfortunately, in addition to flees which kept jumping around on the straw and biting me, I was tormented by my thoughts, assumptions and unrest about the persons dearest to me whom I was about to recover when instead...

The darkness in the room was so terrible that it was scary. Once in a while a piece of furniture screeched, or the floor creaked. In my nervous imagination I heard several times the sound of bare feet coming toward my bed. Cold sweat covered my body. I had no courage to reach for a match.

When I calmed down a bit, the flees and the thoughts began to taunt me once more, soon to be forgotten as a result of other scary things: that someone is walking outside... that someone is lightly knocking on the window.. (a year later such things no longer scared me).

The night lasted so long that I had a feeling it would never end.

When at 5 o'clock I found myself outside alone, I was truly unhappy.

Although I knew that the man's house was very close and I knew the direction I had to take, at every step I kept finding myself up to my ankles in an ice cold puddle. I was shaking feverishly and my teeth were chattering.

Finally I found myself in front of the desired door through which I could see a thin ray of light.

With my heart beating strongly, I knocked.

The railroad man told me that he and our people were extremely lucky: one of his friends warned him that that someone noticed something suspicious in his locomotive and that they would probably carry out a search. For that reason he was already afraid to pick them up in Kroskienko, which turned out to be lucky because shortly after Kroskienko he was stopped by the railroad police and they searched his car thoroughly. Had they found anyone, he and they would have been lost.

- You probably understand now how risky this transport is. No wealth in the world is worth one's life. What do I care for money if it should cost me my life?

He added that he is fed up with all that, and gave me back the full deposit I had left him two days earlier.

Then very courteously he invited me for breakfast. But during breakfast he told me such horrible stories of things happening to Jews on "the other side" that I kept choking all the time. But the impression of his words was softened by the compassion which could be detected in his voice.

I will always remember that man as he really belonged to one of the few Poles who treated the Jews with humane feeling.

When I was walking back, dawn was beginning to appear through thick clouds. Although the wind had subsided, it was very cold and fine rain (called "siekanka") was drizzling continuously

I walked quickly, allowing the water to slowly get into my shoes. I was somehow thoughtless, numb and indifferent to everything.

Oh, to be home already. To be in my own warm bed and drown in indifference to everything.

But an event soon pulled me out of that condition.

I was already close to Sanok. Had I been found here, I would no longer be subject to punishment, which means that the danger of my route was behind me.

Dawn turned into a gray, gloomy morning. Only sparse clouds were covering the mountains.

Suddenly out of the fog there appeared several black spots which grew quickly and assumed the shapes of three men.

At first, I became frightened because one rarely meets passer-bys on these side streets. But as they approached, I recognized them and joyfully ran to meet them.

They were the three Maj brothers who used to come to our house often since they were great friends of my father. . During the war they escaped to the Russian side where they did alright. Their parents were in Sanok and the brothers were probably going to them now.

- Your parents will be so happy to see you – I called to them from afar – They were so worried about you since you have not sent them any news yet.

But when I came close to them, I stopped talking at once and my smile froze on my face.

They were terribly changed. Sunken cheeks and eyes, a greenish paleness covering their faces. Their clothes were in tatters and they were not wearing armbands.

The smile that crept up on their bearded faces resembled a ghostly mask. They greeted me with that smile, pointing to their youngest brother whom they were leading between them.

- Nuchim is sick – one of the explained. – Better if you don't go close to him...

I looked at Nuchim's dimmed and haggard eyes and I was shocked.

- What happened to him? - I stammered.

- Let's step aside and I will tell you everything – said one of the brothers. – But perhaps it is not advisable for you to walk with us. We are not wearing armbands which may be dangerous for you too.

- It's alright. Nobody goes through here – I replied.

And so, out of the chaotic explanation given by that haggard looking man, I found out in short all the terrible experiences of the three brothers.

They were among the six thousand Jews in Tarnopol whom the Germans took to the Jewish cemetery to be shot. Like all the others, they had to help in digging the ditch in which they were to be buried. But thirty young boys managed to escape in the last minute – the three were among them.

They walked all the way from Tarnopol to here, through meadows, woods and mountains, plagued by hunger and cold. On the way they stopped in various towns to rest and to get food; in Lwow they witnessed a big "deportation" and they were passing Sambor at the time of a pogrom and the biggest slaughter.

But their worst experience was in the Ustrzyce woods.

There the Germans nabbed Nuchim who had distanced himself a bit searching for water, and they, unable to resign themselves to the loss of a brother who had experienced with them all the sufferings a man can go through, watched from afar, from a hiding place.

- And so we witnessed how the henchmen sadistically pulled Nuchim up on a high side of the mountain, put him in a barrel which was standing there already, put a lid on it and with a swing pushed the barrel down...

-Before we started to run, we could still see how the lid came off and Nuchim started to waive his legs in the air...We ran as fast as we could and Nuchim, who caught up with us, ran with us. But since then, as you may have noticed, his mind is confused.

We were approaching the main road and it was time to bid good-bye to those poor boys. I stretched out my hand and Nuchim, seeing it, stretched his right hand as well and I glimpsed a sign of recognition in his eyes. That sign was followed by the following words:

- I recognize you. You are Sabina – he said clearly. You are still in this world but your cousin, Minka...

The brothers tried to stop him from talking, not allowing him to complete the sentence, but he managed to cry out:

- The beautiful Minka and her husband are already rotting in the earth...

I whirled around together with the earth and the sky so suddenly that if it had not been for the thin, tired shoulders of the emaciated boys I would have certainly fallen.

It was only much later that I found out exactly how Minka's tragedy had played out. I learned it from her husband's cousin who was present there and, since I had brought the subject up, I may as well describe the events now.

Minka's apartment was located on a side street, far from the center of town, on the second floor of the backhouse. To get to it, one had to go through several halls, stairs and balconies; it was covered and, therefore, in that time of unrest, was considered to be a real hiding place.

Whenever there were pogroms, deportations, roundups, etc., her parents as well the parents and siblings of her husband and other close relatives would seek refuge there. The two small rooms were full to capacity.

They would stay there, sometimes a few days at a time, and in fact the persecutors never discovered the place. In addition, she had good neighbors who would never denounce their "beautiful young neighbor" (that is what they called her because she was really beautiful).

One day, in the morning, the whole family began to gather since a roundup for deportation had started. Pale and frightened, they were sneaking in into the safety of that corner.

And precisely on that day, unaware of everything, her husband went to town early in the morning, several hours passed and he was not back.

Minka showed great concern. She kept running to the window and the door, looking and listening..

- He was supposed to return promptly – she lamented. What could have happened, why don't I see him?...

Everyone began to worry, and around noon Minka's frustration reached a breaking point. At that moment, there was a knock on the door.

She ran as quickly as she could to open the door. The neighbor, pale and shaking, ran into the room crying:

- They caught your husband! I saw him in that awful march on the street.

Suddenly Minka tried to catch the vacuum around her with her hands and then collapsed on the floor.

Panic broke out in the apartment. People were all tearing their hair out, and above it all that noise a pitiful cry of the child could be heard.

- Mama! Mama! - she cried, frightened on seeing the mother on the floor.

When she came to, her first words were:

- I will go to the 'Gestapo' and will try to get him out. After all, he is an American citizen and this should mean something. (At the time, America was still a neutral country).

The father and the mother began to wail loudly and everyone tried to dissuade her from such madness.

- Did anyone ever get out from the Gestapo alive?

But she kept saying that she is "going to the Gestapo". She insisted stubbornly.

- We have American citizenship and we have better chances than others.

- If that means anything, then they will let him go without your intervention – they tried to convince her. And the father kept begging his beloved and only child!

- Have pity on your parents who have no other life but you. Stop thinking about this madness if not for our sake than for the child....

- I will take the child with me...

She started quickly to dress herself and the child. Neither pleading nor tears helped.

- It does not matter. I cannot live without him...

"When she stood at the door, turning her face to us, she was so dazzlingly beautiful that in spite of ourselves her words had a soothing effect on us.

- Who would have the heart to hurt this masterpiece of nature?

Her cheeks were burning and her eyes, black as an abyss, were flashing and were full of nobility and sacrifice. She begged with her eyes for understanding of her action."

But her father blocked her exit, throwing himself before her on his knees, while the mother, kissing her hands, rose.

- Do not break our hearts!...

And others were calling:

- We lost Siolek and now you together with the child are throwing yourself voluntarily into the arms of death...

- Minius! Minius! Stay!

She stood there helpless, tall and slender, with widely open eyes, and it was obvious to all that she had a serious inner fight with herself.

- I must go! – she suddenly cried out so loud that everyone stood up.

Everything became silent immediately and in that silence she left with the child in her arms. No one stopped her....

Those who remained returned to the room, sat down on the chairs and sat silently and motionlessly, stunned and numbed. Their hearts were torn apart by despair and inhuman pain.

Minutes, or hours, or maybe eternity passed and no one moved. Nobody said a word.

Suddenly they heard quick steps in the hall and strong knocking on the door.

Someone opened.

It was Minka with the child.

Everybody relaxed. Without asking any questions, everyone was grabbing her, one by one, into their arms, hugging, kissing and crying.

- The child must be hungry – she turned to her sister-in-law Rechcia – please give her something to eat. Please, let me sit down...

Unsteadily, she walked toward the sofa and fell on it like a log.

- They promised me – she started talking in a piercingly calm and distinct voice – they promised me that if I come back tomorrow morning they will release us together...

But I must go by myself, without the child... that is what they said.

Once again all those present felt a sharp pain in their hearts.

That night no one went to sleep.

Minka, holding a prayer book in her hand, sat next to the child's bed. She prayed fervently, kissing the sleeping daughter's face every once in a while.

In the morning she became restless. She walked around the room, kissed either the father or the mother, sometimes everybody, one by one. Then she went again to the child, still holding on to the prayer book.

Before leaving, she called Rechcia to the other room and, attempting to stay calm, she started talking:

- Although I strongly believe that everything will work out alright, that I will soon return to you together with Siolek... But, you know.. You can never know with them... Take care of the child...- But already tears started to choke her. – I know that I don't really need to talk about it. You love her as much as I do...The sobbing choked her throat and she was not able to talk anymore.

She went early in the morning and never returned.

A year later, all those who were then crazy with grief for her and Siolek were no longer alive. Neither was the child.

Alas, how many thousands of such or similar tragedies were played out among the Jews in Poland!

After a long search, I found a certain driver, a Jew, who undertook to bring over my family and their belongings to Sanok.

The room I had live in was much too small to accommodate five more persons and I was forced to start looking for another apartment. That was not an easy thing in Sanok at that time.

I didn't even dare to dream about an apartment in town knowing that it was not possible, particularly for Jews, given that rumors were already circulating to the effect that Jews may be moved out of the center of town altogether..

With my child in the carriage, accompanied by Henek or Pepka. I walked every day for kilometers, looking for an apartment outside of town. I always went in different directions and never left out any house without going in and inquiring about vacant rooms. The answer was always either that there was nothing, or that they would not rent to Jews. This made me tired and nervous, but I did not relent.

In the end, I did find an apartment.

It was far and it consisted of two small rooms and a kitchen and it was in a Catholic house.

The rooms were small like boxes, but so light and sunny that I had the impression that everything was smiling and cheerful which is why I took it at once.

The landlords, the Kurkas, did not appear to be bad people and I did not detect any anti-Semitism in them. Although I did notice soon that they basically did not like Jews, but after all they did not bother with us. It happened that Mrs. Kurka even took a liking to me and with time.....

[page 35 of manuscript missing]

....

There was silence which no one interrupted. Even the child was quiet.

Then the girl burst out crying.

- That voice! the thought flashed through my mind.

With one jump I found myself next to her. I took her tear-covered face in my hands and fervently gazed at her.

That dear face which years and misery changed so much that I was not able to recognize at first .

I grabbed and hugged my little sister.

I cried and laughed. I was hysterical. And she, poor child, was equally moved.

- Maryleczka, come, say hello to your aunt...

Malcia picked her up and hugged her tightly. This moved her to such an extent that she fell onto a chair together with the child and started crying anew.

But I tried to regain my composure. I took off her coat, gave her water so she could wash herself and seated her at the table.

- You must be very hungry, darling – I asked .

- Actually, I have been hungry for several months already, but now, for the first time, I feel quite full even before starting to eat...

The poor girl was then assailed by questions from all sides.

How are they? Why did she come alone, and how? etc...

And they, although alive, were extremely weak from hunger, especially daddy and the youngest sister, little Rywcia. She herself was brought over by the driver whom I had hired, and who said that he would not bring anybody else as he was afraid. The reason was the recently ever increasing number of incidents where people were stopped for identification or search...

It was only after my mother-in-law and the boys had left, and she was already in bed, Henek and I sat down next to her and she told us things in great detail...

[page 37 missing]

Everybody was scared of Siberia; everyone regarded the people deported there as lost in a bottomless icy pit. But what was the reality after all? It turned out that the Jews in Siberia were the lucky ones whom fate chose. Although they had to suffer cold and hunger, had to work hard and live miserably, they were people just the same. Miserable people, but people after all, while we here were always persecuted, always hiding in burrows and in fear for life of a quarry

But my family was not threatened by Siberia. They led a quiet life and their only concern was that their oldest daughter (I) was living in the German hell.

That hell was not a real hell just then. Our situation was very bad but, compared to what the future had in store, it was all nothing.

The Russian-German war hit them like a sudden bolt of lightning. It broke out unexpectedly and they had not time to escape.

With the arrival of the Germans, a terrible life began for them and all the other Jews residing there.

From Sambor they escaped to Kroscienko, in the hope that life would be safer in the country. It turned out to be the opposite.

Every few days, several good-looking young henchmen arrived in a fancy car and, spreading themselves all over the village, they robbed and murdered, left and right. The village is small, so what can be easier than not by-passing any of the little houses? And the accommodating Poles and Ukrainians willingly pointed to the Jewish homes.

My father and brother managed to escape back to Sambor; that was lucky because on the evening of their departure the whole apartment was plundered, a lot of things taken. Who knows what might have happened had they found men on the premises...

Still, in Sambor, they were faced with the worst of pogroms. For six days they remained in hiding, in the attic, together with some other Jews, living on black bread and water.

For six days non stop, bands of Germans and Ukrainians cruised around the town, inflicting death and destruction. They went from house to house, leaving behind and [??] Some people were half-dead as a result of beatings. Every Jew, male or female, found on the street was killed mercilessly. No street remained unstained by Jewish blood...

Five persons were killed in the house where my father and brother were hiding. On the staircase leading to the attic one could hear the thuds of the heavy boots and the terrible shrieks of those bestially enraged... (I don't know how one can refer to them as people). But thanks to some miracle, in the very last moment, they turned around.

And then, once they had their fill of blood, there came a moment of respite.

Father and brother returned to Korscienko and, like everyone else (not Jews only) they suffered hunger and became sick as a result of it.

And every once in a while new killings of Jews took place again and again.

A few days before my sister's departure, their closest neighbor was found on the edge of the woods, his whole body cut into pieces and each part thrown into different places...

I spent a few days after my sister's arrival on searching in vain for another driver. It happened at that time that, without any warning, my mother-in-law was ordered to vacate her room.

The Germans did that often when they took a liking to a Jewish apartment.

My mother-in-law's room was big and sunny. They came and said "get out at once with your trash."...

Of course, they never worried in the least where a homeless family would sleep.

My mother-in-law and the boys came to me and my little room became impossibly crowded (later such things became [illeg.]). It got so bad that even my child was not able to move around the floor for lack of space.

Since my parents' apartment was empty, we decided that I, my sister, Henek and the child would move there.

We occupied only one room with a terrace, while the other room with a kitchen remained empty, waiting for them to return.

We felt alright here, but going to town was difficult since it was quite far and the entire road was one big puddle as a result of daily rain and melting snow.

As a compensation, we had the quiet of the village, the nearby San and a view on the mountains, always beautiful even if gloomy at this time.

Mrs. Kurka often looked in on us. She would bring for my child fresh milk from her cow and eggs freshly taken from the chicken. She showed us much kindness and, since she was naturally a big talker, she talked endlessly...Nevertheless, she was young, pretty and not stupid and one was not bored in her company.

One day she asked why my parents were not coming. I then told her that I had been unable to find an opportunity to bring them, to which she said:

Well, I know a driver, a German, who happens to have a truck to his disposal for a few days now. If I could convince him, he would transport them for sure. He would not ask for too much money and I also think that it would be safest to travel with him – nobody would stop a German on the road...

- Well, - I said without enthusiasm – you must understand that I cannot trust a German ...

- As far as that goes - she replied – I can vouch for him. I have known him for a long time and I know him to be a good young man.

[pages 2, 4 and 6 do not belong in this "Notebook 1"]

My father was lying on the sofa, wearing his clothes, and I was sitting next to him. In the weak light of the dimmed lamp I looked closely at his dearest face. While listening to his words, I thought with admiration:

- How composed he is at such a moment.

I was extremely shaken up. I managed with difficulty to concentrate in order to understand his words.

This is the last time I see and hear him. With this premonition, my heart kept aching painfully. And my father kept talking:

- The Germans demonstrated the diabolic nature of the civilization as it exists there today. All the laws of humanity have been violated. In pursuing their dirty aims they consider each lie to be right. Because this civilization of theirs is a civilization in appearance only. It makes fools of them and is hell for those who are defenseless. Robberies, murders, rapes which they now commit, the fire which they spread on earth will in the end consume them as well. This is why I know that the Germans will suffer a shameful defeat. The Germans are possessed by a destructive spirit which will claim them as its victims. The duty of the entire world – and of every individual – is to contribute to the quickest possible destruction of this evil which with every minute of its existence brings on new tragedies.

We can help in this effort only if we earnestly try to stay alive in spite of their will. Therefore, everyone must take advantage of every available opportunity to save oneself. Unfortunately, I do not have any, but you must not neglect anything in order to survive the war.

- I do not understand the purpose of (illegible) without you – I said.

- A very important purpose – he replied. To make the world aware of our tragedy with all its details.

- But how would I be able to do this?

- Describe it...

- I could never be capable to do it. One needs to have very special ability and a technique. The fact that I wrote some short stories or short novels does not prove that I would be able to create such an opus.

- But child, who is talking about an opus. Everyone who survives this war has the obligation to write about his experiences. Own experiences only, because the experiences of every individual consist precisely of these huge multi-million tragedies. For instance, are we the only ones who are experiencing an evening like this? Think about how many hundreds or thousands of people experience the same. And although you may not have the writer's technique, perhaps just because of it your story will be of greater value since it will be pure truth, without any adornments.

[p. 6]

Your story will be the source for an opus which, having yourself been unable to write, you should give to the world. This work could have never been created if it did not get the facts from sources written by individuals who suffered these atrocities on their own skin.

[Diary – Part 2]

But at that moment I did not trust her too much. It happens that I had found out that she herself comes from a German family and it was only because of her husband, a Pole, that she did not take on the status of a "Volksdeutscher" [ethnic German].

However, when I discussed this matter with Henek later, we concluded that if a German undertakes to do this he himself will make sure that everything goes well, because he will worry about his own hide. Besides, we had no other choice and their situation in Kroscienko was such that they did not have much to lose. So we made the decision.

Immediately the next day I went to see Kurka and we went together to that German.

He appeared to be not a bad person and agreed to our proposition.

It was decided that on that same day, at noon, he would pick them up, so that they would reach Sanok in the evening, under the cover of darkness.

When I brought the news home, (my?) sister insisted that she will go with the driver.

- They there do not expect to be leaving today and, in haste, they will not be able to manage to pack their things by themselves. They will probably be weaker still...

It is then that Henek said:

- You will not help them much. You know, I will go with you -.

- But you are unnecessarily risking your life with such a trip – I protested. Things are not worth it. I see no harm in their not taking everything along.

- Think of how they will feel when a German comes for them by himself – he said. – Knowing your family, I am sure they will think that it is a trap...

Basically, he was right. And besides, I noticed an unshaken determination in Malcia's eyes, and a strong desire in Henek to make a sacrifice for my family, thus for me... I could not stop them.

They left.

And deep in my heart a terrible thought was gnawing at me, a thought that I pushed away with all my might.

- Who knows if I won't lose them as well.

I kept busy all afternoon but everything kept falling out of my hands. I felt feverish. I felt that I was burning, that I was shivering from anxiety.

- Will they come?

- Oh God, will they come at all?

- And Henek ...

Those were terrible hours for me!.

In the evening I put the lights on and filled the stove with wood.

- When they come, all chilled, let them come in as if they were coming into paradise – I thought.

I started preparing dinner and, altogether, looked for something to do in order to pass the time somehow.

But in the end I had nothing left to do. Everything was ready. And actually they should have been here already...

Fearing to remain by myself with my thoughts, I took my child and went to see Kurkowa [Mrs. Kurka]. They received me cordially and tried to calm me by saying that packing takes time and that this terrible weather makes travel difficult...

For a while my nerves were lulled but by the time it was past 8 o'clock my anxiety returned with double force. I started wandering through the room, unable to find a place for myself. I kept running out, intently listening into the silence of the night. A silence disturbed only by the howling windstorm.

You are very nervous – Kurkowa kept saying – you must love them very much...

- I love them very much...

- It is a known fact that the Jews are very close to their families..

- Yes, it is true – I replied, without even knowing what I was saying.

In the meantime. Kurka was outside. When he returned, he slowly sat down on the chair and calmly announced:

- They are coming...

- What? What did you say!? – I jumped out – Perhaps it only seemed so to you?

- What do you mean? Don't I recognize the car? They are close already. Here, listen...

And really a low engine purr reached my ears.

When I ran out, the car was just turning into our street. I started trembling violently. My head was spinning, my legs were shaking under me. I would have probably fallen if it were not for the wind which kept throwing snow in my face, thus constantly bringing me to.

The car stopped right in front of me.

I saw shadows appearing from inside, but it was very dark and I recognized no one.

I stretched my arms before me and like a little child, with a quivering voice, I started calling:

- Mama! Papa!...

Someone grabbed my hands and I lost consciousness!

Next morning, as I was walking to town, my heart was bursting with happiness.

It was quite frosty, but the sun was shining and the snow was crunchy under my feet. This time the long way did not seem to be so.

I thought about last night, spent with my beloved family after a two-year separation. I thought of how enchanted they were with Marylka whom, after all, they did not know yet, and about how after all their experiences they felt like in heaven here. And even their recounting of the terrible experiences, the fact that daddy's hair became very gray and that they all looked like skeletons, could not deprive me of my bliss.

As soon as they have a little peace and start eating better they will become themselves again – I consoled myself.

But once in town, my happiness was destroyed with a single blow.

I already saw from a far a group of people reading a newly posted notice. I approached and started reading, but while doing so darkness began to cover my sight and in that darkness the letters were bunching up and kept turning before my eyes.

The "Gestapo" was addressing everybody who came from "the other side" with an order to leave Sanok at once and return to the place they had come from. Although their stay in Sanok was illegal, therefore punishable, the "Gestapo" will pardon them this breach and they will be issued a return pass. However, anyone remaining in the Sanok area two days later, if caught, will be sentenced to death. The same sentence will apply to those Jews who will shelter them.

When I returned home, my heart aching, I told them about the posted notice, knowing already what their decision would be. How could they return to that hell for a slow death?

- You must move from here at once – said my father. – We have no choice but we don't want you to be in danger because of us...

Even if we wanted to move, there was no place to go. We did not want to be squeezed in one small room with my mother-in-law and three brothers-in law. The thought of starting to look for an apartment, to go through the move, did not appeal to us either. After all, what would my life be if I lost my whole family, reunited with us by miracle, and what would Henek's life with me be then?

- Whatever happens with you let it happen with us as well – we decided.

Since that moment, death kept its arms spread over us.

"Death penalty."

These words held such power that many Jews returned to their previous sufferings as quickly as they could.

So many left that the Gestapo, certain that none of them remained in town, did not even begin the search.

And that was our luck.

In addition, we had the advantage of living far from town and had no close neighbors except for one little Jewish house. As for the Kurkas, we were sure that they would not denounce us, and in town only a few friends of my father who were trustworthy knew of their stay in Sanok.

It happened that the situation in Sanok was better than anywhere else, thanks to chairman Werner who was very influential with the Gestapo and eagerly took advantage of that influence for the "benefit of the Jews".

Thus, we could have had a relative peace but for the awareness that we were living under the threat of death which heavily weighed on us. We shuddered at every casual noise, at every louder knocking and in our nervous imagination we saw the Gestapo henchmen coming for us. Our life would have been one stretch of sufferings if we did not find a way to calm our tattered nerves.

I found such a way by suggesting that we make a shelter in the apartment.

Our room had no basement under it, only bare ground. I suggested to lift a few planks from the floor, dig a deep and wide hole, big enough to accommodate a few persons. Then to make small, hardly noticeable doors from the floor and then cover the whole spot with a small rug, so that nothing would show.

Henek and I saw such a shelter once, in Debica, and thanks to that shelter Henek avoided being caught and sent to a camp in Pustkow.

We told this story to my parents.

Once, during our stay in Debica, the Germans rounded up people for deportation to Pustkow. Pustkow was a camp near Debica where the work and beatings were impossible to bear. Every day more than a dozen Jewish bodies were taken out from there.

Henek together with his uncle managed to run to a neighbor who happened to have had such a shelter. Eight men hid there, the floor was covered with a blanket. The Germans, with their wild screams and bayonets in hand barged into the room, turned everything over, smelled around, searched and found nothing...

- We should have this kind of a shelter, even if only to calm our nerves, I said.

- The awareness that in the event of something happening we have some escape will keep our spirits up

I imagined it as follows: should we hear some suspicious knocking (we had our own knocking system), they would all hide in the shelter while I with Henek and the child would stay. That would mean that we were the only ones occupying the apartment. This would have been quite believable given that we alone were registered there.

Everyone liked my plan. The brothers-in-law, together with Henek and my brother, worked quietly at night, digging a large hole; they took out the dirt in backpacks to a nearby field, only at night, exercising extreme caution.

A few days later the shelter was ready and we were able to breathe a little freer.

But not for long.

My mother-in-law had a little money left and was able to manage on her own. On the other hand, my parents had nothing and the burden of supporting the family which consisted of eight persons fell on Henek's young shoulders. I saw that he suffered on that account, specially because he had no means of earning money and the cash kept depleting. But of course he never said anything until the time when no money was left and we needed to consult with the family about the steps to be taken.

We still had my engagement diamond ring and two rather expensive fur coats left from the good days. Thus we decided to sell one of the coats for the time being. But there were no takers for such expensive fur in Sanok and it became necessary to travel with it to another town...

It was out of the question for men to travel in those days because they were at a much greater risk than women.

My mother was too exhausted to undertake a trip and my 16-year old sister was still too young. Thus it was up to me to go.

I received a pass with great difficulty, thanks only to Werner. Because it was so difficult to obtain passes, Jews traveled very rarely.

Since some friends of my father's lived in Tarnow, I decided to go there, knowing that they would help me in the sale of the fur coat.

It is quite understandable that the trip was extremely unpleasant. As an oddity on the train in those days, I was unceremoniously looked at by all as cattle. Snide and harassing remarks from the lips of the Poles, rejoicing in my downfall, were showered at me. And I, mum, branded by a shiny white armband, sat with lowered eyes and felt like sitting on a glowing bed of coal. I am ashamed to admit to this date, after all the happenings, and especially then, that I was unable to get used to listening with indifference to all the venomous words.

There was no ghetto yet in Tarnow. Although the Jews lived in a separate part of town and were not allowed to show up on the main streets, they still had relative freedom. They engaged in business and earned money.

But I did not do well with the sale of the fur coat. I spent several fruitless days and, finally, becoming impatient, I left the fur in Tarnow and returned to Sanok. I asked my friends to sell the coat if possible and I would return to get the money; my pass was valid for two weeks. (There was no possibility of remitting the money by mail because the Jews were officially not allowed to have more than two thousand zlotys per family and I expected to get seven thousand for the coat.)

A week later I received a telegram that the fur had been sold. However, on the day when I planned to return to Tarnow, there was a rumor of a bloody pogrom there.

A panic spread through Sanok given that Tarnow was the first town on this side where that kind of a pogrom had taken place.

The currents from the "other side" are beginning to get through to us – the worried people were saying. Soon we will be the unlucky ones, like the Jews there.

- This was to be expected. A Jew is a Jew to them whether he is here or there.

My trip was put off for a few days but in the end I had to go since my pass would soon expire. There was a real despair at home when I said good-bye.

My friends in Tarnow did not look the same to me. Pale, frightened, hiding in corners, and talking in whispers. Seeing them in that stage, I had the feeling that the enemy was right at the door and would enter into the room at any moment. That was awful.

Everybody was recounting some miracles. One man was being pursued but, by a miracle, was not caught. Another one was in an apartment which, by a miracle, was by-passed.. Still another one had a brilliant idea to post a sign on the door reading "typhus" and the Germans, afraid to be infected, by-passed him. Still one other was hiding under a sofa and, by a miracle, the Germans did not look there. Etc. etc. Those were the miracles experienced by the Jews (what a life).

This may sound selfish, but when I finally left that gloomy and terrible atmosphere I was truly relieved.

While walking quickly toward the station I really wanted to avert my eyes from the sight of fading little and big brownish spots on the street or sidewalk not yet removed. But my eyes were drawn to that sight and, like riveted, could not move from it.

- Blood, I thought in horror. – Here I see Jewish blood unjustly spilled...

The sight of that blood impressed me tremendously. Each nerve in me trembled separately. I virtually did not know what was happening to me. In that state I returned to the train.

But my fate decided that I had not experienced enough that day and prepared for me two more extremely unpleasant events during the trip.

I sat quietly in the corner of the bench, my eyes shut but my head full of various dark thoughts. Actually, I may have been dozing and dreaming of all those bad things.

Suddenly, I was awoken by a terrible scream. I saw a middle-aged short man, his eyes glaring at me. It took a little while before his words reached my consciousness.

He was shouting at me to get up at once since he had no place to sit and it was unheard of for a person to have to stand while a dirty Jewess was sitting.

Usually, in such cases, I remain passive or give in, but this time, perhaps because of the recent experiences, my nerves have had it and my blood was boiling in my veins.

- First of all, I consider myself as much a person as you are, I shouted back at him. – And I think that it is rather unheard of for a woman to make room for a man.

Everyone looked on at this scene with interest and pleasure feeling a brawl in the air.

- This cheeky dirty Jewess dares to claim to belong to humanity!

- Perhaps it is you, with your behavior, who shows lack of humanity?

- Stop barking and get up at once.

- So far there is no law that says that one must obey the Poles. You don't have much more of a say than we do. I would give in to a German but I will not to a Pole.

- You should know that I am a German and now get out, I don't want to talk with you.

- If you are a German then why don't you travel in the compartment reserved for Germans? I kept talking being certain that he was lying.

- If you show me your German identity card I will give you my seat at once.

- I will show it to you in a way that will knock you out! He yelled and approached me with an outstretched arm.

I jumped up and suddenly, unexpectedly for me, I slapped his face with such force that my hand became painful.

And then, with a startle, I found myself before an accomplished fact and instinctively turned my back expecting a bolt to strike me any minute.

But the arm of that disgusting man started to go down. He touched the fading trace of my fingers on his face and then, with a menacing gleam in his eyes, he reached for his pocket.

We were facing each other up to the moment when he, having found among his papers the *Voksdeutscherkarte* [ethnic German's identity card], shoved it under my nose. And I, having seen it, felt that the ground was caving under my feet.

- This is the end for me – the thought went fleetingly through my mind as, half conscious, I slid down on the seat. And a thought was burning in my head like tongues of fire: - I hit a German.

As if coming from another world, the following words reached me:

- Why should I bother to teach the bitch a lesson? At the first stop I will bring in the police, let them shoot her like a dog.

Just as he uttered those words, the train sopped at a station and he went down.

Somebody pulled me by the arm, whispering:

- Save yourself, run. –

I looked up in surprise.

- Is there still hope for me to save myself?

But the word "run" began to energize me.

I got up quickly and left. I passed a few compartments until I found myself in the next car. I went into the toilet, took off my armband and my hat, changed my hairdo a bit, and going over to yet another car, I sat down in a compartment. There was a death penalty in effect for removing the armband. But I entrusted my life to fate. Should they find me here, they will kill me anyway; if not, then at least my travel companions will not see that I am a Jew and will not harass me with their actions and snide remarks which, for now, I could not bear to hear.

I started anxiously for the police to show up. But some time elapsed, we passed station after station, but no police.

And at the moment when I was beginning to regain my composure, one of the women struck up a conversation with me.

She was a young, good looking girl, but with a malicious look in her eyes. When the conversation touched on the then most popular subject, the Jewish question, the girl became agitated.

- You have no idea how I hate the Jews. Although I never had any closer relationship with them, the sight alone makes me grind my teeth. They are some base, disgusting nation which should have been exterminated long ago.

My heart was racing but, for fear of betraying myself, I started to agree with her.

- Not all are the way you picture them, a young man interjected himself in the conversation.

- I know many honorable Jews, competent doctors and honest businessmen and would be a pity to annihilate them. (I instinctively felt like throwing myself at him for those words.)

- I tell you that there are none like that. What you see as virtue is only a mask which those swine are capable of putting on and deceiving us. But perhaps you yourself originate from Jews and therefore take their side – she remarked with malice.

- Not to worry about it – he replied with a smile. I only believe that it is naïve to state that all the people of a nation or race are either good or bad. Every nation has good and bad people and the Jews are no exception. That is all I wanted to say.

- And I say that the Jews are precisely an exception. They are a harmful element. The Germans are too nice to them. They should simply kill them all. Then there would be peace. They deserve this destruction at least for what they did to our people on "the other side" during the Bolshevik days. I hate them so much that without blinking an eye I could watch them, their wives and children being slaughtered. I myself would be able to kill them as well.

- You are a valiant woman, the young man said sarcastically...

Of course, I was unable to discuss the subject with her for fear that she would recognize who I was and would denounce me without hesitation.

Instead, I had to keep agreeing with her while I felt my blood draining from my heart, drop by drop...

How tired and exhausted I was after that trip.

And the unknown man who probably was one of the few people with a heart and who dared to publicly stand up for the Jews will always be remembered by me with gratitude..

Up to the time when a final order for annihilation of all the Jews came from Berlin, there were towns in Poland where tragic things were happening from the beginning, and then there were others where things were not too bad at first.

This depended largely on the local Gestapo and on financial possibilities of the Jews. When the Gestapo men, with the help of gifts and money, became approachable and were accommodating to the Jewish Council, things were not too bad. But when they remained inflexible in spite of taking from the Jews as much as they could, then the situation was hellish.

It is generally known that, for instance, in Lodz the conditions were exceptionally bad. But there were many such exceptional towns throughout Poland. But there were also, in much smaller numbers to be sure, towns where the situation was relatively good; one of the latter was Sanok.

While in Krakow, Tarnow, Rzeszow and in many other small towns ghettos were being created, pogroms were taking place as well as those terrible "deportations" to unknown destinations, whose victims were women and children as well, there was still a calm in Sanok, marred only by news coming from all over.

Werner showered the Gestapo with gold, met all the requirements, was at their back and call at any time and, as long as he was able to, managed to deflect the imminent danger from the town

And that is how it was until the spring.

My family did not dare to stick their noses out during the day, and it was only in the evening, once in a while, that they went out individually to the banks of San in order to breathe in some fresh air which everyone hungered for. They lovingly melted the snow in their hands, they absorbed the view which was coming out of the night shades, the beautiful sites of Sanok, while their hearts were beating from fear of some unwanted meetings. They hurried home as quickly as possible.

During long winter evenings, when the children were playing, romping in the middle of the room, we the adults were sitting around a hot stove, having long talks. We were immersed in a true family atmosphere. We had the impression that, after long battles, we had reached a quiet resting place where we finally felt good.

Oh, what a delusion!

A delusion that dissipated every morning when our blood would often turn to ice in our veins on hearing the news reaching us.

And misfortunes began to affect us personally as well.

The parents and siblings of my father who had been in Rzeszow were deported. The mother's sister and four young children were also deported and she had no news from the rest of her family. A large number of our friends from Tarnow and Krakow and Warsaw were no longer alive.

Sorrow and despair were tearing at our hearts and, in addition, our own fate kept looking into our eyes as a poisonous snake

A friend of my father's came to see us once, a broken man, bringing us recent, terrible news.

- Where is our God? He kept asking.

My father was pale as a corpse and his hands were nervously in motion.

- I hope it does not affect his heart, I kept thinking to myself.

- You are unhappy to be a Jew, right? He asked his friend.

- Of course...

-Would you prefer to be, say, a German?

- Today, naturally I would.

Suddenly, my father jumped up and in a screaming voice, such as I had never heard from him, he started to shout:

- I swear that I will be able to make a miracle and change you into a German! But when you are him, you will have to do what they do...You will have to kill! Make up your mind now whether you prefer to be an innocent victim or to kill innocent victims?...

Speak! .

The man kept gazing at my father with his eyes wide open and when my father stopped shouting he lowered his eyes in embarrassment.

- Yes - he stammered – it is better to be killed then kill other people...

On the background of these dark tragedies, the love which budded between my sister and brother-in-law Israel, first, innocent and pure love, beautiful, like a lonely mountain ..[illegible word]

while threatened with annihilation by the raging hurricane kept raising its velvet head with a friendly smile.

Israel came often to our home, where he had a chance to talk to Malcia. Sometimes, in the evening, they would go out for short walks from which they returned with blushed cheeks, a smile on their faces and a gleam in their eyes.

The family looked at it with indulgence while I and Henek saw them already, in our imagination, tied with a marriage knot.

They would have probably made a good couple. They understood each other and had blameless characters, but unfortunately... Actually, they did unite but not in this sad world. Who knows if they are not better off now? Who knows if they don't walk together on that paradise lane, strewn with fragrant roses, smiling and happy while here every one of their smiles, every bit of happiness was marred by some new blow?...

With the coming of spring a wave of misfortunes befell Sanok and the blows that hit us became heavier as they were the result of a long suppressed might of the fist.

It started with a trifle.

An order was published to the effect that all the Jews must deliver all their furs to the Gestapo. Under penalty of death it was forbidden to withhold even a small piece of fur, even as little as one centimeter long. For his part, Werner posted a notice urging the population to strictly abide by the order as otherwise the consequences could be disastrous.

One hour later, crowds of Jews, with packages under their arms, were surrounding the building of the Gestapo.

All that happened precisely at the time when the money received for the sale of the first fur coat was almost depleted and we began to think about selling the second coat. This was a great blow to us, but not one to dwell on for long. Too bad. We will have to manage in a different way. After all, I still had the diamond, a very valuable one. (Of course, one was not allowed to keep diamonds nor gold. An order was issued as early as the beginning of the war to the effect that Jews were to hand over all their valuables. But a diamond was small enough to be hidden safely and therefore nobody surrendered such items. At that time, the penalty was not even that severe.)

Still, we did not want such an expensive fur to be handed over to the hated Germans who would make good use of it. We decided to give them some small fur pieces and burn the good one...

- But actually why burn it? - said the always practical Henek. - If we don't hand it over, it would be better to bury it somewhere, so that after the war we may have a souvenir of the good pre-war times.

And that is what he did.

But many people in town were as smart as we. Some did not surrender the furs for the same reasons as we, while others did not want to part with them because those were the only valuable objects they owned.

All that would have succeeded because the Gestapo men collected truckloads of furs, but for the fact that some people had the idea of placing the furs for safekeeping with their Aryan friends.

Some of the Aryan friends, however, turned out to be not such good friends and they denounced to the Gestapo the Jews who had given them the furs.

Those were the first victims in Sanok – the first ones since the onset of war. There were four families, 26 people – men, women and children – who were taken to the Jewish cemetery and shot to death there.

That was the beginning of checks and searches for furs in Jewish homes during which several people from "the other side" were found and killed at once.

Since then, not a week passed without the killing of several Jews.

Regardless of the extent of the offense, there was only one punishment for Jews: death.

Our situation became extremely bad for two reasons: first, my family was from "the other side" and, second, neither we nor the in-laws had any money left for everyday life.

In the midst of the storm of misfortunes, my mother-in-law appeared one day before Werner pleading with him for a pass to go to Krakow.

- You must have lost your senses! he shouted in reply. – What Jew would travel nowadays? Don't you know that every step during the trip may mean death?

- But this is precisely a matter of life – replied my mother-in-law. She continued to plead and insist on the pass.

- Alright, if you want I cannot refuse you. But please listen to what I think about it: You will pay with your life! Life! Life!.

Werner's words had such an impact that my mother-in-law, shattered, returned home. What good would the trip do if she were to die together with the diamond.

We started looking around in Sanok for a prospective buyer for the diamond but, as we expected, there was none. The Jews needed cash and no one was crazy enough to buy diamonds in the face of death. We had no acquaintances among Gentiles.

Thus a trip to Krakow became a pressing need. I had a long argument with my mother-in-law as to which one of us was to go, but my mother-in-law was adamant:

- I am almost fifty and my life is no longer worth much, while you, at 22, have everything open before you.

And she left...

She returned after a week, happy, bringing several tens of thousands zlotys – but looking more than 10 years older.

But apparently we were no longer destined to enjoy peace; soon another blow fell upon us.

The Gestapo began going from house to house, looking for people from "the other side" whom they called communists. One day they came to a little Jewish house near us and, having found there a crippled man who was from "the other side" and was hiding at our neighbor's house, they shot him while he was lying in bed. On leaving, they warned the neighbor that they would get even with him for hiding the refugee.

We suddenly realized that if we don't find a way out our days are counted.

- I will go to see Werner and will tell him the truth about you being here, I said once in a surge of despair. – Maybe he will give us some advice...

- Maybe this is what we will do - said my father – but this evening is the first day of Passover, so let us put it off for two days.

- If we survive, we will be the just ones since suffering ennobles the soul; but if we do not, we will be among the holy ones...Now we must free ourselves from fear because fear abases our souls.

- But how do we rid ourselves of fear?

- We must concentrate and look face our fate with courage. Because things will happen as fated to everyone. The fears and defiance will not stand in the way of what must happen...How much easier it would be for a man to stretch out his hand to fate and say: I am waiting to give myself to you without a murmur.

My father had a feeling that he was spending holidays together with his dearest and most beloved ones for the last time in his life. Of course, he never said that but it was obvious from his entire behavior.

My mother-in-law and her boys spent the two days at our out-of-town residence.

During the whole time, the table was laden with the best food and all kinds of delicacies that one could afford at the time.

At my father's request, we tried to act happy and merry and to forget the whole world.

- I wish to see once more in my life a smile of pleasure on your faces but, since I don't know if I will live that long, I want to pretend that you are satisfied.

After the Seder, we sat late into the night, talking.

My father, in a humorous and playful way, recounted some events from his past, reminisced about some of his aspirations for the future and, with a smile, he joked:

- Yes, yes, dear man, pitiful ball of fate. You believe sometimes that you are the master of your will but fate always conquers you....

He showed a lot of tenderness to my mother and praised each child, one by one. For the first time in life he told us that he was pleased with us, that we did well by him and, what's more, that he was proud of us.

He expressed his happiness with the fact that I had a good husband in Henek and that if he could leave all his children in such good care as I was in he would be quite satisfied.

He pretended to be joyful and careless, trying to make us laugh and tell pleasant stories to which he listened with pleasure.

We did not allow any bad news to reach us during those two days; we did not go to town and those who came to visit us were at once warned by my father not to talk about such news. His aim was to really let us forget and be happy in that short period, in take a deep breath in order to have strength to confront the events awaiting us.

On the second, at the same time the last, night of the holidays his behavior was quite unbelievable.

- You know, let us dance once more before tomorrow comes...let's dance once more in life!

With youthful enthusiasm, he grabbed Henek and his brother in the middle of the room, and waving his arm invited the in-laws to join them. And there they started dancing, in a ring, holding hands and humming a Hebrew song.

My father danced as if he were in ecstasy. He banged his feet, shook his hands and sang while tears were streaming from his half-closed eyes. The harder he sang and danced, the more the tears were falling down to the floor, spraying it with little black drops.

His enthusiasm caught us all, including the women who were only watching. Our cheeks were burning, our eyes shining. We were moved by some kind of madness.

After a while, only three of them remained in the middle of the room: my father, brother and Israel.

I still wonder what forces joined those three in that mad dance, just those three who later perished, one after the other, in the same camp?

I sense some secret power bringing on those events, but I am still unable to understand it.

That was a picture which seemed to me as unreal then, when I looked at it, as it does now when I see it in my imagination.

When those three, joined in that unbelievable dance, appear to me out of the shadows of remembrances, I...well, no use my trying. I cannot describe what I feel.

Shortly after the holidays, I went to see Werner and, in one breath, I spilled the whole truth out to him.

On seeing his reaction to my words, I became so terrified that I thought I would faint.

White as a sheet, he nervously ran over the room, actually tearing at his hair.

- They are here! They are here! He kept whispering with white lips.

And suddenly he stood before me and asked:

- Do you realize that if anyone would find out that I knew about all this I would be lost?...

- I don't understand ... I stammered.
- I received a verbal order from the Gestapo to denounce all those from "the other side" who live here that I know of. They told me that if I did not abide by that they would kill me, together with my wife and children. So what shall I do?
- But no one will ever find out that I told you about it! – I called out.
- In these cases the walls have ears. Besides, I am helpless. I cannot help them at all...
He ran into the other room, leaving me alone in my despair.
When after a long while he returned, his face was changed even more, but his voice was controlled when he said:
- Come back tomorrow afternoon.
I left without a word.
Next day, while handing me some papers, he said:
This is the second time I do things for you which really exceed all my possibilities. Last year I brought your mother-in-law and her sons out of the Lodz ghetto - an unbelievable achievement. But what I did today for your father is a miracle which can only be likened to a miracle of a man who, jumping from a fifth floor, does not break his back doing it. I will tell you in brief: I risked my life and I succeeded. My compensation will be your lives. I will admit that I would not do it for anybody else, but I regard your father as an unusually worthy man, and what I did was worth it. But my and my family's lives will depend on your silence...
My gratitude was overwhelming and I did not know what to say nor how to act.
One moment I wanted to kiss his hands, in the next moment I wanted to fall on my knees to him.
In the end, I only said:
- The world has a priceless value when a man like you lives in it.
But he must have understood from the tone of my voice the extent of appreciation and thankfulness that my words contained.
When I was leaving, he added still:
- Let them leave as quickly as possible.

My family took up residence in Rymanow, a little town near Sanok, and we of course remained in our apartment out of town.

Our relief at their departure was so great that we were almost drunk with it... It did not matter much to me that I was no longer together with them. I only wanted them to be well. There was no room here for sentimental yearnings. Yes, I was happy every time I saw them; I did see them often since once in a while I would get a pass and would go to visit. Sometimes, to give them pleasure, I took my child along.

They felt like newly born. Finally, they were able to come out of their hiding and begin to live, lead a life like everyone else. And although that life was bitter and dangerous, they were no longer threatened directly. Their documents were in order and they were no longer an exception.

Compared to the life we had led till now, our present conditions appeared to be freedom to us and to them.

We were so full of that feeling of freedom that we did not allow any other feelings to affect us. Besides, we got somewhat used to the all the terrible happenings and our hearts began to harden and become immune. (It had to be so - otherwise the "bubble" would have busted).

At this time, both in Sanok and in Romanow, the matter of forced labor became threatening. All the Jews had to work. That order had been issued at the very beginning of the war, but one could avoid it by paying and sending substitutes. The practice of sending substitutes was quite common because it had two good sides to it: one, that those who had financial means did not have to do the senseless

work; and two, that all the deported poor people of whom they were so many in all the towns, and whom the community was not in a position to support, lived on the money received for being substitutes. They got good money for it which, of course, they rightly deserved. They not only worked in place of others but also had to bare their backs and receive the beatings by the bestial sadist, also for others.

Henek and his brothers were ordered to work for the Kirchof company. That place was known for its very hard work, namely paving of streets and crushing stones, and the worst imaginable treatment of workers.

With a great effort they managed to be transferred to a Polish company, a wooden shoe factory.

Henek, being familiar with bookkeeping, was treated with a lot of consideration and worked only a few hours a day.

When all that was settled, my father asked me to come to Rymanow for a family council. It concerned Mendek, my brother, who had also been summoned to work but, since he was very weak and really unable to work, the family did not know what to do.

I went gladly, even more so because my pass would expire in a couple of days and I had no actual possibilities of obtaining a new one soon.

First, I took my brother to a doctor. But the doctor, even before examining him, said:

- I advise you, regardless of anything, to go to work because if you don't you are condemning yourself to death. After all, you know what they did "on the other side" with people unable to work? They killed them all. You can probably see that the laws from there are slowly becoming effective here as well?

- Yes, this is true.

- So now you see. In the end, whatever happens there will happen here. Are Jews here worthy of more consideration than the Jews there?

- Only because those there are regarded as "communized", said my brother.

- All Jews are regarded as communists by them.

After a long family council we decided that Mendek should after all get a doctor's certificate and not work for the time being; after all, on this side there had been no incidents of this nature. Should anything happen, he has time to report to work later.

I stayed with them to the last day of validity of my pass.

On that last day, in the morning, we, that is, my mother, Malcia and I, went out for a long walk outside of town. It was already late spring. Everything around us was in full bloom. The air was clean and fragrant. We were walking on a narrow country road which went up and down.

- Oh, how beautiful life is after all – said Malcia with a longing gleam in her blue eyes. – I cannot understand why any man should mind having another man walk around this world? What is all this killing about? Life could be so beautiful if people didn't complicate things for themselves...- And she started humming a song:

"The world is so beautiful in the sun rays, but the people, the people are bad"...

Mother was telling us a lot about our childhood. – When you, Sabincia, were two years old...or - when Malcia was born, you, Sabina, were so distressed at not being the only child any longer... while Minka envied you because you had a little sister.

Her face, still young, was flushed. Her eyes, behind her glasses, were shining, full of hope.

Later, while sitting at lunch, we were in such a good mood that even my father and brother were affected by it. For an unknown reason, hope entered our hearts. Was it because of spring?

In the afternoon we went to visit our relatives who lived in Rymanow. The talk was on current subjects, thus our good mood began to dissipate.

Citing the words of a certain prophet, my father was saying: - There will come a time for the Jews (those will be messianic times) when their enemy, at the peak of his might, will arise to annihilate them. Only a handful will remain. One to a town, two from a whole dynasty...

- Oh, I exclaimed, touched by a premonition. – Probably the worst off would be those lonely survivors...

- The present lets us assume that the times the prophet talked about are now the present – said one of the present people; there is a good chance that we will all be killed, but the chance of the coming of the Messiah is very slim.

I also heard a story about a holy man whom God asked if he would like to live to see the coming of the Messiah. The holy man replied that if he were to live to achieve that honor he would be happy. 'The coming of the Messiah must be preceded by the spilling of Jewish blood. So, if you agree to wade through the pool of Jewish blood, you will receive that honor.' Then the holy man replied: "if I had to go over even one corpse, I do not want to live to see the coming of the Messiah."

The conversation of that nature, in a serious or sarcastic vein, must have continued for a while yet, but I took "English leave" as I had to get ready for the trip.

Of course, it never occurred to me on leaving that I would never return there again.

I do not know what an eighteen-year old boy, namely Israel, had in him that made a person in his proximity feel like being enveloped in the glow of sun rays. Could it be that his brown eyes, big and shining, had such force? Or perhaps his bright smile, or his appearance, tall and youthful? Or maybe all of those things together?

The room brightened up when he walked in. One just felt better. When looking at his handsome face where everything appeared to be smiling goodheartedly, one thought: "Don't worry. This will work out somehow..."

Israel got a one-week leave and spent most of his free time in my company.

This was a quiet period in Sanok A three-week period of relaxation, without any tragic events happening, and during which even the news from other towns was not too bad. We did not think about the possibility that this may be the quiet before a storm. We enjoyed every moment of breathing freely.

The summer was at its peak. I used to take Marylka out in the field for many hours. Like a colorful butterfly or a carefree bird she played in the grass and among flowers. My heart was full of happiness when I looked at her.

While lying on my back, gazing at the clear blue sky, I dreamt of my child's happiness. In my imagination I saw her, saved already from the predatory German claws, surrounded by an atmosphere of safety and well being.

Israel, having time off, often sat next to me and we enjoyed long talks.

Hot sun rays caressed my skin and made me relax and feel good. Intellectually, I enjoyed the brightness of every word uttered by Israel. He was the personification of life itself.

He held his breath when I talked about Malcia, his eyes showing the feeling he had for her. (She had the same expression when I talked about him in Rymanow.)

- How happy she will be with him – I thought to myself with great pleasure.

Sometimes, Henek would join us after work. He whistled on approaching us, giving us a sign at which Marylka would jump up screaming happily and running toward him.

- Papa is coming! Papa is coming!...

We took the fullest advantage of every moment of our grim life, more so than ever before in the past. Perhaps this was our way of preparing ourselves to withstand the blows which were always imminent?

Once in a while, for just a brief moment, fate showed us its smile, as if teasing us, as if saying: "See how happy you could be? But you won't"...

The misfortunes which began this time to befall us were endless.

At first, there were shooting accidents. The "Gestapo" under all kind of invented pretenses, would burst into Jewish home, mostly at night, grab the men, lead them to the Jewish cemetery and shoot them.

The sounds of that shooting which carried around seven o'clock in the morning often reached my ears since the cemetery was close by. On hearing them, my heart stood still for a fraction of a second.

"If I were to hear a shot and be aware that a person is falling down, I would surly die. I tell you, daddy, I will not survive the war." I had said that to my father at the time when the outbreak of war was imminent.

And now, I heard a shot and knew perfectly well what it meant and...I went on living. The fact is that a man can never evaluate the forces within himself and how much he is able to bear.

"Shooting incidents" – two short words but what a magnitude of tragedy is hidden in them. Young, innocent exuberant lives suddenly and brutally cut down. The earth sucked in the fresh, youthful bodies while the hearts of the remaining parents or siblings or wives bled from sorrow and despair.

There was new shattering news coming to Sanok. In many towns, those unable to work, such as the aged, the disabled and the sick, were being killed.

The Gestapo told Wermer: - The Jew has a right to life only as long as his work can be useful to the Germans. All the others are disposable and will be removed soon"... Once, when I was talking to Mrs. Kurka on the balcony in front of the house about the atrocities perpetrated on the Jews, she said:

- The worst is the fact that the Jews do not realize why they suffer...
- And you do realize why? – I asked.
- Of course. It is because they were the cause of the crucifixion of Jesus.

To her, everything was clear and justifiable. But to me this did not seem to be clear nor justifiable.

The awareness that an innocent person is being killed without any purpose. A criminal, on dying, knows that he deserves the punishment for the murder he had committed. A soldier knows that he falls in the defense of his country. What are we dying for? Only so that the Germans may inherit our fortunes and satisfy their bestiality; this is the only reason, the only purpose, and that purpose is worse than any other.

You, soldier, who lie in the muddy trenches on the front, who have no day nor night, who suffer hunger and cold and are bitten by lice, if you only knew how we envy you. You, by suffering, achieve a hero's death. By giving your life, you fulfill your duty.

We suffer at least as much as you, crowding miserable huts, hiding in cellars or dungeons. Death looks into our eyes a thousand times a day, as it does into yours, and when it catches up with us it is miserable and purposeless. Nothing makes it sweeter for us.

The religious say that such is God's will; that by dying in such manner we become holy. How I wish that I could share that belief!

Today our goal is to live. To see the Germans' defeat. To be able to avenge our blood. This is our goal. But how slim are our chances of achieving that goal!

Posters affixed all over the streets of Sanok announcing that all Jewish [illegible words] craftsmen and workers must register within two days in the Gestapo building were equal to an alarm on

the front announcing that the enemy was attacking. The difference was that soldiers know how to act in such situations, they have a leader who they can rely on

We ran all over town, from place to place, like a frightened pack of wild animals. Our leader, Werner, did not know what advice to give us. After all, he was only a Jew and the Gestapo did not deem it necessary to confide in him about their intentions.

But we had already heard about such registrations in other towns and we already knew what they meant. They are the pretext for a mass murder or mass deportation.

In addition to craftsmen, registration was required only for workers who worked on German army posts. They were allowed to take their wives and children along. That represented one-third of the town. What will happen with the rest? With those working in Polish companies, such as our boys? What about the sick? And the old ones? And the disabled?

Werner, changed beyond recognition, could only raise his hands in helplessness.

- Maybe they will be deported, or maybe at once...

Crowds of desperate Jewish men and women crowded around the building of the Jewish Council, looking for some salvation but knowing that they will not find it.

.. A united mass, squeezed one against the other, there were the rich, the poor, the old and the young, the healthy and the sick, the ugly and the handsome, all [illeg.], all with the same expression in their eyes, an expression of panicky fear. That mass was in motion, swaying, humming with stifled whispers coming from tightened throats.

I, Henek and his parents were little drops in this miserable human sea. Our faces, like those of the others, were elongated from shock, sweaty, fear showing in the wide open eyes. Like the others, we kept asking "what will become of us? What should we do?" knowing that we will get no answer.

The crowd swayed livelier. The voices became louder. And suddenly everyone started dispersing, running as quickly as possible, almost racing, to the "Arbeitsamt" (employment office) in order to register for work at Kirchof's, a place from which, until now, everyone wished to be far away.

The crowd, until now surrounding the Jewish Council building, started pushing its way, brutally with their fists, to the "Arbeitsamt". We were among them, just an insignificant fraction of the crowd.

Henek and his brothers, after sweating it out and almost totally out of breath, finally became the lucky ones who managed to register with Kirchof. The same Kirchof from whom they freed themselves with great effort only several months ago. As a wife of the worker, I and my child were entitled to register, but what about the mother-in-law? What will happen to her? After all, mothers were not included.

.. - In case something happens, you will hide in our bunker – Henek tried to comfort her. They will never find you, even if they stand on their heads. We know from experience that one has to hide from them until such time when things quiet down.

The boys and girls who were accepted to Kirchof's formed a line and marched off to a far site where they were to start working on stones at once.

Standing at the sidewalk with my mother-in-law, I looked at the huge human wave distancing itself, and at the sight of my thirteen-year old brother-in-law, Motek, I was moved to tears. He kept stretching his neck, standing on his toes, only not to be seen as a child but as a man...

At the last turn, Henek raised his hand, in a gesture ordering me to keep calm.

Holding each other by the arm, we slowly walked back towards the house. We were in need of rest, in need of forgetting everything if only for a little while.

- The poor ones, who knows how hard they will have to work still after such a day – said my mother-in-law.

- And my little one is roaming around at Mrs. Kurka's, or in the yard, on her own.. Who knows if she did not hurt herself – I added.

We passed the Jewish Council which was still surrounded with a tight circle of people; older and disabled people who had no chances whatever.

Involuntarily, I experienced a feeling of relief at not having to belong with them anymore, and I was ashamed of myself after I recognized the feeling. "Even the best of men, in moments like these, thinks only of himself and those closest to him". That sentence was uttered by my mother-in-law, either influenced by her own thoughts or, perhaps, having felt what my thoughts were. Then she added: "that is quite natural."

Even before we reached the road leading to our out-of-town house, two women blocked our way, calling from afar:

-Did you hear what happened at Kirchof's? No? They trapped us!...

We stopped as if struck by a lightning.

- What? – we stammered.

- Well, they knew that by not joining the registration their workers will be taken from them and deported, thus they wanted to finish a certain job as quickly as possible. That required a great number of workers so they lured them in that manner.

We returned to town with a heavy step and once again we joined the crowd of the unfortunate ones surrounding the Jewish Council.

- They are probably working there without knowing anything...

- Not at all... The news has reached them already...

They all knew about the Kirchof's story. Those who were envious of the chosen ones before, were now silently pleased. Such people, capable of envy, find satisfaction in seeing others being as unfortunate as they themselves.

I walked stooped, pushed, with a feeling of helplessness in my heart when, suddenly, a loud voice announced:

- The Jewish Council has just received word that Kirchof's will join the registration...

For the second time we returned home, somewhat calmer. This time, on the way, someone handed me a letter from my parents. The letter was full of concern for me and us all. "Even though things are not quite calm here either, should anything happen come running to us. Perhaps things will quiet down, then you will return"...

The boys returned from work in the evening, dragging their feet, tired to the limit, burned by sun rays and depressed by the news that Kirchof' will not join the registration.

During those two days preceding the registration that situation prevailed: once it was said that Kirchof will join, then again that Kirchof will not join the registration.

We lived in terrible uncertainty and nervous tension. And in addition the boys worked very hard. They were exposed to sun all day long, as a result of which the skin on their faces began to peel. Their joints ached not only from work but from beatings they were subjected to. In the end, Kirchof did not join the registration.

Since the situation in town was becoming dangerous, Henek's family moved in with us.

The night prior to the registration, we did not sleep at all. We kept talking about what to do. Should the boys go to work that day, or not. If they don't, they may incur death penalty. If they do, there is a possibility that all of them will be surrounded and sent out, in which case there would be no escape. Can one be wise and foresee what may happen in such cases? Of course, after a whole night of exchanging ideas we reached no conclusion.

At dawn, they suddenly decided to go to work.

I went with them but we parted on the way. They went to the field and I went to town.

Could one ever imagine that the fact that a person is good looking or ugly can decide his fate?

Such most improbable things did take place in our tragedy.

The fact is that at the registration, the food cards of only handsome and good looking people were stamped.

- If we must look at the Jewish mugs, let those be pleasant at least...- the Gestapo men were saying, pulling out men or women who were not good looking. Even the fact that they were good craftsmen or good workers could not save them.

- Let them be scrapped! – the barbarians were saying.

And when someone lagged behind or tried to ask for something, he would get a bullet in his head in front of everybody. By noon there were already a few dead bodies.

Walking the streets with some friends, I collected rumors, some false, as it often happens.

Some were saying that those who have no stamped cards will be shot at once, while others were saying that they will be sent to Belzec...

At that time we already knew well that deportation means certain death such as shooting, except that this death would be worse and more painful. For a few days in a row two hundred people were cramped in one box car, slowly dying of heat and thirst until they reached Belzec. Thousands of people were struck by electric current...The secret "deportations" were no longer secret. Nobody doubted any more that the destination of these deportations was death.

- Are you perhaps coming from the Jewish Council? – we stopped all those passing us by.

Whenever someone nodded, we immediately asked:

- So what is new?

We were showered with a pile rumors.

I met Anszel who happened to be coming back from registration. In spite of having his card stamped, he was very depressed having witnessed the death of some people killed on the square by the Gestapo. He mentioned the names – some known to me.

He showed me his stamp and said:

- What good is it to me if I don't know what will happen to my family. If they are deported I will be left alone in the world...What kind of life would it be? Although, imagine that there are still some optimists who believe that this is "big cloud and little rain", and they claim that nothing will really happen. That things will work out equally for those who have and those who do not have the stamp...

- Does it mean that they will deport those who have the stamps as well? Or that no one will be deported?

- That no one will be deported...

- Do you believe that the Gestapo would go to all this trouble with us?

- I think so too. After all, there are victims already...

Siamek was approaching us, looking calm and smiling.

- You are alright – said Anszel on greeting him.

- Your parents are in Rymanow and you got the stamp so you don't have to worry...

- Are you sure that nothing will happen in Rymanow? he asked. You never know with them: here today, there tomorrow. One cannot be assured. Even this stamp is no guarantee.

This is what the stamp holders kept saying to reassure those who were not.

But in their heart they were happy to have it.

In the end I had enough of the nerve wrecking walking. In fact, that could have been dangerous as I did not have the stamp.

- I will go to the village green – I said taking leave of my friends. – Perhaps I will be able to talk to Henek, because I don't know what we will do; maybe he will think of something.

- My opinion is that one should hide. They will not go house to house but will rather grab people off the street. That is what happened in other towns – said Siamek.

- This is what I will discuss with Henek...

Sanok was on a hill. To go out of town, regardless of the direction, one needed to go down. Thus I walked down a winding serpentine, longingly looking at the mountains bathed in blinding glow of the sun which seemed to be mocking all our misfortunes. At its feet, the winding blue San seemed to tease with a sarcastic smile as if saying: "See how beautiful the world is? But not for you..."

- Who can defeat us?, the mountain and the river were saying. What is man's existence compared to our eternity?

I lowered my head and started walking briskly ahead.

- Why does the world tease us with its beauty? Its cruel beauty which binds us to life, forces us to love it but gives nothing in return?

From afar I saw the swarm of people which, at first, appeared to consist of little moving dots, but as I kept getting closer it assumed natural forms. Work was in full swing. Some men, with their feet in the water, were taking stones out of the San, while the others were circling a huge machine whose rattling noise deafened me even though I was quite a distance away; still others pushed wheelbarrows loaded with stone, continuously wiping the streaming sweat off their brown faces.

- I probably won't find Henek – I worried to myself.

I got closer, all the way to the green, and started to look around intensively. I was so absorbed in that effort that I did not even hear steps coming in my direction until a harsh, low voice let me realize that its owner was right behind me.

- Was suchen sie hier [what are you looking for]?

I turned around abruptly.. Before me stood a giant, with a huge, tanned face from which narrow eye slits flared dangerously. Under his piercing look I felt that I was becoming pale with fear.

- I am looking for my husband – I replied in German in a shaky voice.

- What? He shrieked in such a manner that I became petrified. – You came to pull him away from work? To waste his time? Do you know what you deserve for it? Death! You are lucky that I am not shooting you dead on the spot, you "verfluchte Jude" [bloody Jew]...

I started moving away quickly but not quickly enough to avoid the reach of the brute's stick which fell on my back.

I felt a stinging pain. I walked with trembling knees while tears welled strongly in my eyes.

-This is the care our boys get – I thought in despair. No wonder that their bodies are wounded all over.

But this was not yet the end of my walk through the green.

[Diary-Notebook 4 Direct continuation of NB 2. – NB 3 is not related to the diary.]

...because as soon as I walked a few steps, three boys ages 13-14, sons of our Polish "friends", suddenly blocked my way and started dancing in front of me while singing:

See this earth, Jewess,
you will soon be under it!
Yes, yes, yes, tra-la-la!

They did not let me go through. They kept picking a stone at a time, throwing it at my face and legs, jumping non-stop and singing that idiotic song.

I don't really know how it happened, but all of a sudden I felt that I was hitting somebody with an unusual force, tearing his shirt into shreds. That somebody freed himself from my grip. I ran and again grabbed him – or maybe it was one of the others? And I keep hitting and hitting...

Suddenly, I tensed all my muscles and I hurled the body I was holding in my hands with such a force that it rolled down far, into a ditch.

- I must have killed him – I quickly thought to myself and seeing two boys approaching me with huge stones in their hands I thought – now they will kill me.

I started running as fast as I could. The stones were whizzing by my ears and I kept running and running till I ran into an entrance to a building, ran up one flight of stairs, then another one, then to the attic where I finally fell, totally out of breath, onto a floor full of dust.

But this was not yet the end of happenings for the day. Actually, all that was nothing compared to what happened that evening.

I was lying on a beach chair, in front of the house, my mother-in-law was sitting next to me, every once in a while changing a wet compress on my head. My head was aching terribly. Marylka was playing nearby, happily unaware of everything around her. I was thinking about her, about her lack of concern in moments of such deadly dangers.

Behind us Mrs. Kurka was talking with a Polish man who had come by. I could not hear their words clearly.

- Such screams, such moans... - strange voice was saying.

- Where? asked Mrs. Kurka.

- At the village green –

- What? At the green? What happened there, in God's name?

- I don't know exactly, because I was afraid to go closer, but they say that they shot Jews there...

- Tss... hissed Mrs. Kurka and with that hiss I felt a taste of death in my mouth.

Usually, at moments of fear or despair I become semi-conscious and see black before my eyes, but this time it was totally different. To the contrary, I saw everything in bright and frightening sharp colors. I had a chilling feeling in my heart and my mouth became dry. Totally dry. And that dryness had a specific taste. Such taste can only be the taste of death. In later years, when I felt that taste on many occasions and knew it well already, I called it... [apparently a page of text missing.]

... and wringing her hands she kept whispering:

- Oh God, have pity on us! God, surely you will not allow such misfortune to happen to me. I already lost my beloved husband in this war. God! Let this be enough..!

I saw her tragic despair with terrible clarity.

- Why suffer so much! Come, let's go – I said in a loud voice.

- Where to? She asked absentmindedly.

- To the green. You, I and Marylka! Let us suffer the same fate as they ...anyway, we will never survive their deaths...

- Yes, yea, you are right – she said with sudden vigor and ran to get our coats.

A minute later we were on the street. I was carrying my child. She was smiling, not knowing where she was heading.

Suddenly we stopped.

There in front of us, as calmly as can be and occupying the whole width of the road, walked our four boys

I left the child behind. The taste of death disappeared. I let a terrible cry escape from my chest. I started running ahead. Right there on the road I threw myself at Henek's neck and hugged and kissed him frantically. And I cried and cried as I never did before in my life.

And the boys, seeing our behavior, did not know what had hit them. They were sure that we had gone mad.

It was later that we found out that actually what had happened was not all that terrible. A few girls, while crossing by boat to the other side of San, fell into the river and screamed awfully. In fact,

some of them almost drowned which was the reason for their moaning. This is how a rumor may create a mountain out of a molehill.

Thus that day so full of shocking events ended unexpectedly well.

In the evening, when it was getting dark, Anszel came running, out of breath, to tell us the news about additional registration for Kirchof's that was to take place the following day. Since that day until now, our lives have been just like that. One day we get ready to face death with all concentration and resignation, while the next day we are ecstatic with happiness because the danger was temporarily averted. Sometimes these extreme feelings were inflicted upon us in one and the same day, and sometimes even a few times a day.

That evening each one of us hugged Anszel until he hurt, to thank him for the news. We all became extremely talkative. We laughed. And I even felt like preparing a tasty meal to which we invited Anszel as well. That night we all slept like logs and woke up only at dawn.

It was decided that I would go with the boys and the child would stay with the mother-in-law since children were not required to appear; it was sufficient to give their names.

We were too nervous to have breakfast. With shaky hands we performed all the functions, such as dressing, combing the hair, etc.

The fact that we were going to register was not enough. The question still remained whether they would find us sufficiently good looking to stay alive.

[the print on page 5 of original too faint to read.-Transl.]

.... That was true. In addition, she kept herself well and was still quite pretty
- Anyway, this is my firm decision – she added, closing the discussion.
At the green we were placed in a file and marched through the whole town.
The Poles packed the streets enjoying this amusing spectacle and mocking us unsparingly.

But we did not pay it much attention.

In a few moments we were to face the highest court which would decide our fate: death or life!

The fact that my mother-in-law was with us made us feel worse.

For me this was to be a hard experience as it was to be the first time I would face the Gestapo: I would meet with murderers face to face.

I often thought about how the eyes of murderers look, and now I was to find out.

- Sabinka, rub your cheeks so you don't look too pale, said my mother-in-law.

- Oh, I almost forgot that my looks must be appealing.

I started to rub my cheeks vigorously, as did my mother-in-law as well.

The Poles were pointing at us, calling out:

Look, these Jewesses have gone crazy.

But we did not pay attention to them. We kept thinking that our lives depended on our looks...

With beating hearts we marched onto the big yard of the Gestapo and we stood at attention.

We became motionless.

Soon we were surrounded by our henchmen, each with a gun in one hand and a heavy stick in the other.

They started eying each of us from head to toe, while the silence in the yard was pervasive.

I wanted to look into their eyes but I lacked the courage. I was afraid to raise my eyelids.

For heaven's sake, Sabina, you look frightened – Henek whispered almost inaudibly...

The boys' faces were quite tanned and showed no emotion.

When finally I decided to look my eyes suddenly met with those of Werner. I noticed that at that very moment he noticed my mother-in-law among us and his face became deathly pale.

- He is sure they will kill her – I thought with dread and felt my legs beginning to give in under me.

I would have undoubtedly fallen down if I did not feel just then a sharp steel blade on my face. I raised my head and there I saw the eyes...beautiful, blue eyes the look of which was like a piercing steel blade.

That handsome sadist came close to me and, with a good natured smile, asked:

- *Hast du Angst?* (are you afraid?)

- No, I mumbled in German – not much.

- That's good, he answered and moved away. His good natured smile did not leave his face even when he pulled out by the collar a middle-aged Jew and, hitting him with a stick, talked to him in a mild manner:

- This is for daring to show up here with a "mug" like yours. You will be shot at once.

- Oho! – I heard a voice right behind me. - *und du was suchst du hier?* (and you, what are you looking for here?)

I moved my head slowly. That other henchman had big, gray eyes, a facial expression no less good natured than his predecessor.

My mother-in-law to whom those words were directed, holding her head high replied quickly and loudly:

- I have four young sons here, wonderful workers, and I myself am still able to work, which is why I allowed myself to come here.

Werner, witnessing the scene, his lips ash white and said::

This woman is a friend of mine. I told her to come. I told her I would intervene on her behalf.

- I see – the henchman said and pulled my mother-in-law from the line.

- So, you want to live or die? he asked

- Why should I say anything if it does not depend on my wish – she answered looking him straight in the eye.

- You are a hero, he said patting her on the shoulder – because you trust too much in Werner's protection but...what the hell... And he pushed her back into the line.

A few minutes later I saw the same henchman beating with a stick a woman lying on the ground while blood was gushing like a fountain.

I turned my head away so that I would not see it and almost at the same moment I heard a shot. The sufferings of that woman finally ended.

All of us received the stamp but the price we paid for it was hearing, right next to us, six gun shots, six screams of people dying and six sounds of falling bodies.

But we did not see anything; our eyes were tightly covered with the eyelids.

We, my mother-in-law and I, were returning home since the boys went back to work. We felt as if we had gone through a serious illness. In chaotic sentences we shared our experiences. It was difficult to talk about what we felt.

Not far from home we saw Mrs. Kurka, with Marylka in her arms, running towards us and shouting from afar:

Thank you Jesus for letting me see you again... I prayed all the time for you...

Her eyes full of tears she kissed and hugged us and her every move and word showed that she was sincere.

I took my child from her; when I left earlier I thought that I may never see her again, so I hugged her close to my heart.

- More than one child lost its mother today – I said to Mrs. Kurka. They killed Mrs. Winer.. the poor woman left four little children behind.

- And she was not the only one...

- I was so frightened all the time – she was saying while walking with us toward the house. Her burning cheeks were a proof that she meant it.

- You are a wonderful exception among the Poles since you commiserate with us...They showed us all they hatred today when we were registering. They wished us death and were celebrating it in advance – I said to her.

- You should not be surprised – she replied. We suck the hatred toward the Jews with our mothers' milk. From the first moments of our lives we hear the worst accusations at the Jews. We hate without even realizing why. I don't know how I would behave had I not met you. We have been indoctrinated that among the Jews there is not even one honest person. Be it a doctor, a businessman, a rabbi, they are all thieves and evildoers. Not knowing them, there is no opportunity to realize that it is not so. Aside from you, I knew a few unusually honest Jews. Actually, I never had the occasion to meet one who was not, even though I know that they exist. Our people say that what we see as good in the Jews is only play acting on their part. But I have been living with you for almost a year, almost in one apartment, we see each other a hundred times a day, so I cannot be wrong. I am not so stupid as not to see people for what they are...

Our conversation was interrupted by her husband who, having been home already, also came to meet us. He cordially shook our hands and expressed joy at our having come out alive from the hands of the tormentors.

The butts of their torments were not Jews alone. After all, they treated the Poles in a despicable manner as well. Night-time roundups of innocent people, arrests and deportations to camps and to Germany, all that was not a pleasant situation.

- Lucky that the Germans are so busy with the Jews and have a little less time for us – they were saying. – We should not wish to have all the Jews killed at once. Let them play a cat-and-mouth game with them so they will not remember us.

They all feared the Gestapo like the plague.

The result of the registration was totally unexpected, namely Zastaw.

At constant intervention on the part of Werner, the Gestapo replied that, if there were room in Sanok for the creation of a "ghetto" which would hold all the Jews, there would no longer be a need for deportations. But, since there is no room...

Werner was helpless. His appearance showed how many sleepless nights he spent thinking of ways to save his town.

Just like Anszel who was not happy with his stamp, he also was not happy that he and his family were secure. In his heart he was concerned about the welfare of the town.

During the two days when registration was taking place, he looked like a corpse. He appeared to be taller and still leaner than usual, even though he walked with a hunched back and kept his head low.

But on the first day after the registration, early in the morning, people saw him suddenly energized, with head high, walking quickly with his briefcase under his arm in the direction of the Gestapo.

-Now are chances are improving – people started saying, and our hearts filled with hope. In the afternoon we knew already about Zastaw.

This is a village not far from Sanok, actually I don't know if one can call it village since no one lived in all of Zastaw. There were only several huge uninhabited buildings intended to house factories. The owner of those buildings left at the outbreak of the war and they remained vacant.

It was Werner who approached the Gestapo with the project of creating a ghetto in Zastaw.

After a lot of difficulties, they agreed but levied a very high assessment on the town and, in addition, demanded that the Jews, at their own cost, transform the buildings into residential ones. Of course, no luxury whatever, but housing as primitive as possible. The work to be completed within two months.

Naturally, Werner agreed to the conditions eagerly. A year earlier, if they had wanted to close all of us, three thousand Jews, in a place like Zastaw, what a tragedy that would have been. What kind of life could we have expected? A life of prisoners in the worst of prison. A dozen or more people in one room, sleeping on cots, meager food, hard work...

Yet a person so stupidly clings to this life and prefers the worst of suffering to death. Why? After all, doesn't every one have to die eventually?

Thus, we were happy that instead of death we were given Zastaw.

Our biggest consolation was the fact that we had two more months ahead of us during which a miracle might happen...

Actually, why would a miracle happen to **us**?

There was practically no town left without a ghetto or deportation, or both. And although there had been many victims in Sanok already, it was still minimal in comparison to what was happening elsewhere.

There was still relative quiet in Rymanow . Although something similar to registration did take place there, it was of a different nature altogether. I found about it after it was all over, from a letter from my father who wrote:

"Notices were posted in the evening ordering all men ages 18 to 35 to gather on at 7 on the following morning at the Market. Failure to show up would be punishable by death (as usual).

Mendek had a swollen face because of a tooth infection and did not look too good. There was a chance that our life givers might not like his looks and for that reason we could not decide whether he should go. Actually, he was the one who really did not want to go. Therefore, we kept him all day hidden in a closet. You are probably familiar with the result of that registration. They selected two hundred strong, healthy men to be sent to a labor camp in Plaszow, near Krakow. I must admit that I am quite concerned because of that; it looked as if the whole town was destined for death while they selected the work force which would be useful to them.

Another thing that worries me is that they are deporting Jews from all neighboring villages to Rymanow and, all of a sudden, Rymanow has been named "Samelstelle" [gathering place]. I don't know what to make of it. God only knows what those devils plan to do with us still. But do not worry ahead of time."

In Sanok, our days, seemingly calm, were nonetheless tragic. Tragic not for the entire population but for individuals.

The unfortunates were the people whom the Gestapo chose to harass by barging into their apartments, during the day or night, pull out the best, the most beloved member of the family and take him to the cemetery. There, the victim had to dig his own grave, stand at its brink and wait for the bullet.

This, unfortunately, was becoming a daily happening. People began to get used to it and those who were not personally affected did not worry about it too much.

Someone would say: - they killed so-and-so.

- Really? What a shame, so young and decent – was the reply. And right away, without even finishing the sentence, one began to talk about something else. – Did you read the paper today? Anything new?...

People were getting used to life as it was.

Even I, who have always been a bundle of feelings, able to be deeply concerned with things much less tragic, even I began to get accustomed.

My mother-in-law returned to her apartment in town and the boys kept going to work.

They were so tanned that they looked like Negroes. They became manly. They were getting used to work and to the terrible treatment.

Oh, God, what a person can get used to!

I, as well as Henek, waited impatiently all day long for five o'clock, when he would return from work. Even before five, I would take Marylka by the hand and go out on the road to meet Henek. Whenever I saw him from afar, when sometimes he walked heavily, my heart started beating joyfully. I ran to meet him, took from him the backpack which he always took with him and in which he carried food and other things he needed during the day, and on the way toward the house we told each other about the events of the day. At home, I had hot water for washing and dinner waiting for him. He gladly threw off his work clothes which, no matter how hungry, he never wore at the table. Once he changed, refreshed himself and combed his hair, he sat down to eat. In the evening, when the weather was good, we lied down on the beach chairs in the little garden before the house.

Above, the moon watched playfully, above us the trees were humming, the air smelled of San and blossoms. And so it was that sometimes we were able to forget about the whole world.

After all, we were still so young...

- Henek, I see that something is bothering you for a few days already, something you don't want to tell me – I once said to him when I saw him looking terribly worried.

- Nothing of the sort. Just the news that reach us about the elderly, the sick and the disabled are being killed...

- Well, this also worries me because of my parents and Mendek, but still I see that you are overly concerned about something.

- I would feel better if I knew that you do not go to town every day. People avoid walking in town too much after last week's event when they grabbed those few women and men in the street... In addition, you take the child with you and you tire yourself too much and don't look well...

- Henek, I see that you are avoiding the issue. Tell me honestly, is there any imminent danger hanging over our heads?

- No, I really worry because you don't look well at all. Promise me that if you will really need to go to town you won't take the child with you. You can get sick from carrying her. Please, promise me that...

- I can do that easily, because I can leave her with Mrs. Kurka, but will this make it easier on you?

- Yes, I swear it will.

It was only two days later that I understood the meaning of that talk.

It was Sunday, that lucky day when Henek was free and his entire family came to us from out of town.

For the most part, we sat in the garden talking about current matters or playing with Marylka who was our bright ray of light in this dark life.

Pepka also worked at Kirchof's which was the reason why we rarely saw each other. She was too tired on Sunday to come so far to see me, and for my part I did not want to leave Henek on the only day which we could spend together.

But the Sunday in question the weather was beautiful and Pepka, although tired, took a walk to see me.

After she rested a little, the two of us walk out on the road and walked back and forth along the San.

She was in love then and told me all about it with youthful enthusiasm.

- So how are things? You don't go out with the child anymore, right? she asked me suddenly.

- Yes, it's true. I no longer take her with me – I answered, surprised at her knowledge.

You are lucky that your child can play in the garden next to the house, and can even run around here on the road. In the city things are different. The poor child of my cousin no longer sees the daylight on such beautiful days. You never see any children on the street.

- Why? – I asked with a terrible foreboding.

- You mean, you did not hearing anything?

- I don't know anything – I answered, feeling the blood draining from my face.

- Well, probably you were not told, so you would not worry. How stupid of me!

But in town they talk about it so often that I was sure that...

- Since you started, please tell me the whole truth or else you will do me great harm.

- Well, they are beginning to carry out a children's "action". It was terrible in Ustrzyki and Samborz Ter...(?)

- What is the meaning of "action"?

- Well, they simply grab infants and children under 13 from their parents and kill them at the cemetery. They regard children as dispensable as the elderly and the sick.

- Oh, my God! I stuttered in despair. .. – and they gave it such a nice name, "action"?

Since that day, my whole being was filled with a limitless love for my child. I hardly ever left her. I cuddled her and gave her whatever she wanted.

How sweet, joyful and pretty she was then. My bleeding heart kept asking me: "why do the want to kill her? Why? Oh, God, how can anything like this..."

What kind of monsters dare to lift their arms to kill such an innocent little things, such little creatures who never did any harm to anyone, but instead gave so much happiness only with their existence?

Every passing day brought us inevitably closer to the end of our freedom (actually, what kind of freedom was it?) With every passing day our hope for a miracle became dimmer.

In every town, death mercilessly mowed down Jews, reaping ample harvest. But those who remained in life lived in hell. The hellish fear consumed them all day long, at every step, during any activity. Hellish were the Sleepless nights, or dreams which were a mixture of the worse nightmares. Shouts, moans, blood, running away and fear, fear which at night took on even larger proportions.

Belzec!

Nobody ever really knew what it looked like because the ones who saw it took its image with them to the grave.

And yet...

A huge, dim hall. One by one, naked silhouettes of men, women and children walk into it. Fat, skinny, tall, lame silhouettes, all of them shivering in mortal fear of what will happen to them in the next moment. The head which in a moment is to disappear in the darkness lifts itself up, eyes bulging, once again to embrace the world...

And the crying....Didn't everyone see it in a dream?

Or, racing trucks, loaded with big and little children, babies in pillows, those pillows one on top of the other...the car is racing but our soul races right along it. It sees the child's little face, red tear-ridden eyes, hair blown by wind, eyes full of longing for the parents, fear of something they do not understand...Little hands stretched out before them in an imploring and frightened gesture, while their faces distorted by crying are calling: Mamma, mamma!

Every mother kept hearing in her dream the terrible, blood curdling child's cry: Mamma.

- The don't go to the trouble of shooting these little ones. They don't want to waste bullets. They simply twist their little heads or, deafening them with a blow of an ax, they bury them alive...

That is what the people who lived near the cemetery were saying; they were eyewitnesses to those events...But those who did not know were not able to imagine it. A person's imagination could not stretch that far.

There had been no children's "action" in Sanok, but we were expecting it any day and we went through all the torments of fear by using our imagination. Mothers shuddered at the thought of it, worse than at deportation.

But when it came to deportation...

One must know that the Gestapo is not known for keeping its promises, particularly when it comes to the Jews. They ordered "Zaslaw" [barrier?] to be erected to take the place of deportation; they even tried to make the place less crowded for us, by daily killing a few people. But once everything was almost completed, they informed us that deportation would take place after all.

Could it be that things were not entirely up to them? Perhaps the order came from higher ups?

I don't even know it exactly. It suffices to say that, in spite of contributions, in spite of the building of Zaslaw, deportation was to take place after all.

But first it happened in Rymanow.

For me, the deportation of Rymanow together with Sanok has become one terrible vortex of the worst events. One preceded the other.

It was August.

On that day, seemingly an average one, nature was overflowing with joy. A cool breeze mitigated the sun's heat. Under its influence, the woods, looking as if they wanted to get up from their place get rid of their seriousness and merrily move around in a circle. The trees, growing alone on the top of the mounts, tilting to one side then to the other, seemed to be executing a "pas" of some complicated dance. The grass was swaying, birds were singing.

This joy of nature affected others as well.

While walking on the country road in the direction of home, I hummed to myself, which was unusual, since recently I walked on that road in fear, every step representing a danger.

I often relived in my thoughts the walk to the cemetery in the company of the Gestapo; or the event when I suddenly found out that Henek was taken out from work, the way many had been taken already...

- Surely, nothing bad will happen today – I had thought looking at the carefree sight around me... And I was so sure of it that later, when I clearly heard what had happened, I could not believe my ears...

- Today? Today? – I murmured while running to see Werner.

His son opened the door. He said that his father was busy with an important conference and was unable to see anyone now.

- Is it true about Rymanow? – I asked in a quivering voice. – I heard that there are already refugees from there...

- Unfortunately, yes – he replied. – My father is right now in a conference with the Rymanow "Judenrat" [Jewish Council]. It seems that the situation is hopeless...

- When is that supposed to happen?

- In a day or two..

- Is it really true that they will leave no one in town?

- No one. Neither in town nor in nearby places. Those from around had already been assembled in Rymanow in order to have everybody readily at hand...

- So that is why Rymanow was named the "Samellstelle" [assembly site]. Do you know that I have family there?

- Yes, I do. Please come a little later. Perhaps my father will be able to give you some advice, although I doubt it...

But before I had time to leave, Werner came to the entry hall and, on seeing me, approached and said only:

- This time, I cannot give you any more advice. Only if they would succeed to escape, I would try to make it possible for them to remain here legally. It is worth trying to escape, since there is nothing to lose...

I ran home on that same narrow country road. There was chaos in my head and tightness in my heart... But nature was still smiling...That pitiless nature...

I burst like a bomb into Mrs. Kurka's place.

- You must help me. You must go at once to Rymanow and tell them to escape... Werner said that he will try to legalize them here.

Mrs. Kurka agreed and, leaving her household chores, she began preparing for the road. She was back before the evening.

Would anyone guess what she did for us?

Well, risking her own life, she took Malcia and Rywcia (without their armbands) along with her. Malcia, crying, threw herself at me.

- Sabina, you don't know what is happening in the little town. People are going crazy with despair. They fast, they pray, they go to the cemetery to ask the dead to intervene on their behalf... They think, they fool themselves, that this will help...Perhaps? What do you think? Maybe it will? ...

- What about papa, what about mama?

- When they said goodbye to us, they were sure that we would never see each other again. Mama was fainting, papa was completely shaken...They were not sure if our trip with Mrs. Kurka would be successful.

Mrs. Kurka was saying: you cannot imagine the things I saw. Christ almighty! What they are doing to people would be even be a sin to do to animals

I will never forget your parents' goodbye with the children... And if you don't succeed – she shouted extending her fist – I will take revenge in your behalf as soon as the opportunity arises!

- But what do my parents intend to do? Won't they run away?

- They said to tell you that there is a Polish driver who goes every day from Sanok to Rymanow – Mrs. Kurka answered. My sister was too shaken to speak. She was lying down on the sofa like a log, her eyes fixed at the ceiling. – Perhaps the driver would agree, for a good remuneration, to take them...They told me to tell you that Siamek knows him since he brought his parents yesterday. They will wait until five o'clock tomorrow morning. If he does not come to get them, they will start walking through the woods...Even though, many refugees were already caught in the woods yesterday and today and the poor ones are already in the cemetery, they said they will try anyway. They have nothing to lose.

I immediately went to see Siamek. When I left the house I noticed Marylka playing ring-around-the-rosie with Rywcia in the garden. Rywcia a six-year old child who did not understand worries was, instead, playful and happy with the circumstances that enabled her to play with Marylka whom she loved a lot.

The oblivion of these children seemed terribly tragic to me. All along the way, I was unable to hold back the tears welling up in my eyes.

Siamek gave me the address of the driver and a little introductory note. But I did not find him at home. His wife told me to wait for him on the road from Rymanow and described the car to me so that I would recognize it.

I walked back and forth on that road as restlessly as a caged animal. Dusk was falling. Every passing car seemed to be the one but I experienced disappointment each time it came closer.

I carefully avoided all the street urchins because I knew that they would never let a Jew simply pass by.

This time I was so engrossed in my suffering that I did not notice several young "citizens" (the future of Poland) approaching me and it was not until I felt a cold shower on my head and back that I abruptly came to myself.

At that moment, I heard a merry, youthful laughter around me.

- Even though I will get a beating from my mother because I spilled the bottle of milk, this sight alone will make it worthwhile. Just look at how she is dripping milk all over...from her hair, face, dress. Oh, I'll die... Oh, I'll bust laughing. This is super amusing...

I shook myself off like a dog from water, I kept coughing, unable to catch my breath.

This provoked even more merriment on the part of the boys. Their laughter felt like a cut with a sharp knife..

- When you tell your mother what you did with the milk and what a great time we had, she won't be angry for sure. And they rolled with laughter – boys fifteen, sixteen years old.

- Oh my God, how will I go to town now? My dress is wet, my hair sticky from the fatty milk. I must look simply awful.

Suddenly, I heard a whir. In one moment I forgot about everything. A car was approaching. It was the car I was waiting for. I recognized it in the dusk.

I ran out to the middle of the road, signaling with my hand for the driver to stop.

- What is this Jewess doing, she must have gone mad – I heard the boys' words.

The car stopped. The driver stuck his head of the window and, after having a look at me, wanted to move on. Such was the impression I made on him. But I started talking fast, telling him that I have been waiting for him and handed him the letter from Siamek; I said I knew that he had brought Siamek's parents the day before; and that I wanted to ask him to bring my parents over, and that, of course he could ask any amount of money for doing it.

- You must be wondering at the way I look, but this is the work of those urchins standing there. It is a fact that I am a Jewess and am vulnerable to such treatment. But it would be nice if you would admonish them for it...

- What is it to me?... he answered. Children are children and they like to play. Let them play as long as there is time.

- What do you mean "as long as there is time"?

- Well, as long as Jews are still on this earth. Later, the poor kids won't have anyone to amuse themselves with.

- Oh – I stammered, once again experiencing a feeling of a cold shower, this time coming from the words.

- But if you give me two thousand zlotys, I will bring those oldsters tonight. What do I care if they perish a few weeks later.

- Do you talk like this to Siamek as well?

- Of course. Didn't he tell you that I only love the Jewish money?

I stood there with a helpless despair in my heart. Is this the person I could entrust my parents to? Yet, he did bring some people over; also, what was there to lose?

I gave him an advance. With a smirk, he pocketed the money, started up the engine and, on leaving, added:

- Those boys were really something!...ha, ha, ha.

My parents left Rymanow after midnight and at 4 a.m. the whole town was already surrounded by police. No pedestrian, no buggy, no car, were allowed to go through without a pass. Thus, my parents had escaped in the last moment.

A few thousand people were brutally joined into one huge "Calamity". That mass of Calamity was driven along a two-kilometer road leading to the railroad station and on the way the people which were part of it were beaten, whipped, stepped on, to the extent that the road was spattered with blood. The days were hot but regardless of the heat the Calamity was pushed into a few train cars and left without a possibility of catching its breath and without a drop of water.

Everybody still had a clear picture before their eyes, everybody carried in his heart the sound of the Calamity's moaning, when the talk started in Sanok about deportation. On that day, all other feelings were put aside by the instinct of self-preservation which completely took hold of everyone telling them to think exclusively of themselves and of those with whom they were closely connected. Be it a poor man or a rich man, an uneducated person or a genius, they all thought of saving their lives. Everybody felt and thought alike. Everybody felt feverish, cried or laughed nervously. One tried to comfort another by explaining that death was inevitable, but at the same time knowing that nobody's spirits were could be lifted because of the emotions one experienced. There were so many people but actually they were all one person.

As a town, Sanok, where the deportation was just about to take place while almost everywhere in Poland it had taken place already, was ready for that blow. People knew that without a miracle Sanok cannot be an exception. Thus a miracle was the only hope...Was there still a chance?

People fasted and prayed for that miracle but in the meantime it was the "deportation" that was approaching. (People readily used that mild name which the Germans gave to their mass murder.)

The town was prepared. But one can never be prepared for death to the extent that when it becomes eminent one would not experience a panicky fear of it (with rare exceptions like my father who really did not fear death), such fear that causes one's eyes to pop out of the sockets, and the heart and hands to desperately look for support in the vacuum...! Thus, although people were prepared and knew that what was going to happen was inevitable because it did happen everywhere else and there was no reason why this town should be an exception, in spite of that knowledge they still shuddered with fear.

The barrier was completed. One knew already what its use would be; that in the next few days thirteen thousand people from Sanok and the whole province would be assembled there, of which only 2 thousand would remain while the rest would be deported to Belzec...If only two thousand out of thirteen were to remain, how many of them would be from Sanok and who would be the lucky ones.

Everybody deluded himself that he might be one of them, even though he was saying:

- I already resigned myself to what may happen..

But people who were deluding themselves were only those aged 16 to 40; those older did not, and children did not understand...

The Polish and Ukrainian population waited impatiently for that performance which was about to take place, and enjoyed in advance the pleasure they would have. In addition, they waited for the benefits they reap from it. The Jewish store would pass into their hands, there will be an abundance and choice of apartments and, although the Germans were confiscating everything, something would surely go to them...And there would certainly be fortunes hidden in the cellars. One will only have to dig deep and find them...

Still, there was a certain, minimal (of course) percent of people among the Poles (not Ukrainians) such as Mrs. Kurka. They were touched by the tragedy of the Jews and extended a helping hand to save them while placing their own lives in jeopardy. A large part of those Polish benefactors did

this for material gains only, but given that death penalty was in effect in many towns, some Poles paid with their lives for their compassion.

Mrs. Kurka's husband was arrested at that time and sent to a labor camp near Krakow. She was left alone with a 6-year old son, without any means of support. Since she was a stranger in Sanok (she came from a different part of Poland and had lived in Sanok for several years only), she would have felt quite lonely if she did not have us. She clung to us whole-heartedly, particularly to me, considering herself a friend of mine; since her husband was taken away, she became like a member of the family.

- They took my husband and now they want to take you too – she lamented. – What will I do? But she immediately added: - what are my sufferings compared to death which threatens you?

We started putting our heads together to find some solutions. Actually, she was the one who urged us all the time: - I don't understand you. You must defend yourselves as much as you can. By staying alive you will be able to take revenge on those henchmen.

- But how can we defend ourselves?...

- You must hide somewhere. I will write to my relatives in the country and perhaps they will at least want to take your children, Marylka and Rywcia...Oh, that Marylka, the beautiful sweetheart, the sunshine... I will not let her be harmed...

When she learned (we only told her about it at that time) that we had a hiding place in the room, she cried out enthusiastically:

- This is the salvation! Stay here! In case of something, you can go to the hiding place and stay locked in the room. After all, there are no neighbors near by and my house is far from town. I will bring you food and will take things out... This will not last forever...

But a problem arose. What will happen with Marylka? She would not be able to stay quiet in the event that something happened.

- It will be necessary to send Marylka to the country... she said. But I would never agree to be separated from my child.

Anyway, all that was not so simple yet. The thought that so many people would sit in one room for an unknown period of time was not a pleasant one. To become a burden to this friendly soul was also painful, and we were not even sure that it would not prove dangerous, especially to her; we did not have much to lose. Today she was enthusiastic about helping us, but perhaps later she would greatly regret it.

- We don't want to drag you into the quagmire of our misfortunes – said my father. We are already condemned and cannot help it. And even though the temptation to save my children is great, I must think of you first. Our first obligation in our friendship to you is to reject your proposition.

- What will you do then?

- Whatever everybody does...

- But everyone is making some arrangements...And there are Poles who help the Jews...What does one live for if not to help one another?

- Your thoughts and desire to make a sacrifice are beautiful. However, for now I cannot yet think about taking advantage of your offer – said my father. Still, we could see that eventually they will all stay with her. But what of me and my child?

I was already well aware of false Aryan identity papers. And, although at first the idea seemed to me to be a sheer fantasy -- how can one suddenly assume a new name, start a totally different, hypocritical life, a life where one is not one's real self, where it is all fictitious as are the documents – in time, when deportations became a reality, I began to think about it seriously. People were talking about it and thought it to be the only possible rescue and, since it was a costly undertaking, only people of means could dream of it. But that was not all. One had to have the right appearance and speak Polish without any trace of Yiddish accent.

Once the question of me and my child came up, I began thinking seriously about the Aryan papers. Was I to go with my child to the box cars where I would have to watch her suffering from heat exhaustion and thirst until we reach a cell? When there is no way out, then alas it must be so... But I did have a way out. Admittedly, I felt remorseful about that solution. Still, my father abolished all my objections and the fact that he himself advised me to do it, finally convinced me.

- In order to save one's life, one is entitled to resort to many things which would be unforgivable under different circumstances, except for three – he was saying: it is forbidden to kill someone in order to save oneself; it is forbidden to disgrace one's religion and that of one's ancestors' if that were a choice, and it is forbidden to act as a spy for the enemy. – Your and your child's life depends on a certain lie which will hurt no one. Thus you are allowed to lie, particularly since it is for a certain time only... You should leave for our sake as well because, since we don't know how things will turn out here, you may be able to help us later.

My worst concern was the separation from Henek. This was to be our first separation and for what reason? He was not sure that I and the child would be able to manage on the outside; it was quite an act to live such a life of lies without betraying oneself. Henek was not sure if I had it in me and I in turn was uncertain about him. Will he go into hiding? Will he take a chance and go in the hope that they will let the workers remain? All this was still doubtful. For him to come with me was out of the question. My appearance could provoke serious doubt about my being of pure Aryan blood, but his appearance left no doubt that he was a Semite. I alone, with a blue-eyed child, could perhaps pass because there are gentile girls who have a Jewish look, but a couple like myself and Henek together would be arrested by the first policeman who would come across us.... Particularly, since the assumed identity was no longer a secret.

The person I went to see regarding the documents was not in Sanok just then.. He was to return on Monday. When I got home, I found out that my father had already seen notices at the Judenrat (the Jewish Council).....[top of page 34 totally illegible]

.....It was Friday. The entire town knew already that the deportation would take place on Monday. Nobody stayed home. People were running in the streets and assembling around the "Judenrat" as they did prior to the registration.

And again one asked the other: what are you doing? What will you do with the children? with the parents?

- What do I know, my God? – this was the nervous reply.

Pepka dared not to go to work. She came to see me and dragged me out to the street.

- You can tell me the truth - she asked – whether you really have no way out?

- The parents will perhaps remain with the children and Mrs. Kurka's – you do know about our hiding place there, but the brothers-in-law cannot make up their mind about it and are thinking about crossing the Hungarian border. And Henek also...

- But this is certain death... you must not allow it.

- But child, does anyone dare nowadays to advise the others, even the closest family? I know that it is very risky to go, but isn't it just as risky to stay? And for young men to sit in a hiding place, unable to move and remain idle, isn't that worse than death itself?

- And what are you doing with your child?

- I thought about the papers... but I did not manage to get them.

- So what will you do now?

- I will leave.

- What? Without documents?

- Yes. Blindly. I will leave it to fate, for better or worse. If they catch us they will only shoot us and, at least, we won't experience the trip...

- What do they say at home to this madness?
- Nothing. They cannot say anything. Nobody can hold me back. But now you tell me, what are your intentions?
- Believe it or not, I had the same bad luck with the papers as you did. He is coming back on Monday only, and it will be too late then...
- So you went to the same person as I did at Wl.Troj.[?] right?
- Precisely. And now I have no other remedy. I will go to Zaslaw. Perhaps they will keep me as a young and strong worker.
- And good looking too. This may also help. But it is really a pity. You really look like a gentile and you could have certainly saved yourself.
- If I get to be one of the lucky ones who stay, I will try later to leave; otherwise, too bad...
We were walking the streets of Sanok and probably we did not look as dejected as the others, because everybody looked at us with surprise and some called after us:
- They must have already provided for themselves.
Sure, provided for themselves. Is it ever possible to ensure one's safety against these devils?
Unfortunately, they were some who envied those who they believed had found a safe solution. I was unable to understand it. How is it possible not to be happy for even one person who may remain in life.

But I know that some strange and terrible things were lodged in people's hearts, things that they themselves did not understand. Could they be responsible for their feelings in the face of death? After all, they were only average people.

To calmly think of death, one must be on such spiritual level as my father was. I myself was of course far from it. I belong to the average masses and I was shamelessly afraid. In particular, I thought with suffocating despair about the death of my child. She was at that time so sweet and healthy as a little apple.

Pepka said: I must tell you, Sabina, that I am terribly scared. I am ashamed of it but cannot help it. I am curious to know if a soldier on a battlefield is also afraid.

- To be afraid of death is cowardly, but not to be afraid is really courageous and show true spirit, but we are just average persons. Look around you and you will see that you are not an exception. What shows in everyone's eyes? Isn't it fear? Plain ordinary fear?

- But, I see some movement among the people; look, they are kissing each other... they are crying and laughing... what does it mean?

In fact, whatever began to happen in the street was beyond understanding.

People were embracing, kissing and hugging each other with enthusiasm.

- Really, I said. Has everybody gone mad?

- Let's run there – Pepka shouted and, grabbing me by the hand, pulled me as if I were unconscious.

Before we could understand what was happening, the crowd separated us, kept throwing us from embrace to embrace, leaving us breathless as a result of the hugs and kisses, while we, helpless, with eyes wide open, kept receiving the signs of enthusiasm hearing only the words: a miracle has happened!...

With all my strength I tore myself away from the crowd and, with a pounding heart, ran in the direction of my house. On the way, I was being stopped by people inquiring about what was happening.

- A miracle! I kept replying.

- What kind of miracle? – But I kept running.

- Sabina – somebody stopped me again and before I could turn around someone grabbed me in his arms...

At home, I was embraced by those closest to me. My mother was sobbing: "thank you God for saving my children." My mother-in-law was sobbing: "thank you God for saving my children".

I ran breathlessly to the village green. Maybe the boys don't know it and it is necessary to let them know. I ran, ran, the stones were flying behind me thrown by little urchins.

- Look at her disheveled hair, -- they were shouting. – A real madwoman.

I paid no attention, I kept running.

But there was a big commotion at the green. They were not working. They were hugging each other. The buzz of conversations sounded like a beehive. Not even the German whips were able to restrain the joy of the crowd.

(But fate was laughing itself to tears.)

I joined the crowd. I found Henek and my brothers-in-law. We kissed. We laughed. – Thank God!
– we murmured...

Later, I ran again. I had not seen my father yet. I wanted to see his joy as well.

I met Malcia on the way.

- Where is papa?

- At Werner's.

I ran to Werner's house. I knocked loudly. Someone opened the door. In the hall, I heard excited voices coming from the room. I heard toasts being raised. When I opened the door I saw Werner was holding a drink in his hand and saying: - This is the unhappiest and the happiest day of my life. Let's drink to this day.

My father, who was also holding a drink, called out:

- Let this day really be the beginning of our liberation.

All those present (including myself) cried out: - Hurray! They drank and fell into each other's arms.

At that moment I realized that I actually did not know what had happened. A miracle did happen, but what kind of a miracle?

I was pulled to the table. I was offered cookies and vodka and only under the influence of alcohol I dared to say that I did not know what had happened.

- The deportation was called off for an indefinite period of time. The "Kreishauptmann" (district commander) said that it might be at least three months. And within three months the war may be over.

I sat totally exhausted by that insane joy which had taken hold of me.

My head was buzzing from alcohol and the conversations and laughter around me reached me only faintly.

- It is an unheard of thing for the Germans to put off a deportation date.

- It can only mean that there must have been a break in Germany. They could no longer witness with indifference the murder of innocent and unarmed people.

- Yes, yes... Perhaps there was even a revolution? Actually, it was bound to happen.

- So you see, the fasts and prayers did help...

- It is at times like these that one sees that all the Jews are brothers. Whether they are Aguda followers or Zionists or Revisionists, at times of happiness and misfortunes they all become one body and one soul.

- Here is the rabbi, an Aguda man, and Mr. Werner, a Zionist, who in spite of personal liking for each other were always arguing with each other; doesn't it seem now that all those disputes were senseless in the face of the present?

.....

[Diary-Notebook 5]

Friday, 14 March

The Germans entered Hungary. The Poles are happy because they will make order with the Jews. It will do Hungary a lot of good because it is already "interlarded" with too many Jews.

[end of Polish page 1]

[this section (pp. 2-5) belongs before Polish pp. 63-70, page 29 of Engl. translation]

....will happen. And, altogether, will I succeed in getting out of Sanok? When I came here people were not asked for identification. Nobody could imagine that a Jewish woman would be able to come here at this time. But on leaving?... No, I am sure that I won't be able to leave here... But as the sun began to set, I became more and more restless. I kept moving around the room like possessed. Why? Oh yes, because the only train that could take me back to my child was leaving at 7 p.m. and it was already 6 o'clock...

- Sabina, for goodness sake, what will happen to the child without you? You left in order to save her and now you are leaving her to fate? ... Sabina, go back...- I had the feeling that Henek was whispering to me because at moments I could see my child clearly, stretching her little hands and crying: Mama! Mama!...

And so my feelings for Henek, my maternal feelings, the distaste for life, the desire to stay here and allow myself to be swallowed by death and get rid of everything once and for all, all those feelings were fighting madly within me. The last one, the one to remain, was the strongest.

At 6:30, suddenly and unexpectedly even for myself, I stated: - I am going to the train. Maybe I will manage to leave. If not, so be it...

The children started to cry. – Do not leave us.

And that was the worst moment of my life. If I live to be 100 years old and have the worst possible experiences, that one will always remain the worst of my life. Compared to it, death would certainly be sweet beyond description.

I was standing in the middle. Mendek held my right hand, Rywcia the left and Malcia stood in front of me. They cried desperately.

- Do not leave us alone. Their faces were bluish and twisted in pain. These are the faces I still keep seeing in my imagination.

- If I could really help you, I would stay without hesitation... My death will be no consolation to you, while in the meantime there is my child... Think about Marylka.. What will happen to her without me?... When I said that I saw her little face twisted with pain in the same way as the faces of my siblings...Well, I am a mother. That little face was instrumental in my decision.

I jumped up. I grabbed my coat and on opening the door I looked back once again and saw them standing in the same position as before.

I ran out....

Once outside, I regained my equilibrium to the extent that I realized I was in danger and I tried to exercise caution. I walked in the direction of the station on little streets outside of town, and managed to get there. Acting self-confident, I approached the window and purchased a ticket (as a precaution, I purchased a ticket for a few stations beyond my destination, so that if I should be caught no one would know about Plesno). I went out on the platform and sat down on one of the benches in front. I even crossed my legs and put on a happy face. I tried to maintain that appearance even when I noticed a Gestapo man holding a heavy stick in his hand and sharply looking at everybody.

I started eating tomatoes which, miraculously I found in my bag, and I kept swinging my leg, pretending to be carefree. Two young girls sat next to me and started to talk about Jews. - "They are doing terrible things to them. They treat them as if they were not human beings." And the other added: "Should we feel sorry for them? They deserved their fate. Just today the last transport left for Belzec... Do you see the Gestapo man? He is looking for a fleeing Jew"... Suddenly, one of them started to give me "that" look and then started to whisper something to her friend. That friend turned to me and asked: "Aren't you afraid?"

- Why should I be afraid? – I pretended to be surprised and at the same time I noticed that the Gestapo man was looking at me. I felt chills running down my spine but I spoke calmly. – Why should I be afraid?

- Because you look like a Jew..

- So what? If they will take me for a Jew, I have my "Kennkarte" [I.D. card]...

- Yesterday, at this very time, two Jewish women with "Kennkarten" were shot at the station..

- In that case, each one of us is in danger, I said.

- No, she replied. Only the person who has a "fake" card is in danger.

- Well, in that case we have nothing to be afraid of, I burst out laughing.

The Gestapo man kept looking at me. At a certain moment, precisely at the moment when I was laughing, I felt that any moment now he was going to approach me...

- You keep yourself very well, said[end of p. 5]

[continuation of this section is on pp. 63-70 of the original and on p. 29 of the English translation]

[pp. 6 & 7 - top of page 6 truncated]

...armbands. Jewish girls carrying long brooms on their shoulders, like soldiers carrying rifles, were marching to work. Probably street sweeping. The sight of them filled me with utter horror. Here were pretty, intelligent, but sad and sick looking faces, humiliated by those long and dirty brooms. Yet when I looked at them closer, I noticed that in spite of everything they showed pride and disdain. They did not keep their heads down when passing by the Poles who jeered them and little boys who threw stones at them. They had a look of a victorious soldier marching with his rifle.

- But of course, I was saying to myself while remembering my father's words: "It is not the one who is trampled on by his defenselessness that is humiliated, but it is the armed brute who torments him" Is there a bigger shame than a victory over a defenseless person? Oh, what a shame it is to force intelligent women to sweep streets under threat of death! Or to kill them and their children! Well, it is better not to think about it.

Among the girls I recognized a few of my ...[missing lines on truncated page] my cousin [?] Rosia. Rosia glanced at me indifferently but suddenly her eyes lit up in recognition. She smiled lightly. My lips also opened slightly in a smile. We blinked at each other in understanding. That was quite dangerous for me. What if someone had noticed it?

(end of page 7)

[pp. 8 & 9]

Aboutrushed in and demanded to be taken to them. He ordered everyone to gather and go to Kirch... because if they go with him now they will be able to stay there legally. The poor souls rejoiced

because hiding there became terrible. But suddenly the question arose: what to do with Rywcia? They could not take her along, nor could they leave her alone. Thus my brother and sister remained with her. And they are with her to this date. They are quite depressed and impatiently wait for the parents to pick them up. All this would not be too bad, but day before yesterday a German man showed up with a card from the Housing Department and claimed that this apartment vacated by the Jews had been assigned to him. He demanded to be taken to the apartment. She[?] quickly signaled through the wall to go into hiding in the bunker and then led him in. Luckily he did not notice anything.

In sheer despair, I ran to the Housing Department begging that they let me stay in the apartment, but to no avail. He is to move in on Monday. And what is she and the poor children to do? she wanted me to tell her. She proposed to the German to take her room and the kitchen, and she would move, but he did not want to hear about it. He needs two rooms with a kitchen. So now what? It is already ...[truncated top of p. 9] ...what will the poor ...do?

Somewhat reassured by the fact that everybody is still alive, I recovered some of my energy.

- I will stay here today and we will try to settle things somehow. I will write a letter to my parents to take the children at once, and you will try somehow to get this letter to them through someone...

In the morning, Mrs. Kurka took me quietly to the room where they were staying. During the few days they all changed and looked like skeletons. Crying, they threw themselves at me as if I were a safety anchor, hugging and kissing me without stopping...

What did they do to deserve this? Why is this happening?...

When that first wave of emotion subsided, we all sat down on the one bed that stood there, and, in a whisper, they started talking about their misfortunes. They are able to sit on the bed without being spotted through the window by a passerby. At every sound of steps, they jump to the hiding place and their hearts stand still. They are unable to eat. They experience stuffiness...

[end of p. 9]

[pp. 10 thru 16]

- If we could only tell about it to people abroad and in Palestine so that, once and for all, they would stop their partisan bickering because it is all senseless given that they are all Jews. Let our suffering at least lead to the disappearance of hatred and partisanship among Jews. It is enough that we are hated all over; we must stop hating each other.

- Let us drink to our brothers abroad.-

Once again the glasses were emptied.

(All that time fate shook with laughter)

For unknown reasons, the Germans put off deportation for eight days. The people learned about it at once the next morning, on Saturday, and talked about it with bitterness.

- Fate mocked us and we made fools of ourselves with thoughtless joy. Belzec is overcrowded, there are too many people standing in line which is why they gave us a gift of a few more days of life. Depression and despair returned mixed with disappointment.

For me, however, and for some other people as well the few days of delay meant life... We managed to have some documents made and leave. Actually, I was going to leave with Pe.. but we were unable to reach an agreement. When we got the papers, she wanted to leave while I wanted to spend another (day?) with my family. She wanted to go to Warsaw ...

[bottom of p. 10 and top of p. 11 truncated]

...big city crowds... to be so far away from my dear ones. I wanted to go no further than Tarnow. We bid each other an affectionate farewell, as if it were forever, and she left.

Oh, that Friday evening! My father said that he could write several volumes about that one evening. Although I felt and experienced the same as he did, how can I even dream of being able to express myself in a way that would allow the world to grasp, even to some extent, the enormity of its tragedy?

After running all day in town, I and Malcia were the first to return home. In my hands I held the documents and peeped at them constantly.

- I wish that I could succeed in renting a separate apartment somewhere where I would be able to bring you to.

- You can't even dream about it as far as your parents are concerned. After all, they don't speak Polish well (my parents lived for years in Austria and Hungary and their Polish was faulty and spoken with a foreign accent). Mendek would rather die than consent to this type of life (I did not have a chance yet to mention that my brother's piety bordered on fanaticism[...]. With Rywcia we could perhaps[...]. My father still cannot make up his mind....to stay with Mrs. Kurka.

- I believe that this would not be for too long - said [...] - Later they will surely be able to go to Zastaw and stay there illegally or, perhaps, even legally. Werner will certainly make some effort on their behalf.

- This can only be decided later.

At home, Mrs. Kurka came in to see us.

- So, what is happening?

- I already have my papers.

- Oh, I am so happy. Please show me.

She took the "Kennkarte" (identity card) in her hand and read aloud:

"Stefania Kucharska, born 3 February 1920 (my actual date of birth) in Rakowice near Krakow, a seamstress, Roman-Catholic..."

- Everything looks the same like on my "Kennkarte". She added – even if they stand on their heads they will not be able to tell that it is fake. And what is this?

- This is the birth certificate and this is a certificate that I am no longer registered in Krakow and on that basis I can register anywhere.

- So then, everything is alright. Thank God.

- When I rent the apartment, I will take your mother-in-law, Malcia and Rywcia away from here right away, and if the conditions are right I will take Henek as well. But we cannot foresee anything. I may be caught...

She continued: - one must be a little cunning, cold blooded and self-assured. I am telling you this as a warning...[balance of page truncated].

[top of page 13 truncated]

They even asked Mrs. Kurka to show them her identity card and could not get over the fact that everything was identical...

Darkness began to fall and Mrs. Kurka sensed that we wanted to have a talk, the last family talk, and she left.

The boys were washing, I started to pack, Malcia and mother were helping me. They stuffed in the bag all the best things that were at home.

- You may need this – they kept saying.

My father was lying on the sofa, while my brother was sitting next to him (my brother did not work anywhere, he was weak). My mother-in-law was feeding Marylka and secretly wiping her own tears.

I did everything mechanically, thoughtlessly. Everything was cramped inside me. My heart, my throat and everything.

- Sabina – Henek called.

I straightened out, I looked at his face and suddenly I fell hard to the floor, crying.

I sobbed and sobbed, but it was not the kind of sobbing that eases the pain. No. That was bloody sobbing, while, for the second time in my life, the taste of death began to invade my mouth.

Henek lifted me, my father pulled me to the sofa, got up and made room for me. Everybody was talking to me; I understood everything very well and clearly, even the fact that Henek and Israel had decided to flee to Hungary.

- We are in a hurry because we are to meet with the guide in an hour. There are a few of us going.

- Don't go because I will never see you again – something was crying inside of me, but could I say it to him?

- If you so decided - I moaned with terrible taste of death in my mouth – then go with God...

- But, Sabina, would you prefer if I stayed? he asked. Just say the word and I will stay, said Henek.

- Mother, just give me the word and I will stay - Israel was saying to mother.

- How can I advise you, my child – mother was saying in a sobbing voice, the helpless mother to her son.

- Do as your heart tells you – I was saying to Henek. – Am I to give you advice?

But my heart was sobbing: - don't go, don't go my dearest!

My father was curiously silent. He seemed not to be among us. His big blue eyes were shaded with a teary fog. I gazed into his beloved eyes, searching in them for help or advice.

- Daddy, daddy, what do you say to Henek's going to Hungary? You know that only one in a hundred succeeds.

- If your heart tells you that he should not go, tell him, you may tell him so.

- Of course that my heart tells me so, but...- I suddenly got scared – no, if he wants to, let him go. In fact, I will insist that he go...

- I will stay! Henek announced suddenly. And at that, the taste of death left me. It is a pity that I was then too busy with [illegible] to observe how...[balance of page truncated]
...a conversation which I placed in the introduction and I will not write about it again.

That night, because of the children, no one went to bed. Izrael also stayed as he did not want to Hungary alone. We also sat at the table. Father tried to touch the religious spirit in us for support. He tried to lift our spirit. Henek sat next to me all night long, holding my hand in his.

My eyes traveled constantly on those faces dearest to me, faces that I may never see again... No one, except for my father, would be able to express what went on in our hearts on that evening. But my father is no longer alive and the world will never understand that it is not only the killing that is the worst but also the evenings, like that one, that precede it.

Every heart is torn to bits, not because of one's own pain but because of grief for the other.

Oh, how torn were our hearts.

The night was bright and hot. One by one each of us approached the open window, looked up to the stars, inhaled some fresh air and returned to the table.

Around midnight, we felt tired and fell silent. For a while the silence was undisturbed. Suddenly, the silence was interrupted with a low, slowly intensifying roar of an engine.

- A car – someone said.

- Rather a plane – someone else added.
I rose and approached the window. Among the stars [...]
- Airplanes – I said and I immediately added: - Oh, how brightly they [...] and illuminate with reflectors from above?
Then, a bang! Another bang and then another bang!
The lights went out at once. As at a command, everyone ran out. Mrs. Kurka, frightened and half asleep, ran out as well.
- What happened?
- They are bombing... At that moment another bang! Bang!
Although the whole earth was shaking from the jolts, we stood outside calmly, with joy in our hearts, waiting... What for? Was it for the bombs to hit us or to hit our tormentors, the Germans? Or perhaps we expected that this will cause the reprieve from what was hanging over our heads? We fervently wished for each of those things.
We did not fear that death.
When we returned to the room, we started once again to talk about the fear, namely, that our fear was very complicated because it is a fear of one kind of death, a death by the hands of the Germans. We only realized that when facing another danger.

[p. 17 – top truncated]

...and it is forbidden to think about suicide.[.....] to think about saving oneself.
Then I returned to Mrs. Kurka.- I will write a little note to [...] Mr. Wl. Troj. Please take it to him. Maybe [...] until Monday he can make up some documents which will enable them to leave...
At the same time I was thinking that I [...] say that there is no help for them. I cannot take them with me because how will I justify their arrival? If they come, all of us would be lost... So where will the poor children go? They will be recognized at once...But something must be done...
Once again we sat waiting for Mrs. Kurka, not talking but sobbing quietly. Time was passing.
Suddenly, a knock on the wall. A sign to go under cover. We jumped quickly into the hiding place. Shortly after the door opened and we heard a conversation in the German language.
A man's voice was saying:
- We decided to move in tomorrow. Please wash and clean everything. Do open the window because it stinks here. What is this smell? It is as if someone was relieving himself in the room.

[top and left-hand part of p. 18 truncated]

Mrs. Kurka tried to defend herself. She kept saying that there was not enough time to do everything for the next day. Besides, the Jewish furniture that was confiscated was still in the house.
- That's nothing, he said. – The junk can be thrown out into the yard.
Everything went silent. In the darkness we were unable to see our faces, but when we emerged into the light we were shocked at our appearance; we had changed so much.
Mrs. Kurka came in shortly and spreading her arms said: - that man is not in Sanok... He will be back tomorrow. What happens now? When once again we were alone, my siblings turned their imploring eyes to me...A look that was saying: - help us...
I started moaning that I will no longer be able to help them. Perhaps they can try to smuggle themselves into the ghetto, or to the Kirchhof camp and remain there in hiding. But even so, I will not be

able to take them soon because there is no place to go. Besides, I do not know if I should return to my child or perhaps stay here...Let whatever happens to them happen to me as well.....

[p. 19]

.....in this little room. They are nauseated and vomit several times a day. Rywcia cries all day and night, missing her mother. This child is already quite sick. She either cries all day or catches flies which she then lets go, saying that she does not want to murder them like the Germans do. If only the Germans murdered flies alone...

The morning dawned sunny and beautiful.

Mrs. Kurka went to town with the note while we waited anxiously for her return.

- Oh, how I wish I could run a little in the garden, Rywcia was moaning. Why do I have to hide? Why can't I go out?... I took her on my knee and consoled her, telling her that she would soon go to mother and that later I would take her and Malcia with me, so that they can be together with Marylka. They must only have a little patience and wait until I can rent an apartment somewhere.

In the meantime, I bore with them the suffering of sitting in hiding. I felt the stuffiness. I was becoming nauseated. At every sound of steps we jumped into the stinking hiding place where we literally could not catch our breaths.

Hour after hour passed and Mrs. Kurka was not back. The impatience and anxiety caused cramps in our stomachs and the pain made us groan.

Late in the afternoon Mrs. Kurka returned. How sweet it would have been if I did not live to see her return. She came in running into the room and threw herself on the bed!

- Ooh, she moaned. – The parents are no longer here! The mother-in-law is no longer here. They took them! They saw them as too old.

I fell, hitting my head on the edge of the table. That brought me to immediately. Mendek and Malcia were writhing on the floor in pain...Rywcia, crying, was grabbing my hands...

- Daddy is no longer here! Mommy is no longer here! Now we don't want to live either. Don't worry, we will leave here, we will go the Gestapo, my sister was shouting, while my brother kept pulling his hair and moaning "oj, oj, oj"

The taste of death in my mouth, as usual, made me see and hear everything with unusual clarity. My heart began to bleed. I felt each drop draining...

- Children, get up, I shouted with such force that I surprised myself and did not recognize my own voice. – Get up! I repeated. My words had a magic sound. My brother and sister got up.

- We must control ourselves and think about what hangs over our heads! Our parents would not be happy if we went ...[end of p. 20]

[page 21 is continuation of p. 30; the translation appears on Engl. p.14]

[page 22]

We heard an unusual noise on the road. My siblings explained to me that the workers pass here every day... I could not contain myself and I approached the window and stood behind the curtain. I saw them, men marching in rows of four, with their heads down and their feet dragging. I kept watching them. They were all dear to me at that moment, but perhaps I would find among them the one dearest in the world to me. I did not see him nor his brothers. It is true, I remembered that Mrs. Kurka told me that they went by car. Suddenly, what is this? Yes, it's singing. They started to sing, in a voice that seemed to come from the ground. What terrible singing... At the sound of it I felt chills and started to shake.

- They must sing like this every day, my sister explained to me.

A German with a heavy stick approached the last rows and started to beat a few of the marching boys, hitting them mercilessly on their heads and backs. .

When Mrs. Kurka came later, I asked her why the German beat them so much.

- It's because he noticed that they were not singing, she answered.

Terrible, terrible. They murdered their families, their closest and dearest beings and then they force them to sing. Who did not hear that singing....[balance of page 22 truncated]

[the following 2 pp. (Polish 23 and 24) should follow pp. 26, translation on pp. 14]

- Did anyone see you? she asked apprehensively. – Did you see anyone?

- No, I hastened to reassure her. No one saw me nor did I see anyone. Mrs. Kurka's hand with which she led me to the room was shaking terribly. She was saying:

- If you only knew what was happening here! I cannot stand on my feet anymore...The police is on all the roads day and night..

I wanted to ask about the thing most important for me but had no courage to do so.

She carefully closed the window and put the light on. I was shocked by her changed appearance. Her face was elongated, yellowish pale, her eyes sunken...

She gave me a chair and seated herself across from me, shaking with cold in her flimsy robe.

- For God's sake, why did you come? Where is the child?

- Well, I could not live any longer without knowing if they were alive. I stammered while watching her lips intently. – I could not stand not knowing if Henek was alive...

- He is alive! They are all alive.

I jumped up and started shaking her like crazy...- Really? Really? Are you telling the whole truth? Is Henek really alive?

- I saw Henek yesterday. He passed by here in the Kirchof's car.

- So he did go to Zastaw? And they?

- Please sit down and don't interrupt me, so I can tell you everything.

And she started talking chaotically and in a low voice so that once in a while I could not understand her.

It suddenly happened in the last day that my father and mother were assigned to the two hundred people who were to remain in the small Sanok ghetto which had been set up in a hurry somewhere near the mill. Henek and his three brothers decided to go to Zastaw because they were assured that the Kirchof workers would remain. Thus, my mother-in-law, my brother and my two sisters were to remain in the bunker. That was to be for a few days only, since my parents told them that they would try right after the "deportation" to take them from here to the "ghetto". But on Monday, two of Henek's brothers, Lewi and Motek, stayed as well. Lewi because he had somehow twisted his leg at work, and Motek because he was not feeling well. On that day she did not go out because the Poles were forbidden to go out on the street. Even the stores were to remain closed. In the evening, one of the neighbors came to her and told her that a woman and a man had been killed because of sheltering Jews; that they go all over town to all the houses, searching...

She became very ill at ease. What if they found someone in her house? After all, if they searched thoroughly they could.

[end of p. 24.]

[Polish pp. 27, 28 followed by pp. 25, 26]

There, at Mrs. Kurka's, there was a terrible man who shot daddy...Daddy is lying on the floor...Those words from the child reached suddenly in the midst of her chatter. Like a mad woman, I ran to her. – What did you say? I cried out in despair.

- That a terrible man shot daddy at Mrs. Kurka's, she repeated frightened.

- What are you saying? I cried.

- I don't know, mommy – she sobbed and started crying when she saw how upset I was.

I fell to the floor. The taste of death invaded my mouth. My whole body started trembling. At that moment I felt that something inside me is turning upside down. Appearing to be calm, with dry crying eyes, still trembling, I got up, picked up the child and returned home. I called Marysia to the other room and taking her by her hand I whispered: - I am going to Sanok today...

Marysia pulled out her hand and looked at me with eyes bulging out of the sockets: - Are you crazy? she stammered.

- Yes, Marysia. This is exactly what I feel. I went mad. If I don't go I may commit a worse madness yet.

- Nothing can be worse. To go today to Sanok where everyone knows you and everyone would denounce you without hesitation...Can anything be worse than that?

But then she stopped. She came close to me, picked my hair off my face and patting me on the head she whispered:

-Calm down, Stefa, calm down... Try to calm down.

- No, I cannot, believe me. I must know today whether Henek is alive...

- For God's sake, what happened to you, Stefa? You know that you won't come back from there. Just think. You will be caught right at the station. You heard Janka telling that it is the Gestapo who stops everyone at the station for identification... And what about the child? What will you do with the child?

- I will leave the child. I will also leave you my diamond and all the money, as well as everything else. Just in case that something happens you should have enough for the child.

- But think...What would I do if I stayed alone with the child?..

- If you don't want to, I will take her with me..

Finally, Marysia was convinced that I was insane and that all persuasions would be to no avail.

The train was half an hour late. I sat on the bench in the waiting room of the little village station and waited. There were a few other people waiting besides me. They tried to start up a conversation. They were telling me something, asking me something, while I tried to concentrate in order to understand what they were saying to me. I was only full of one thought – that I am going in order to find out if Henek was still alive.

I trembled at the thought that perhaps I may succeed in seeing him. Perhaps one more time in life, one time only...

One corner of my heart was whispering to me: - go back to your child! Where did you leave your child? The train was late on purpose so that you would still have time to return...But the last bit of my sanity was lost to my madness.

- I am going in order to find out if Henek is alive! I must know it today still...

The train entered the station with a shrill whistle. I went out to the track with other people and, like everybody else, I rushed to get on because in little towns the train stops for a very short time only. As soon as I sat down the train moved...

I looked out the window as we were passing the village. Among other things I saw the lonely house of Michalowska. – My child is there, I thought with a terrible ache in my heart. I even felt something like an impulse to jump out but the train sped by. The little house disappeared from view...

- Today I will find out if Henek is alive!...

I kept looking out the window, not wanting the other passengers to start a conversation with me. Woods, hills, empty embankments, little lonely houses, small villages, all that was passing before my eyes like a kaleidoscope, turning and slightly swaying.

I saw "that" look directed at me by various persons, but I did not care about it at all. I am sure that even if the Gestapo had taken me off the train, I would not care either. Was I in possession of my senses then? Today, two years later, I can say with all certainty that I was not...

I arrived in Sanok at 12 midnight. The night was dark. I walked quickly on the empty road on which I had walked home so many times. Now that house was no longer my home. Thoughts were going running through my head like frightened birds. My entire body was trembling. And when I began to recognize the contours of our little house the taste of death penetrated my mouth with such intensity that I felt nauseated. My intestines twisted, my heart was pounding in my throat... What will I find out now? With legs buckling under me, I quietly went around the little house steeped in darkness, and suddenly I made a decision and, holding my heart with one hand, I knocked on Mrs. Kurka's window...

- Who is this – a frightened voice asked.

- It's I, Sabina...

- Oh, it's you. Wait a moment. Please come to the fence and I will open.

I ran to the fence and waited with my heart pounding. I heard soft footsteps then the key turning. The little fence opened and I was pulled inside the dark hall

[continuation of this section is on starts on p. 12 of the English translation]

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[The following segment (pp. 29, 30 and 21) belongs to the section on Plesna (p. 29 and on of the English translation)]

When we came back from dinner, we found at Michalowska's her brother, a young student from Tarnow. His name was Franek. He was introduced to us and during dinner kept flirting with Marysia. And suddenly, during that flirting, I noticed "that" look on his face. Yes, even though he was not ..[?] He was from Tarnow. When we remained alone for a little while, I shared my observation with Marysia. – That's impossible – she said. You are over sensitive. You must have imagined it.

But then we heard some whispering from the next room.

- That is not possible – Michalowska was saying. While her brother was whispering something, but the words: "you should have asked for the identification papers" were quite clear.

We looked at each other and the look said: - it starts again.

Then, the door opened and Franek came in. Now there was no doubt about "that" look. He started to talk about the "Kennkarte", that there was a big crowd in Tarnow when they were issuing them and that he only got his up last month. Then he asked if we also picked up ours just now. – No, we answered. – We got ours in May. – Here, look - I showed him mine. Here is the date, May. Marysia also showed him hers, feigning anger at the Germans for those "Kennkarten". – They are not satisfied with our identity cards – she was saying – they must have the "Kennkarte" with thumb prints and other data, as if we were criminals. Franek's suspicion began to waver after that conversation. It seemed that it may have disappeared altogether and that deep inside he was remorseful at having suspected us. He now began talking quite openly about Jews: that there will be a "deportation" tomorrow. That finally Tarnow will be rid of that pest. He said: - All our present sufferings are worthwhile if only for the reason that we will regain a Jew-free Poland after war.

- If only it were already after the war. Marysia sighed, trying to change the subject so touchy for us.

Once again our hearts became heavy. Doesn't he really suspect any longer? If such an anti-Semite had any suspicions, our lives would be worthless. Nonetheless, that night we slept like logs. The sharp, fresh air made us drunk...

[the following page 31 follows Polish p. 16 (page 8 of English translation)]

The day began at 7 a.m. I was to leave at 9, so I started to prepare myself for the trip. Henek, at the risk of his life, did not go to work and was helping me. Actually, everyone was helping. Everyone tried to do something, just so that they would not have to think. I, especially. With all my strength I tried to push all the thoughts away. I was dressing myself and my child. I changed my hairdo, I put makeup on my face (so as not to be recognized on the street while going to the station, since I intended not to wear the armband) and I put all the effort into those activities. And then, everything was ready. The suitcases were on the cart which Mrs. Kurka was to take to the station, and she stood ready.

I called my child and ran out of the house. I ran with her up to where the street turned. I stopped at the turn, my heart beating fast. I knew that once I pass it, I will no longer see the house nor anybody. I started to turn. That lonely house appeared so sweet and dear to me when I looked at it for the last time; but will I be able to live without those I saw standing on the threshold and at the window? I stood there for a short long while, with eyes fixed on all those dearest to me. Will I ever see them again? I felt a horrible pain pulling at me. Once again I wanted to run away. Or maybe to go back? I was unable to move. No, I cannot believe that what is happening to me can be really happening.

- A nightmare, a nightmare, I was whispering. The weight of the child I was carrying and the pain I felt seemed beyond endurance. I thought that my heart would break (I did not know then that hearts do not break so quickly). Suddenly, I distinctly felt a strange sensation of being split in two. While one part of me, changed into an empty barrel, stood holding the child, the other part started to run back toward the house. That part of me threw itself into the arms of my parents, my siblings and Henek, clinging to them with burning lips, whispering with made love: 'dearest, I will stay with you, my place is with you. I will always be where you are'...

- What's happening to you? Have you turned into a stone? Mrs. Kurka who was quite ahead of me called from a distance. – I have been calling you for a long time and you don't answer. It is late already...

The empty barrel started mechanically to walk in the direction of the voice that was calling.

The train huffed and puffed and all those sounds resonated in me with the sound of an empty barrel. It was only one part of me that was traveling. It was the empty barrel which thought of one thing only: "smile".."Beware, sadness may betray you" So I smiled – to my child and to the other passengers, and to the conductor, and to the police who checked my papers.

[truncated line at end of page 32]

Because on Monday they will end there with the Jews. They are afraid that they may slip out...

- Exactly, I know – I replied with a smile...

- You were the first to be asked for identification because you look Jewish..

- Yes, I know – I replied smiling.

- I must admit that we also thought that you were Jewish, until we saw your identity document...

- I am often taken for a Jewess, I said smiling.

- But your child does not look Jewish...

- No, she does not...

The trained huffed and puffed and in me everything resonated with the sound of an empty barrel...

- Mama, where is daddy? the child asked.

- At home, darling... I answered with a smile.

- I want to go to daddy, to grandpa and grandma...

- Yes, yes – I interrupted her quickly, fearing that she might name others like Malcia and Rywcia... We are going there...

- The child is very attached to the father, isn't she? someone asked

- Yes, quite...

- Where do you live?

Why do they want to know everything?

- In Krakow.

- Does your husband work?

- Yes, he is an office employee...

Time to change trains. My travel companions helped me to carry my suitcases and placed them on the other train. This was already a direct train to Tarnow. I was relieved to sit down in it. Finally. Finally. What matters if it's on the train or in Tarnow? Or, actually, where? On the street? In the hotel? Train, hotel, street, that's my home. Maybe home-train is best of all? Maybe home-train is the safest...The Poles seem to recognize me...All of them look at me intrusively. Why do they keep looking at me? Why should they care if I am a Jew or not? And if I am, why should it bother them? But I was not worried. After all, I was an empty barrel..

- Last week they caught two Jewish women with a child on a train , my new travel companions were telling...- It was quite funny when they took them off the train... Those rogues try sorts of things. They take off their armbands and travel...They think that they will succeed the way they did before. That's the end for them... If I met Jews anyplace, I would denounce them to the police without hesitation...

- So would I, added someone else.

- That is what one should do, said another person.

I wanted to say: "of course", but could not utter those words. But I felt nothing.

After all, I was an empty barrel...

The train was approaching Tarnow. Looking out the window, I could discern clearly the contours of the town appearing on the horizon.

And suddenly, as if out of ???[illegible word], I noticed something swaying in the air and coming in our direction...That "something" was approaching, kept rising and falling above the meadows and kept approaching...At the sight of it, the empty barrel became concerned. What is it? Horrors! It was me. I recognized myself. My dress, undulating with the wind, stretched legs, open arms, disheveled hair and eyes...my eyes gazing at me...I became breathless...My second me is returning, it already fell upon me with full force. My two "I"s united and that was terribly painful...

The taste of death penetrated my lips opened in a smile...

- You betrayed him! Everything was screaming inside me. – You betrayed him! You should not have approached him! You should have stayed...

- The child! ...something protested in me timidly.

- No, you should not have left even for the sake of the child.

My heart was filled with love and burning yearning for Henek, and all other feelings were brushed aside...

Tarnow. With a screech, the train pulled into the station filled with people.

Porter! Porter! I called standing at the door. A porter came running and took my suitcases. – Where to? he asked...

- To a droshka [horse-drawn carriage]...

I walked behind him quickly, holding my child in my arms. The poor child looked around with surprise. She did not understand the change.

- Where are going, mommy? That question really hurt me. I was no longer an empty barrel. I felt and understood everything.

- You will see, sweetie, you will see.

I told the cab driver to take us to a hotel.

- There are no hotels for Poles here in Tarnow.

- How come? I cried out in fear. – Where do people in transit go to?

- They are several lodging places...illegal ones.

- Could you give me an address of such a lodging place?

- There is one nearby – you see that house there? There is a lodging house on the first floor.

Maybe they have a room available.

I asked the driver to watch my things for which I will pay him, and I would go to find out. With a beating heart and carrying my child I walked up the stairs and knocked on a door.

- Yes, this is the place, a woman answered. – But the room is taken.

I felt my legs giving in under me. What will I do now, without a roof over my head and with the child?

- Is there no way at all for my spending the night here?

- Actually, if you would want to, we have a narrow sofa in the other room. I don't know if you and the child would be able...

- Oh, it does not matter, I cried out happily. This is only for a short time. I will be glad to accept the sofa.

The room was dark and dirty. There was noise and banging coming from the street. I placed the tired child on the sofa and put something in her little hand so she could eat it. I myself kept turning around in the room, not knowing what to do with myself. What should I do?

Mommy, where are we?

I approached her and, sitting down next to her I said in a muffled voice:

- I don't know, darling.

- I want to go home, to daddy...

- Don't break my heart, sweetheart, I moaned.

Someone knocked on the door. I jumped up.

- I wanted to emphasize that we rent for the night only. We need the rooms during the day.

- Oh well... Anyway, I meant to go out right now. After all, I came here to settle something..

It was only two o'clock. The day was hot. I started walking toward a public park. The child was crying and wanted me to carry her. I was not able to. I was all shaken up.

Finally, I had to pick her up.

With a sigh of relief I fell onto a park bench shaded by trees. But was it a relief?

Thoughts began to gnaw at me.

- Why did I leave? What will I do with myself and the child now? Who can I turn to for help? And the terrible yearning for Henek felt like a sharp cut with a knife.

There is absolutely no future for the child here. - By leaving, you are saving her, Henek used to say on various occasions. Maybe we would be better off dying together than living separately, but the child... We must not think of ourselves.

- You were wrong, my heart was now saying. – I will not save her because I have no strength left... I have no strength to fight, and I would really like to go back.

The thought that I could actually go back still gave me a jolt.

- Yes, go back, even to die there but go back.

At the same time, I watched my child who was playing in the sand and asked myself: - How can you be so selfish? Just because you are suffering you want to kill your child? Is this how a mother acts?

- And then, is this a salvation? Walking the streets in the daytime and sleep on the narrow sofa at night, and all this for a few days only while danger lurks at every step? At every step that intense look of the Poles – is she or isn't she? – "I would denounce those without hesitation." And I even forget to maintain the cheerful appearance, I cannot, cannot smile...So how can I save my child?

You must collect yourself. You must go from house to house looking for an apartment, register like the others and be like the others...and smile...

But I was unable to move. I sat like nailed by my suffering. - Henek! Henek! My head was throbbing. I tried to magically bring back to memory his face which hides all his worries under a coat of tan.

How is it that I think of no one but him. After all, I loved and love them all so much. I love them but he is my heart and my soul. He is me. I never had occasion before to realize that. "My country, you are like health, only the one who loses you knows how to appreciate you"! I remembered the words from "Pan Tadeusz".

- You are a mean person! Instead of thinking how to save your child, you engage in sentimentality, I was scolding myself. But the suffering, like poisonous snakes, attacked me from all sides. If only I could find some advice, some means of escaping from all those snakes.

I took my child by the hand and starting walking around the park with her. I wanted to tire myself to the extent that I would not be able to think about anything. But this time she did not want to be carried. She wanted to play in the sand, so I sat down again on the bench. I started biting my nails one by one. Perhaps the physical pain will help me?

- Marylus, come here...

I took her on my knee and, taking advantage of the fact that there was no one near, I started to teach her.

- You know, your name is Marylka Kucharska.

- No, my name is...

- Your name is Kucharska! Repeat it! She did.

- And your mama's name is Stefcia. Repeat it. And your daddy's name is Tadek...Tadek. Will you remember it? And he is in Krakow. Your daddy is in Krakow.

- And where is Malcia and Rywcia and...

- Be quiet, be quiet. Don't talk about them, darling.

- I should not talk about Rywcia?

- No, my sweetheart.

With surprising ease the child learned everything, even to cross herself. Mrs. Kurka had said that such a child did not need to know her prayers.

After several hours I found myself on the street. I stopped at a bakery where I bought some lemonade and cookies and then decided to start looking for an apartment..

As I was walking, holding the child by the hand, I suddenly heard someone calling behind me: "Hello! Hello!"

I quickly turned – it was Pepka.

Disregarding the fact that we were on the street, I threw myself into her arms. Can anyone imagine my joy when, lonely like a lost and helpless sheep, I suddenly found a kindred soul?

Her present name was Maria Ponkowska. I called her Marysia. We returned to the park and she told me that she had actually been waiting for me in Tarnow. She had thought things over. What would she do all alone in that big city of Warsaw? She would have no one to talk to. Besides, she did not have enough money – 1000 zlotys only.

- 1000 zlotys? I was surprised. You had the courage to travel with such a meager sum of money?

- What could I do? Did I have anything to lose? Actually, I did have a little more money but had to give some to my brother...

- So don't worry now, I said. We will be together...

For Marysia (this is what we'll call her now) being together with me had a lot of disadvantages. Namely, she had great appearance (meaning Aryan look) while I did not. Thus, because of me, she could also come under suspicion. Also, the child... This will not be easy. But she had no money and without money it was not possible to dream of staying alive. (I had a few thousand zlotys and also a diamond. The engagement ring I had sold at the time when my mother-in-law was in Krakow, but since it was worth a lot of money my mother-in-law bought me instead a smaller one. I had that one with me.) Maybe with her, as her sister, I would not be suspect, and, most of all, I would be rid of this gnawing loneliness. Besides, we complemented each other. She helped me and I helped her. We decided to start looking for an apartment the next day.

It turned out that she was staying in the same lodging place as I. (a strange coincidence) and that she was the person occupying the room I had been told was already taken. As a result, she did not agree to my sharing the sofa with my child but let me use her bed.

We talked long into the night, making various plans, and in the end decided to "rest". But this was no rest for me. "Can Marysia's suffering be compared to mine? She left behind only her brother, while I...? I suffered tortures that night and did not sleep a wink, even though I had not slept last night either.

When I got up in the morning my face was so changed that I actually did not recognize myself.

- This won't work Stefa, Marysia was saying. You must get hold of yourself. Otherwise you will betray yourself. Your eyes show despair. Did you ever see such look in Aryan eyes? You must get yourself together and try to look happier.

When we went down, we mingled with the people walking to the station or rushing to church. Among them we saw a few Jewish girls and boys from Sanok. We approached them. They were very frightened. They told us that posters had already been posted there and terrible despair prevailed. They were going to Warsaw and were here in transit. They advised us to do the same because they felt that for our purposes a big city was the only possible place to be in. And then they asked us to distance ourselves from them since such a gathering could not be healthy.

The day was sunny and hot.

We went to the park again. We had something to eat and then we split up. I remained in the park with the child and Marysia went to look for a room. We were to meet in the park at noon; if she did not find a room by then, I would try in the afternoon.

I sat for a long time looking at a newspaper or a magazine, seeing nothing. I felt energy and a desire to act waking in my heart. I decided that as soon as I found a room I would get in touch with W. Trojno[?] who had arranged my papers and, with his help, I would bring Henek over at any cost. But I was worried that it may be too late. I may be too late. They may be discovered or perhaps they had left for Zaslav? Or maybe they actually left for Hungary? At the time I left nothing had been set yet... Oh, how great it would be if I could bring him, his mother and my two sisters over. But will it work?... Will it? And tomorrow is Monday already, that day...

Marysia returned at noon, disappointed. She did not find anything. She told me in which part of town she looked, so that I would go elsewhere. Then came the question of dinner. For me it was the

second day (for Marysia the third) without any warm food. Should we go to a restaurant? Should we eat non-kosher food? Of course, if we were to live like Gentiles. But our upbringing (she was also from a religious home) was so deeply rooted in us that it was very difficult to make that decision even under these circumstances. Finally, we went, mostly because of the child, yet we had difficulties swallowing the food.

After the meal, Marysia went with the child to the park and I went in search of lodging. I went from house to house speaking to janitors:

- Is there a vacant room in this house?

The answer was "no" most of the time. But sometimes they said:

- I believe that Mrs. I. on the second floor, or Mrs. G. on the first floor expects to have an available room. Or: Mrs. C. has a big apartment and maybe she would rent one room. Please go and find out. So I went, to the first, and second and sometimes the third floor. I stood out of breath in front of the door and rang the bell with a quickly beating heart.

- No, I just rented the room, was the answer. Or,:

- With a sister and a child....

- With a child I cannot do it. She will dirty the place. She will cry.

- No, she is very quiet.

- It does not matter, I don't want a child. And the door was shut in my face.

It seemed to me that they looked at me with suspicion.

- Are you from here?

- No, from Krakow.

- So why did you leave Krakow?

- This is my own business...

- If I am to take someone in, I must know who I am dealing with...

- My sister got a job here...

- If that is so, then the "Wohnungsamt" [Housing Department] should give her an apartment.

She does not need to sublet.

- We have no furniture for a separate apartment...

- "Wohnungsamt" provides furnished apartments as well.

Someone even asked me point blank:

- Are you a Pole?

- If I were a German I would not need to look for a room. I am not an Ukrainian either.

- I did not think that either. But perhaps you are....? Well, it doesn't really matter; I am not renting the room.

As the evening was approaching I was very tired. The energy that drove me in the morning has deserted me, giving room to bitter resignation. I felt like a beaten dog. I also felt bad without my child. Maybe she is crying for me. My God...they are sitting in the park and anything may happen... I became concerned. I wanted to drop everything and go back to my child. Still, the thought of Henek held me back. I will not give up. Whether I ever see him again depends on it... also my child's life... Thus I kept going from house to house until dusk turned into evening.

I woke up from a dead sleep and started to look around semi-consciously. Where am I? Suddenly, the whole load of misfortunes crashed on my head. I moaned again. Today is Monday...

I jumped out of bed, went to the window and pulled the shade aside. The light of dawn blinded me.

- Rain – I thought with horror. What will I do with the child on the street in this rain? I was shaking with feverish chills. I returned to bed and cuddled my child...

- Why didn't I go back? I cried bitterly. Why didn't I go back?... It's too late today....

- Stefa, aren't you asleep anymore? Marysia called quietly from the next room.

- No. Maybe you come to bed here?

Soon I heard barefoot footsteps. She came running and snuck into bed with me.

- Rain. What will we do today? she whispered.

- I don't know.

- We must find a room today. We must...

- You will go one way and I the other. We will both look.

-Yes...

- Today is Monday...

- Monday, I repeated like an echo.

- Today...today... For justice's sake, we too should have a difficult day...

- We should.. We will have it for sure..- Suddenly, I remembered that there may be a letter from Henek at the post-office...(We had agreed that he would write to me care of "poste-restante").

I started to dress quickly. My energy returned. I fed the child, dressed her warmly, we took an umbrella and went out. We only had one umbrella and it was pouring. Only the child could be protected with it, while we were drenched...

There was actually a letter from Henek at the post-office. It was short but warm and it raised my spirits... "After you left a lot has changed here for the better. So you too should be optimistic. I will write you after 'this'". After "this"...And "this" is happening there now...

We separated once again so that each one of us would look for a room. I carried the child all the way. The rain kept streaming down the umbrella. The wind blew in our faces all the time. The child started to cough, then to cry that she does not want to be outside, that she wants to go home...I was wet not only from the rain but from my own perspiration as well. I panted from the effort of carrying the child and from the weight of my sufferings.. I put the child down for a few minutes in every gate so that I could breathe. Then I picked her up again and kept going...Today, today...the thought kept going through my head like a drill, while I pressed with my hand the letter from Henek which I carried near my heart...

My search produced no results.. At some moments I became so resigned that I wanted to give myself up to the Gestapo at once. But that would have been a terrible blow for Henek, were he alive. There is always something that holds us back in this cursed life. Or maybe that something does not exist and it is only one's instinct of preservation that does it.

At noon, drenched like cats, we met at the restaurant. Her search was as futile as mine.

- You know, Marysia, I cannot take it any longer...

A thought came to me that actually there was a ghetto in Tarnow. Maybe we could get in there and stay there?

- Where, in the ghetto? Marysia cried out softly.

- Why not? I will suffer the same fate as the other Jews. My strength has left me...

- You are running from one hell in order to go to another?

- Isn't our present life the worst hell I could be in? At least here in the ghetto there are some of my father's friends with whom I could stay. The child would at least have a roof over her head while she is alive. You take the child with you and I will go to look around.

I knew Tarnow very well. I knew that the ghetto was on Lwowska street. I went in that direction. From a distance I could already see a high wooden fence with a barbed wire at the top. There was a small gate in the fence. I started to walk around that gate. A Polish and a Jewish policeman stood there. After a minute's hesitation I approached the Polish one. I asked him if it was possible to enter the ghetto, as there was a Jew there from whom I want to collect what he owes me. I asked him to enable me to get in for which I would pay him...

- So you want to go to the ghetto, he barked. – You look a bit like a Jew to me...

- Ha, ha! I faked a laugh. – You think I am Jewish? Well, that's because of my appearance, but here is my identity card.

He took it from me and started to examine it from all the sides and then, giving it back to me, he said:

- Please, go away from here right away!

I did, but not too far. I went into a hallway and from there kept watching the ghetto gate... It took a rather long time until I noticed that the Polish policeman left, leaving the Jew alone. I ran to him quickly and begged him to let me in. He did so at once, even though he risked his life by doing it. A Jew is a Jew after all. Nobody will take away from me the belief that a Jew has relatively the best heart in the world.

I found myself in the ghetto for the first time. The street was familiar to me as I had been there already, but before the creation of the ghetto. Suddenly, I felt like a dying fish which returns to the water. A great joy came over me. It is so good here! I will be happier to die here than to live outside. I looked around while people were looking at me. I was not wearing an armband.

My heart beating with joy, I climbed the stairs leading to my friends' apartment. But there my joy disappeared. They were living in one room, and not their family alone. 12 persons lived and slept there, among them little children who were not allowed to see the light of day; children had no right to live there. My friend's child who was Marylka's age sat under the table, sad and speechless in the stifling room.

My friends were complaining. – This paradise won't last long. They are talking about another deportation and they intend to put us in camps.

There were about 50 thousand Jews in Tarnow in the winter; now they were only 15 thousand... and now there is talk of a new deportation...

- This shows that they want to annihilate us. You may still have a chance with your documents, but with the child? It is out of the question. They started to counsel me not to give up but to continue patiently to look for a place to live. After all, there are many people alive and manage in this way. They led me out through a secret exit through which "smugglers" delivered food to them, and with tears in their eyes said good-bye to me, wishing me luck...

Marysia was already waiting for me in the restaurant, looking happy.

- I found a room with a lonely old lady. Wonderful conditions. A separate room, and the old lady knows nothing. 100 zlotys a month. And do you know whom I met? (She whispered that it was Lola, who was a good friend of ours, whose name was now Janka).- She lives with a female janitor but is uncomfortable and is already looking for another room...She may come here soon...

In the evening, we all went to our new place. The old lady did not make a good impression on me. She had small sly black eyes. She kept glancing suspiciously at me and Janka (who also looked Jewish). The room did not have a separate entrance and was in the passage way.

- Henek could not live here, I thought to myself.

That is the way it was; there was no choice. For now, we must stay here and later we may be able to look for something else.

We brought our things and stayed.

But an hour later we already knew that we would not be able to remain. The room was in a passage way which was used by the neighbors who kept going through constantly and without any ceremonies, and kept looking at us. Some of them stopped in and kept showering us with questions to which we had to invent answers. As it happened, these people were not white-collar workers; they were riffraff.

- My God, how can one take it?

Our old landlady, pretending to be passing through, kept stopping by, stayed not for a moment but hours, talking endlessly, not even allowing us to unpack. In the evening she announced that she had

a subtenant who only sleeps here, and she would sleep in our room. Marysia started to argue, saying that it would make us uneasy and that we should have been told about it before. But there was nothing we could do. As we were talking, the young woman came in. She was a sales girl at a German cold-cuts store. Actually, at the time she came I was not there. I had gone to a store to buy something. When I returned I found her talking to Marysia and I was drawn into the conversation...

Once we were alone, we looked at each helplessly.

- You know, Marysia whispered. – Our stories differed from each other. When you were out, I said that we were sisters, and now you said that we were cousins; besides, other things did not correspond either...

Marysia, I and the child shared one bed. I placed my child on the bed on which the bedding was not too clean, and wanted to put her to sleep. But soon after the landlady came in with the subtenant and a few neighbors. They sat down unceremoniously at the table and talked loudly, while the child moaned and groaned, unable to sleep. At least the people at the night lodging were better and more understanding. They did not mix into our affairs and left us alone. But here...?

When at 10 o'clock we remained by ourselves, we took advantage of the situation and quickly undressed and slipped into bed.

- This is unbearable, Marysia whispered.

- Worse still, they suspect us. You heard how they questioned Marylka? They thought they would get something out of her.

- Do you think so?

- I am certain...and their look. I know that look too well. It haunts me at every step. On the streets the suspicions of passer-byes are not too threatening because one can get lost in the crowd. But here...

- I think that if we get by until tomorrow... I started whispering but at that same moment the landlady came in again and disregarding the fact that we wanted to sleep she moved around noisily and spoke loudly with the subtenant.

That was one of the longest and worst nights of my life. The bed was narrow and we lied pressed together. The bedding had a rather unpleasant odor. As soon as the lights were put out the bedbugs attacked us mercilessly. The child kept moving around and kicking, unable to stay put. I was afraid that she would wake up and start crying. The thought that one of the riffraff already denounced us to the Gestapo, that the Gestapo may come for us at dawn, did not give us peace of mind...

- It seems to me that we sank into a quagmire from which we won't get out...

- Too bad, I whispered back. – Those in the box cars are worse off now...

- That is true...

Early in the morning the landlady woke up the subtenant and called her into the other room. Soon after we heard a subdued conversation and laughter.

- They are talking about us, I whispered. – We must dress quickly and be ready...

We started to dress quickly and then we took all our things that we unpacked the day before and started putting them back in the suitcases.

But during that conversation, both women came in and the old woman started to tell us, with a sarcastic smile in her black, cunning little eyes, that the neighbors called her attention to the fact that she should not let the room to us because we are...well, Jewish.

Marysia pretended to be outraged. She took out our "Kennkarte" and threw it on the table.

- How can they!... she shouted.

But here the subtenant interfered, very quietly, saying that there are a lot of fake identity cards nowadays and that only the Gestapo men, whom they just called, were capable to verify if ours were really authentic.

Marysia paled instantly and fell on the chair.

- I am fainting, she moaned.

I, who was to some extent more prepared for that than she was, retained my calm. I ran to get some water and started to bring Marylka to, while at the same time I was saying:

- If you noticed that we were Jewish, wouldn't it have been simpler to tell us and to refuse to let the room to us... Why do you want to ruin us? Don't you feel sorry for this child who is standing so peacefully next to me now ? Why do you want to kill her? Aren't you afraid to sully your hands with the murder of people who never did you any harm?

- The Jews have always harmed us by their mere existence, said the young woman. Besides, we will not kill you, the Gestapo will.!

- But you are placing us in their hands. Please understand that it is the same crime. It is not only the executioner who is the murderer but also the one who puts the victim in his hands...Please understand.

Marysia was sobbing quietly. I told her: - Calm down. We will get dressed. Let us be ready for those who will soon come for us. Let those who are responsible for our death cry instead. They will become aware of their crime too late. It will haunt them at every step and will be unable to escape it, as we are now unable to escape them...

- Well – the girl laughed. This is the least of my fears. But I can do business with you. If you give me two thousand zlotys right here, we will let you run away...

Under those circumstances, were we in a position to think things over? I counted down two thousand, we took our things and ran out on the street with trembling knees.

In addition to the child, I carried two suitcases; Marysia three. (We left one behind). We walked fast and recklessly, just to get as far away from that house as possible.

All covered with sweat, we reached the park. Once again, it was a nice day but the benches were still wet from yesterday's rain. We paid no attention to it and fell on one of them, totally exhausted...We were breathing heavily and loudly. Our heads were spinning...

- Mama, I want to eat! the child cried. But I was unable to budge...

- We were so lucky, Marysia said.

- But what now? We cannot go back to the lodging place because it would be suspicious. I think we must run away from Tarnow... I see that our case is too well known here.

- And where will we go? Maybe to Warsaw, after all...

I shuddered. I lost all my energy and, after that experience, to travel to Warsaw and start again to look for a place to live required a lot of energy.

- Let's not talk about it yet, I said. I was not able to talk. I wasn't even able to think. I sat with my eyes half closed and still panting.

- Eat! the child kept crying.

I had to collect my energy to go with her to a pastry shop. Marysia stayed with the luggage.

- This sitting in the park with luggage can be very suspicious, Marysia said. But it cannot be helped.

While walking on the street with the child, I noticed a large crowd around the posted notices. I went closer and started to read. The posters stated warned that "deportation" will take place in the ghetto on Thursday; and that Jews will probably try to escape. Therefore, the Gestapo is addressing the Poles with a warning not to dare to shelter Jews in their homes, this being punishable by death...- Never fear, I thought to myself. They would not do it anyway...And then I sighed at the fate of those people whom I saw only yesterday and who already anticipated what was hanging over their heads. But who among us is to be pitied more?...

Worried and resigned, I returned with the child to the park...- To hell with everything, I thought. – I will sit with the child on the bench until the police picks us up. Let Marysia do what she wants. I have no strength left. Not even for the child or Henek...

I cannot... I cannot...All I am able to do is sit idly on the bench.

While walking, I held my child close to my bosom. She was unusually quiet and sad...- Even she must have a premonition, I thought with pain...-Oh, my poor little one, my poor child...

Suddenly I stopped, struck by an idea. Perhaps my limitless pity for my child gave birth to that idea.

- Plesna – I thought. – Of course, Plesna! It is a nearby village, a summer resort. To go to the resort with the child, even if it is already beginning of September, is not at all suspicious....

With renewed energy I ran in the direction of the park. From afar I saw Marysia sitting with her head propped up on her arm, looking helplessly at the ground. I fell upon her as a hurricane..

- We are going to Plesna, I called out

That same day, that is on Tuesday in the afternoon, we were already in Plesna..

We easily found a large, sunny room (with 3 windows) in a little house beautifully located on the edge of woods, somewhat isolated. We told the landlords that the child was sick and the doctor's orders were to take her away, even though it was late in the season. In fact, he suggested that we go to Rabka, but we cannot afford it so we decided on Plesna. These people were real peasants, too unaware of what was happening outside of their village, thus unable to suspect anything... We unpacked. Ate something and went out for a walk with the child between us. Was it inhuman for me to feel in my heart nothing but peace and admiration for nature already slightly clad in a transparent, bluish autumn fog? And to delight in the country quiet and in the fact that for the moment there was no looming danger. At the time it seemed to me quite inhuman, but today, when I take into account all that I lived through, I believe that a person who cannot allow herself some momentary relaxation after such experiences cannot exist any longer...

This was like taking in some fresh air prior to plunging into whirl of sufferings...

When after a good night's sleep I woke up to the new day, all my sufferings and my terrible yearning for Henek woke up with me...

- It is already Wednesday, I thought with despair... Are they alive? Is he alive? My God, is he alive? I began to gag as a result of that terrible feeling. I felt that if I did not find out at once whether he was alive some awful misfortune would happen to me. But at that moment Marysia woke up and smiling blissfully whispered: 'Thank you God for providing this blissful corner for us. Yesterday seems like a nightmare to me...

Soon after my child woke up, stretching delightfully and opened her laughing eyes. Could I spoil their mood? Was I allowed to sadden them? With all my willpower I smiled at them.

Golden sun rays penetrated the room through the windows. People were already moving around in the next room.

- In the country people get up early, I said. – Let us get up as well. It is a beautiful day, we'll go outside or into the woods. Let's live with the moment!...

- Let's live with the moment!...I repeated and to myself I added: "because our life and peace is only momentary"... Can we stay here longer than 3 weeks at most? What will happen later? Better not to think about what will happen later. Perhaps later the war will end!

After breakfast, tastefully prepared by Michalowska (the landlady), we went out. (Although we did not feel like going for a walk, we had to go out since our story was that we came to provide good air for the child.

- It is so beautiful here, Marysia spoke with enthusiasm.

The place was truly beautiful. The hills, the tops of the trees in the woods, everything crowned by the bright sun rays. For the first time in my life the beauty of nature did not affect me. I resented it because it was so beautiful and smiling at the time that such ugly and gloomy things were happening around it.

- Nature is cruel – I thought with bitterness and did not want to raise my eyelids. I preferred not to see it... The child ran in front of us, clapping hands with joy, bending down every minute to pick a little flower. And she hummed to herself...

- She is like nature. Cruel because of her innocence, but so delightful...

As y mood was somewhat improving, I started to look around...

Marysia was playing with Marylka. They were running after butterflies. They picked flowers. They made a lot of noise and laughed. I was lying on the grass, gazing at the blue sky and letting myself be trampled by my sufferings...I could not admit to those sufferings to Marysia. She would not understand. Why? she would ask. The fate turned out to be so generous to us and you are still complaining. The family? Henek? My God, what can we do? I have a brother there also. Can we help them by our suffering? No, This kind of talk would not console me. The only time I would be able to think of Henek would be if my life were threatened. It was not threatened now (wasn't it really? Something could have happened at any moment) and I had to think that his life may be threatened... And who knows if he is still alive...

At the moment when my despair reached a peak, Mairyka came running, embraced me tightly and asked innocently: - when will daddy come to us? It is so good here! I want daddy to come...Seeing that I suddenly started to sob she got seriously frightened and began to call Marysia over...

In the afternoon we went to the post-office to mail some letters. One to Tarnow, to Janka, telling her of our whereabouts, and the other to Mrs. Kurka. I gave her my address and asked to let me know at once the whole truth about everything...Then we went to the woods.

The following day Marysia stayed at home to help Michalowska in some work while I went out with the child. That day was also sunny and warm. I walked down on the country road in the direction of the river whose pleasant roar could be heard from afar. Marylka was again happy and playful. She sang and talked incessantly...

[end of p.62]

[this section (pp.63-70) is continuation of pp. 2-5 (pp. 1-2 of English translation)]

I don't understand you. What does it mean that I am holding myself well?
As I was saying that, I noticed that the Gestapo man was quickly distancing himself. If only the train would come I would be safe, because I am certain that these two young women who are amusing themselves at my cost would not do me any harm. Suddenly, one of them cried out: - Look, they are leading a Jewish woman with a child...

I looked in that direction and saw that same Gestapo man leading a young woman who was holding a little girl, maybe 5 years old, by her hand. Her face was pale as chalk. When she was passing me our eyes met. We recognized each other (she was an acquaintance of mine).

I thought:: now he will come for me. Nonetheless, I tried to smile and asked one of the young women: - Was she really Jewish? She was not wearing an armband.

- Of course she was. Don't you know her?

- No, I replied, praying for the train to arrive...I don't know her. I am not from here...

- Probably in five minutes she will no longer be alive. Still, it is a pity about the child; she was beautiful.

At that moment the train arrived at the station. I tried to mingle with the crowd and get away from those young women. I was one of the first to board the train. I found a window seat. When the train moved, I saw the Gestapo man running out on the platform and feverishly looking around...

- Too late, I silently whispered – you should have rushed a bit more... At the same time I pondered whether it was still before or already after "work" . Once we passed the station I felt I was terribly perspired. I took out my handkerchief and started to wipe my brow.
Evening was falling.

I arrived at Plesna around 3 o'clock. I was the only one getting off at that little rural station. It was completely dark still. I walked quickly ahead and, frankly, I was not sure that I was taking the right road...But it was all the same to me. My only wish was to see my child.

But suddenly a [...??] blocked my way. I raised my head. I was in the woods. I became frightened. In the middle of the night, all alone in the woods. I retraced my steps. I stumbled along here and there, unable to get out of the labyrinth of the many paths. Which is the right one? Oh, if only a man knew which is his right path in life! How good that would be. Because, did I know whether I should have been here right now? Should I have run away from them in such a manner? And the child, should I have left her alone? What right did I have to burden Marysia with someone else's child who could perhaps hinder her efforts to save herself?

Finally, I did find a bridge and recognized the right road.

As on the night before when I went around Mrs. Kurka's house, I now went around this little house before I dared to knock on one of our three windows.

Marysia, who apparently was not asleep, opened the window at once. I went into our room through the window.

- You did come back, she whispered emotionally. But I ran to the sleeping child, fell on my knees in front of the bed, kissed her little hands and cried desperately while inside I kept asking her for forgiveness for the harm I may have done to her by leaving.

- Forgive me my darling, I whispered, forgive me because I was not myself. I promise that I will never again leave you.

Upon my return from Sanok I became sick. For a few days I was unable to stand on my feet on my own strength, and even when sitting down I was experiencing a strong vertigo and kept falling back on the pillows. However, Marysia took care of me tirelessly. She forced food on me, made sure that I had a lot of fruit and other nutritious food items and later, when I regained some of my strength, she began to take me out for walks...

Time went by without incidents and while I felt physically better, I remained apathetic and almost inert. Janka came for a few hours to see how we had settled down. She felt very poorly in Tarnow. Apparently she felt like staying with us but Marysia told her about the story we had with Franek and told her that, unfortunately, her stay would jeopardize our situation even more. Franek sowed a seed of suspicion in the Michalowskis and that seed had obviously begun to bloom and grow. Even though we went to church and tried to the best of our abilities to fit in, we had no peace. Thus Janka had to leave.

Franek arrived one day and, looking sharply at us, announced that the Gestapo had come from Tarnow and will undertake strict searches and identification checks in all of Plesnia.

We acted completely calm.

- I would advise you to hide all the forbidden things, I said. – I saw some books in the cupboard that the Germans should not see.

I saw distinctly that he was confused.

- And you, ladies, don't you have anything that she be hidden? he asked

- No, Marysia replied. We have nothing to fear.

But of course we were quite fearful. When we remained alone, our teeth began to chatter. What should we do? Should we go for a walk or stay? We decided to stay. We looked out the window and saw how a few fat Gestapo men spread around and went into a few little houses. Death looked into our eyes. I reacted better than Marysia to that look. Perhaps, subconsciously, I wanted it?

However, luck had it that they passed our house by. And that same day we noticed that the suspicious of the Michalowskis and Franek's disappeared.

But I had a terrible night. My child suddenly developed a 40 degree fever. She cried. She was delirious. She did not recognize me. I was in total despair. I carried her in my arms all the time, waiting for dawn to come. At dawn I asked Franek to call a doctor from Tarnow. He agreed to go at once. But before he left I took her temperature once again. She had none. She fell asleep and slept peacefully. I asked him to wait a while – maybe with luck the condition would improve by itself. And in fact the child had no longer fever. To this day I do not know what caused that high fever which lasted for several hours...

But at night I regained all my strength and energy. I decided to act. This situation cannot continue. Fall was approaching to be followed by winter. We could not stay in a summer resort at this time of the year. We had to rent a place in a town.

- We cannot do it by ourselves, I said to Marysia. - I decided to write to Wl. Troj asking him for help. I will promise him a lot of money for it. You know, I am thinking of going all the way. To rent an apartment through the "Wohnungsamt" (Housing Department) rather than to sublet. Think of how great it would be to have our own apartment. First of all, I could bring Henek over...

I wrote an imploring letter to Wl. Troj asking him to come to see us as quickly as possible. And that same day I went to Tarnow. I expected to find a letter from Henek at the post-office. I had not have any mail from him since the "deportation". I took the child with me because I did not want to leave again. Whatever happens to me will happen to her too. Undoubtedly, death would be preferable for her than remain somewhere all alone. But the trip went well and I found 4 letters from Henek at the post-office.

I went into a restaurant in order to calmly read the letters. This is what I learned. My parents and the in-laws were in Zaslaw, alive and well. What a joy that was for me. I ordered the best food, including a shot of vodka. One thing, namely the mention of my siblings, was unclear to me. He wrote: "I am happy that your siblings are together with you." But they were not with me. But I was consoling myself that this will become clear in his other letters. He wrote that he and his brothers were alright. Thus, could I have been unhappy?

One day we received a telegram from Wladek (that is what we called him later) that he was coming the next evening. We were very happy. Maybe, God willing, everything will start getting better for us?

We prepared a good dinner and Marysia went to pick him up from the station. He turned out to be very polite and understanding and promised to help us in everything.

Since he was on his way to Krakow, he decided to bring first the "Kennkarten" for Henek and my mother-in-law and then he could be at our disposal for a few days to try to find an apartment. Yes, this could have been very simple if fate, which had it in for us, did not always complicate our intentions.

I entrusted a rather substantial sum of money to him for the identity cards and was not concerned about it because in the course of the one evening that he spent with us I got to know him well and knew that he could be trusted completely. Although he did not like the Jews that much...

[end of p. 70]

[page or pages missing. Page 71 is not continuation of p 70]

- Stefa, Marysia moaned. – Stefa, what did you do?...

- I will right with you. Quiet!

The owner of the boarding house, bowing, left the room...

- What did you do? Marysia called out, jumping up and wringing her hands. – You delivered us to death... .

- Death! Death! – I started screaming with a passion. – Death at every step! What should I have done? Faint, like you? Run away and leave everything? Run where to? To another resort where they will require the same? I have enough of this. Let that death not threaten me so much...I am not afraid of it! I prefer death to the persecution! Let her grab me, me and the child.! See, here I am at its disposal and I laugh in its face! I am laughing, do you see? Ha! Ha! Ha! To hell with it! And you, if you want, run! Run for your "Kennkarte" and say that you have changed your mind. I will give you all my money for the road. I don't need in the grave!

I saw Marysia, always pale, following me with her eyes as I was screaming and throwing myself around the room. And it was strange...my screams calmed her down...

I fell into a frenzy. I ground my teeth, stomped my feet until my child got scared and started to cry...

Then, silence fell. Even the child sat motionless on my lap, unwilling to disturb the calm. In full concentration and silence, we sat awaiting that what was coming...

Suddenly, there was a light knock on the door. Marysia jumped up and ran to open the door. It was the concierge who handed Marysia the "Kennkarten" and said with a smile:

Now you ladies may relax. You are already under the protection of our Gestapo and no harm can come to you. Would you like something now?

- No, thank you, Marysia whispered standing motionless with her arm stretched out, holding the "Kennkarte".

Once the door closed after the concierge, we looked at each other in disbelief.

- So, even the Gestapo was fooled?

We stayed in Krynica for about 4 weeks and for the first time since our departure we felt safe. Nobody can suspect us here for the simple reason that it was a known fact that any newcomer has to register at the Gestapo. No one expected Jews to be so crazy and daring to risk a registration at the Gestapo with false papers. They did not understand that necessity forces people to do all kind of crazy things which sometime succeed and sometimes do not.

We had news from Wladek that everything was alright at his end. He announced that he would visit us soon in order to continue of service to us.

I kept writing to Henek directly to the camp asking him to answer to the same address as in Tarnow, namely, the "poste-restante". I was afraid to give him the name of the boarding house as I expected my letters to be censored.

A few days passed in complete tranquility. We regained some hope. Our nerves relaxed somewhat. The weather was truly that of summer. Were it not for yellowing leaves on the trees and under one's feet, and withering flowers and grass, one could forget that it was already late fall.

It was delightful. I did not think of anything except that at times I felt sorry that Henek could not be with us. That he could not look as I did at our child so happily playing and running around.

- How much he loved her and how much he must miss her, I thought to myself.

During one of such walks I was struck by an idea: Rzeszow. – Why not Rzeszow?

It is precisely the type of a town I had been thinking about. Not too big and not too small, and situated not too far from Sanok. But there is that side line from Sanok and there is no danger of meeting too many Sanok residents; and if it should happen sometime, one could quickly disappear from sight. (In fact, we have been here already for almost year and a half and have never yet met an acquaintance from Sanok.) Besides, another advantage is that I know that town so well. I was born there, grew up and lived there until I was 13 years old. Later I often went there with Minka to visit my grandmother who still lived in our old house until the outbreak of war. No non-Jews know me in Rzeszow and the Jews all live in the ghetto and even if some do not there is no reason to fear...

- Still, Rzeszow is too small a town for our purpose, Marysia said. I also know Rzeszow and I know that there one neighbor is interested in another one. One cannot get lost there in the crowd, and that is bad for us... I would definitely opt for Warsaw...

Perhaps Marysia was right which is why I did not pursue my plan. But the thought of Rzeszow affected me deeply and I kept returning to it... Was it because of our family house there, or the grave of my adored grandfather, or memories of a happy childhood – I could not explain what drew me to it. Today I understand. It was fate. Fate which had not yet materialized. Which is yet to become reality. Will we die in that town or will we be freed. We are now tensely facing this decision. It may take place in a few months. But I am unnecessarily deviating from the subject.

On the day when there was a sudden change in the weather, when a strong wind suddenly brought in a snow storm and when we could see the unleashed element of nature through the window, on that day Wladek arrived. We saw him through the window as he was struggling with his suitcase and the wind and walking toward our little house.

- What a wonderful surprise, I cried.

- How wonderful that he came, Marysia clapped her hands. – I already worried that winter has arrived and we still don't have a permanent place to live. After all, we cannot stay here forever.

I felt a strong urge to help Wladek who was fighting the wind.

I flew out of the room without putting on my coat, ran through the long corridor, opened the gate and was immediately grabbed by the storm. I paid no attention to it and kept running to Wladek. He saw me and started to waive with his free hand.

When I reached him he greeted me with his good-natured smile on his face.

- What crazy things are you doing? You run out in this weather without coat. You will surely catch a cold. No, I won't give you the suitcase, he said with indignation when I wanted to relieve him of his burden.

- Please, let me, I begged him. – You are so tired. Let me take your suitcase. But he firmly declined.

Once in our room, we showered him with questions regarding his case which was weighing on our hearts. And here we found out something strange.

- Well, the Gestapo has not been heard from. It has been already 2 weeks and actually he does not know anything. His wife wrote him to return home. There must have been a mistake and probably nothing will happen. Gestapo usually does not delay taking out people who are a bother to them. Besides, she and the children miss him a lot and if he cannot come for long, then at least for a day or two... Thus he decided suddenly to go home tomorrow but since he [had] other people's, that is, Jews' money and documents on him which, if something happened, would be lost together with him, he came to us with the request that we keep them and, should anything happen, we should mail them to the addresses he would leave with us. But if, God willing, everything will end well, he will come back in a few days to collect them and to settle our housing problem.

I fervently attempted to dissuade him from going to Sanok. Gestapo is cunning. Perhaps they set up a trap. Perhaps they know that he is not home and want to entice him by not showing up for the time being. Perhaps his house is under surveillance...

- Just think what it means to them to get the man who snatched their victims right from under their noses, I tried to stress the point. But he refused to be convinced. He missed his loved ones too much and who could understand it better than I? Didn't I travel recklessly to Sanok?

After dinner we began to discuss our future. I mentioned Rzeszow to him but he was not in favor of it either.

- Warsaw is better for this purpose.

But since something was pulling me to Rzeszow so strongly, I began to convince them, i.e. him and Marysia, but when I ran out of arguments I finally said:

- Well, I don't know, but my heart keeps pulling me strongly to Rzeszow.

- So, you see, Wladek cried, this is the only valid argument. In such cases a person should follow the voice of the heart. What do you think, Miss Marysia?

- My heart does not give me any directions. So, if Stefa wants it so much, I will not object.

- I will decide this matter as follows, said Wladek. If I am lucky to come back in a few days, one of you will go with me to Rzeszow. If all goes well with renting an apartment, Rzeszow will become your place of residence. But if not, we will go at once directly to Warsaw. There is nothing in Warsaw that cannot be arranged for money.

And that was that. Wladek left that evening.

Next day, after Wladek's departure, I had an unpleasant occurrence. I walked on the street alone, carrying ?? [illeg.] which I bought for the child. It was raining and I walked under an umbrella. Suddenly, I saw walking in my direction a woman from Sanok, a Ukrainian, who lived on the second floor of the building I lived in when I stayed in Sanok. I knew her to be a rabid anti-Semite who derived a lot of pleasure from the knowledge that they were killing all the Jews, and I knew that if she could contribute at least one dead Jew she would do it without hesitation. And such a person was now walking straight at me, her eyes gazing intensely in all directions. I felt blood rushing to my head. I could no longer run away. I thought I would cover myself with the umbrella as best I could and would walk steadily ahead. I may have succeeded if I had not noticed a German policeman right behind me.

"She will recognize me and will denounce me to the policeman", I thought with horror. At that moment I noticed how she threw me a look from under the umbrella and then stopped. The policeman was approaching. I passed her by on shaking legs and I was just passing by the policeman when I saw her stopping him by the arm. I started to run ahead. I fell into a labyrinth of little winding streets. I ran along one of them and, utterly exhausted, ran into a house. Some steps took me to the cellar. I sat there from morning to evening. When it became dark I dared to go out and with difficulty found my way to our boarding house.

Marysia, sure that some misfortune had befallen me, threw herself into my arms crying. – People are so mean! How they persecute others without any cause or reason, she lamented after I told her about my adventure.

Since that day I had to remain in the room all the time. I pretended to be sick while Marysia took the child out. Luckily, the Ukrainian woman did not know her.

Staying at home had a terrible effect on me. I sat for days at the window looking out at the beautiful world and the free people. Oh, to be such a free person.

Besides, on days like those I worried more than ever about receiving no mail from Henek. I was there for two weeks already and had received no letters from him at all. I had already worried about it before, but since I was moving around it did not trouble me too much. I consoled myself with the thought that he probably had not received my letters and did not have my address. But in the end he will receive a letter and I will get a reply...

Today, in my loneliness, the thought of being without news from him frightened me. He finds himself in the hands of such killers and is threatened with imminent death, and I have no sign of life

from him. In addition, my yearning for him became unbearable. After all, I had someone whom I loved so much and thought of only.

A letter from Wladek telling us that everything was alright in Sanok and that he would remain at home for a few more days gave me some pleasure but also depressed me a bit more. Now the apartment and Henek's coming was put off once again.

Once, when I was sitting in such loneliness, despair for Henek took hold of me to such an extent that I wrote a letter to Mrs. Kurka begging her to let me know at once what Henek was doing. Without paying attention that it was broad daylight, I ran to the post office where I mailed an express registered letter.

On the day when I was to leave with Wladek for Warsaw, I received a letter from Henek, and thus I boarded the train in a rosy mood.

Wladek was adamant that I should be the one to go with him to Rzeszow; I and not Marysia, specifically because I had the "bad look" (bad meaning the non-Aryan look).

- When we rent an apartment the neighbors should see you and you must watch them to see if they seem to be suspicious, he said.- If they don't suspect you then they surely will not suspect Marysia who has the good look. If, however, you notice that something is not right, you must at once look for another apartment or, perhaps, go somewhere else. If Marysia were to go, everything could go smoothly and then, when you arrived, everything could fall apart and sometime it may be too late for rescue.

This reasoning was so logical that I had to go along, even though it was terrible for me to leave the child behind.

- I did promise her then that I would never leave her again. But again each step is so dangerous and uncertain. I may never return and may never see her again. Still, I must go, for her sake as well. After all, I want to create some kind of future for her.

While traveling I thought to myself that now that I know that my mother-in-law is alive the child's situation will not be so bad, even if I were to perish. She would come and take the child with her and the child would suffer no harm at all. Besides, Henek's letter kept my spirit up.

Rzeszow. My old, native town. My heart was beating like a hammer when I got off the train and touched the soil of that town with my feet. Instinctively, I wanted to run toward our house. I did not realize that it is no longer ours, that strangers live there and that there is no place there for me. That actually I must not go there because the concierge, who certainly remained there, would recognize me. I so wanted to go home! My heart was yearning to go there. And I really did not realize that I had no home anymore. That I am a homeless dog. That anyone who wants to can push me around and kill me.

- We shall go to a hotel. It is evening already and we must secure a lodging.
Those words brought me brutally to reality.

We took two rooms in a rather decent hotel and early morning on the next day Wladek went directly to the "Wohnungsamt" (Housing Department). In the meantime I went out and wandered the streets. We were to meet at noon in a restaurant close to the station.

I directed my steps straight to our house. It was not too far, on the railway street, and soon I saw its tall, gray walls. When I entered the gate, I was assaulted in turn by feelings of happiness, of wistfulness, of depression. There were the stairs which I ran up so many times with my school bag, with Minka or some friends, happy and careless, all smiles and singing. (I ran up now as well, but what a change. What utterly different situation). Here were the doors leading to my grandfather. And here was my grandmother's room. Here is where Minka lived and here are our doors. Maybe if I ring the bell my mom will open as she did then? How stupid I am! I felled tears choking me and I ran down to the backyard. Here was the place where we played. Here we drew "classes" and there we played ball. On

this spot I once had a heated argument with Minka, and here, a minute later, we were kissing each other.

In the middle of the yard, there used to stand a succah during the fall holidays. And higher up there were balconies. The lower one was Minka's and the higher was ours. She used to throw the ball up and I down. Often the ball would fall down to the yard and we would run down to pick it up. One time, at this very spot near the wall, one gentleman who was visiting my grandfather, gave us two huge boxes of chocolates which we could hardly carry. What a joy that was.

I felt tears in my eyes and I started to hum the known song "Belz".

"The little town Belz, my beloved Belz,

The tiny town where my family lived and where my house stood,

Today, when I returned, nobody knew me,

The family is no longer and my house has disappeared..."

I sighed from the bottom of my heart. Where is my family? Where is Minka, beautiful and beloved?

- Are you looking for someone, a voice inquired.

- No, I made a mistake, I whispered and went out quickly [obliterated words] ...there to school. I was walking that street now, remembering how, wearing a tilted beret, a worn coat and a backpack, I used to run with my girlfriends while we kept telling each other school jokes and bursting out laughing every minute...

When I met with Wladek, I learned, much to my chagrin, that the matter of apartment will not be easy. First of all, the local people do not want to rent to people from other towns because there is already overcrowding. And then, they keep asking about the reasons for our relocating from Krakow. We are not deportees since we do not have a certificate of deportation. (At that time, and before as well, jobless Poles were deported from Krakow to other towns.) But that did not make matters hopeless yet because he found out where that Sak. [??] employee lived. He decided to go to his house and offer him money for taking care of the matter. .

- I don't risk anything by doing this, he said. – He will either agree or refuse. But I believe that he will rather agree because the employee nowadays lives only on what he takes on the side. Would he manage to support his family on measly 300 zlotys with the present black market?

In the afternoon he went to Sak.[?] I awaited him very impatiently sitting in the restaurant and smoking one cigarette after another. (That was the first time in my life that I smoked, not counting the few times I smoked just to try it. I did not like smoking at all, but I did need to kill the time somehow.)

Wladek came in the evening with the news that the Sak. did not refuse him, that he wanted to meet him tomorrow evening in a coffee house. He did emphasize that all one could talk about is one room only. Of course, we had to agree to that. Let it be one room as long as it is ours. Just so that we don't have to depend on anyone.

We went at once to the post-office and put in a call to Krynica. I wanted to calm Marysia who worried about our trip and to tell her that things were looking up.

When talking to Marysia she told me something that I simply could not believe.

- What? I kept repeating. – Is it possible?

- Yes, I assure you, she replied. I went to the post-office today and collected another letter from Henek in which he writes clearly that your siblings are in Rzeszow, in the ghetto. There was news from them sent to Zaslav, to your parents...

I spent a sleepless night. More than ever, I had before my eyes the scene of my flight from them. I should have been happy that they were alive and that now I will have the opportunity to help them. But I was not happy. Until that moment I kept pushing away from me the thought of them because I felt that I would lose my mind if I got involved in it. But today the thoughts invaded me with full force. I saw them that day at Mrs. Kurka's, human shadows, picture of unhappiness; I saw those dear faces full of

pain at the moment when I fled the room; now more than ever I was sure they were no longer alive. Henek did write that he knew they were, but although I tried to persuade myself, I knew that they were not alive. Such is the power of foreboding.

The next day Wladek, searching my face said to me: - I expect that today you will not do anything foolish.

- Of course not, I replied lowering my eyes and knowing very well what he meant. He was warning me not to try to communicate with Jews. – Of course not, I repeated, I don't even think about it...In any case, not today...But I knew well that I was lying...

I went down, pretending that I wanted to look a bit around Rzeszow, while Wladek, who did not feel well, stayed in bed and was to remain there until the time of the meeting with Sak.

At the exact time when the Jewish women passed the street yesterday, I walked back and forth waiting for them to show up. When I noticed them I walked into the gate of "our" house. I waited until they passed it by and then I started to follow them at a certain distance.

On Krakowska street they split into small groups and began to sweep the street. They collected the garbage into small piles and one of them, pushing a two-wheel cart, approached each pile and collected each pile with a shovel and threw it into the car. That girl was my cousin Rosia. She had completed her studies at the conservatory and her violin playing was really masterful. (For that reason she was considered by the family to be conservative and was criticized for it). I heard her play once, during my last stay in Rzeszow when, together with Minka, I visited my grandmother. She played especially for us and she truly charmed us. And now she was collecting garbage.

I started to walk around in her vicinity. Our eyes met. She understood that I had something to say to her... She began to manipulate so as to come close to the sidewalk at which time I, in passing her, whispered: - Are our children with you? I immediately continued to walk and after a considerable distance I went back. This time she whispered while I passed her by: - Only Rywcia...I continued, feeling a heavy load on my head and heart. So that was it. Mendek and Malcia are not alive. Only Rywcia remained. I was so sure of that that I did not even try to ask anything else. But by what miracle did Rywcia manage to get to the Rzeszow ghetto? But this was of no importance to me. When I calmed down a bit I went back and when Rosia approached I whispered: -Please, take good care of Rywcia. I will soon come to get her.

-She is hidden together with my little brother – I managed to hear her whisper as I was distancing myself. The Jewish women noticed that I was communicating with Rosia and surmised what was happening. I understood that from their commiserating looks. Luckily the non-Jews did not notice anything...

- No, shouted Wladek, - You will not deceive me! If you came in with such a face it is only because you communicated with "them",

Crying, I confessed everything.

- If you will act so recklessly then all my efforts will be in vain. You will not be able to hide, he spoke excitedly.

But soon he felt compassion. He approached me and, taking my hand, he whispered: - Forgive me. I was angry only because I care for your life. I could not explain why I feel more friendship for you than for others. Please know that I am your friend and please count on me always.

I began to cry even more. What could I offer him in return? Could money repay all that he did for us? And friendship? What could friendship of a "nobody" like I was and still am be worth?

I sat curled up on a chair in a hotel room, with a night lamp (there was no other one) and, shivering from cold, I kept looking at my watch.

Time was passing at snail's pace and with each hour I became more concerned. Before 9 o'clock I consoled myself that he must be back by 9, as 9 was the curfew hour.I

But when 10 o'clock was approaching and he was not back, I did not know any more what to think. I kept twisting and turning on the chair, tried to read some newspapers; but when it was past 10 I already sat motionless, cold and rigid, always listening and thinking that he must have met with an accident. Each time when I heard footsteps in the hall my heart began to beat at the thought that it was him. But then I was disappointed.

He came at 11:30, totally drunk. Swaying, he threw himself at the chair and when he spoke the whole room began to reek of vodka.

- What happened, Mr. Wladek?

- Ha! Ha! Ha! They took me for a Jew, he spoke loudly and laughed.

- Speak lower, someone may hear you. I was frightened by his shouting.

- So what? So what? Am I a Jew? Should I be afraid? He started to laugh again with a drunkard's laugh. – They took me for a Jew! Ha, ha!

- But for my sake, I whispered, but I soon realized that I will not get through to him. Still, I was so curious that I asked again:

- So the matter has not been taken care of?

- Ha, ha! He laughed again. Did I outfox him! Did I outfox him! He promised to take care of it. I swear that the idiot promised.

I took him to his room and put him on the bed in his clothes (I only took off his shoes and coat). This took a lot of muscle strength and caused me fear because while I was moving him he kept making a lot of noise and, in drunken stubbornness, kept repeating the same sentence: "they took me for a Jew".

He slept until 12 noon and it was only then that I would find out everything. (He had no idea that he behaved so shamefully.)

At the coffee house where they met, 2 men from the "Sek. Ordnungsamt" and one other dragged him to some bars where, of course, he had to pay. While drinking, they kept asking him about the reason he needed a room in Rzeszow. He told them that his family consisting of four members was evicted from their apartment (because the Germans often evicted even Poles if they liked and wanted the apartment for themselves) and moved in with him. This was very inconvenient for him and it is very difficult to get an apartment in Krakow. But he would very much want to get rid of that family because they cost him money and he is uncomfortable with them, which is why he started to talk them into moving to Rzeszow.

- Why Rzeszow? they asked.

- That is my business which I don't want to discuss, he replied.

They started to justify their interrogation of him.- We must be very careful with strangers, Sak. was saying. You know that there are plenty of "those" various people and Jews around. If one of them were caught and it would turn out that I gave him a housing permit, I too would be made responsible for it of course,

- Of course, Wladek replied. – I quite understand your caution...

- To tell you the truth, another man butted in, - you look like a Jew..

- Well, Wladek cried out. – So you think I am one? If so, it is my duty to identify myself to you.

He took out his "Kennkarte" and handed it to them.

- So you come from Rumania, they were saying in disbelief.

- Yes I do. And I actually look Rumanian. At least my friends think so.

- But also as a Jew, added Sak. And suddenly, he asked out of the blue: – do you know that Jews hold fake identity cards and attempt to mix with us?

- How could I not know it being a Krakow man? Wladek was saying as he retrieved his Kennkarte. - Such insolence is seen at every step in Krakow. Now I understand, you think that my... He started laughing and took out his business identification card and all other documents, even some pre-war ones. That definitely convinced them. They talked him into inviting them to dinner which included

many drinks which the two gentlemen never refused. All that lasted for a long time. They promised him to take care of the matter the next day and told him to show up at 4 p.m. at the very bar where they were at that moment, and they would deliver the permit to him. . It is lucky that they never consider the possibility that, as a non-Jew, I may be arranging things for those who are Jewish, he added in conclusion.

- Didn't they wonder that you, a Krakow man, have documents from Sanok? I inquired.

- I told them that I had been living in Krakow for several months only.

- Weren't you afraid to return home after curfew?

-They had special night passes and they accompanied me.

I worried: - Who knows if until 4 o'clock the idea that you may be helping the Jews won't occur to them?

But it did not. At 4 p.m. I already had the permit for room No. 5 at Kol. ja 10. Before I even went to see the room, I telephoned Marysia to give her the happy news.

The room was big, a bit dark even though it had windows. The windows were facing a somewhat dark and rather gloomy back yard. The floor was dirty and worn out. The walls were peeling, showing signs of bedbugs Altogether, the house was dirty and disgusting, and the room was just like it too. But to me the house seemed like a palace and the room like the most beautiful [??]. The reason, of course, was that it was my own. I was a bit concerned about the door because it was connected to the apartment of the neighbors.

- That's nothing, said Wladek. The door can be blocked with a closet and one should talk in a low voice, and nothing to worry about. What is important are the neighbors..

In order to find out about our neighbors, I knocked on the nearest door. A young woman, wearing a robe with rolled up sleeves, opened the door. It was obvious that she interrupted something she was doing before coming to open the door.

I told her that I had just received a permit for that room and would like to clean it up somewhat. Could she tell me if there is a woman nearby who could do it, since I was a stranger here and don't know my around yet.

The neighbor replied very politely that the concierge could do it, and then she started to ask me where I was from. I told her the "fairy tale" about our eviction from Krakow.

I thought to myself that by tomorrow the entire house will know about it and I will be able to know whether or not they have "that" look...

The next day, I found out to my great joy that the entire house is occupied by deportees from various parts; thus, my story was not unusual. The concierge cleaned the room well. She had a face of an utter idiot and I had no reason to be afraid of her. Also, during the few days when I went around furnishing the room (I actually bought some furniture, only the most essential pieces, as well as some paintings of the Virgin Mary and Jesus which looked odd to me in my room), I had the occasion to talk with the neighbors and did not see "that" look in their eyes. While shopping around, I had the occasion to notice that here in Rzeszow people did not know about fake documents yet. They talked about Jews hiding with Poles, as unfortunately they were still some [???] who still hide them They also talked about Jews buying identity papers from Poles for a lot of money, but since the documents don't bear their photographs it is very easy to find them out. The people in general knew of nothing else.

- The day when they learn more, we may already be so acclimated that they will not suspect us, I tried to reassure myself. Besides, the fact that we have a permit from the Housing Department will not give them any ideas.

The room, once cleaned, looked decent. But I was not able to sleep there yet because I had no bed linen. Thus I spent the night, prior to my return to Krynica, also in the hotel.

Wladek eagerly helped me with everything all the time. He left for Sanok only when there was nothing left to be done. That was a day before I left. I decided that we would return here with Marysia

and the child only on Thursday (it was Monday, but since everything was prepaid at the boarding house until Thursday, I yearned for a few days of rest. The furnishing of the room left me rather tired. Wladek promised to come to Rzeszow also on Thursday and to bring us some dishes and bed linens which we had left at Mrs. Kurka. He also took a letter for Henek and said that he would try to communicate with him to discuss the date of his and his mother's departure.

Wladek came to Rzeszow only on Saturday and during the two days we slept in our room completely without any bed linens, and since it was cold already we were actually freezing. We were only able to wrap the child in whatever we had, i.e. dresses, linens and whatever else that was suitable.

We did not go to the hotel because during the one night that I spent there without Wladek I had a terrible experience. At about 11 at night, when I had just made myself comfortable and intended to fall asleep, I suddenly heard steps and German male voices. Someone was banging on my door.

- Who is there? I called out numb with fear.

- Open up! Criminal police, was the sharp reply. I started to shiver feverishly and at once felt the taste of death. While I was putting on my robe with trembling hands I thought: - All is lost. Now I am lost.

With unsteady steps I approached the door and opened it. Then I quickly ran back to bed and covered myself tightly. My teeth were shattering and I was unbelievably cold.

- Kennkarte, came the order in German from one of the three policemen who had found themselves in my room.

- I cannot leave my bed, I stammered. - I am terribly cold, but my bag is on the table, please take the card.

One of them started looking in my bag and found my Kennkarte. He started looking at it from all sides and then began to question me chaotically, as follows:

- What is your name? What is your occupation? What city were born in? Where are you going now? What year were you born in? And so on, in the attempt to confuse me, to make me make a mistake. But I did not. The second policeman was getting ready to continue with questions when suddenly he laughed. He looked at my bed and, holding his sides, we reeled with laughter:

- Oh, God! he cried. - Oh, my God! I followed his eyes and saw the reason for his laughter. There was a doll on the pillow next to me. I had bought it for Marylka and took it with me to bed, imaging (because I missed her) how she would play with her. When I was falling asleep I forgot to put the doll away, and now they noticed it. They all started to laugh and at the same time they put the card back and left, closing the door behind them. Could it be that thanks to the doll that they lost their interest in me?.

Next day, I found out that the police raids the hotel once in a while and require identity documents of the guests. Therefore, we did not have the courage to run the risk of a similar experience which, this time, could have a bad ending...

Wladek was unable to come earlier because he had a cold, with fever, and had to stay in bed. When he arrived he was not quite well yet, but we suspected that it was hard for us to be without bed linens and dishes, so he did not want to wait any longer.

He brought me a letter from Henek who was at his house and he told that he would come next Sunday.

- And my mother-in-law? I asked.

- Your mother-in-law? He started to stutter. Well, you see, your mother-in law, there in Zaslaw, every few days...well, every few days they kill someone there...

I got close to him and started squeezing his hand with force...

- Is my mother-in-law dead?

He nodded his head.

I fell on the sofa and started to cry terribly.

- Now that she already had her papers, that she has an apartment waiting for her, oh God, oh God! I thought my heart would break. She who could have saved herself is no longer alive...

The days preceding Henek's arrival dragged interminably. We registered at the town hall and received our food ration cards. We were citizens on equal footing with everybody. Everything was in order. Nobody suspected us. Somehow, however, this did not make me happy. When at first I thought that my mother-in-law was no longer alive the pain was not so sharp because, above all, my parents were closer to me and I thought that they too were no longer alive. Besides, at that time she was not that close to the family yet...But today, when everything was ready for her...No, I could not bear it...I thought of her Kennkarte in the drawer at Wladek's, of no use any longer. How terrible, how terrible...

And besides, I began to worry about my parents. They are in as much danger as she... My God! They killed over 10,000 people from this area and yet it is not enough for them.

But as Sunday, the day of Henek's expected arrival, was approaching, the thoughts of him began to overwhelm me. I became impatient. I was worried. Will he make the trip alright given his appearance? Although he was to travel at night, the train arrives in Rzeszow after 7 a.m. and it is light already.

Saturday came. The day preceding Henek's arrival. I felt sick with worries from early morning.

- Impossible! Impossible! I cried in the hope that this trip will be successful. And the escape from camp?

- If he could be at Wladek's he can also manage to get on the train, Marysia was saying.

But I kept lamenting:

- You know, maybe I should send him a telegram not to come. Think about it, if anything should happen I will be responsible. I am dragging him here because of my selfishness, while perhaps he feels safer in camp...

- How can a Jew feel safe in the care of the Germans, Marysia was saying.

By noon my concern became sick. I ran around the room crying and wringing my hands.

- What did I do? What did I do, I lamented.

At that point Marysia stated suddenly:

- I am going to Sanok for him...

I stopped floored in the middle of the room. I was unable to utter a word. I thought to myself: she wants to risk her life for me.

- Nowadays the trip to Sanok is not so risky. Things with the Jews have quieted down. They no longer demand identification and I will get there at night and nobody will recognize me. Just think what a relief it would be for Henek to be able to travel in my company.

I did not have the strength to object.

She went...

All night long I lied all dressed on my bed, next to my child. I could never describe what I felt. Sometimes the taste I felt on my dry lips was even worse than that of death!

The hours passed slowly. One, two, three, four o'clock, while I kept wiping off cold sweat from my brow. At every sound, at every move the child made I shuddered. Will 7 o'clock ever come? No, not for me. I will not live to see it...I felt cold and hot. I felt weakness in my heart. I was nauseated, or had stomach cramps...When will that suffering end?...

I looked at the watch. It was after 5:30. How many more hours? I started to count when suddenly I heard a very low, almost inaudible knock on the door. My heart jumped to my throat.

Although the knocking sounded like the sign we had agreed on in Sanok...but what if it was only my imagination?

The knocking was repeated. I remained motionless, half dead. Who could it be? After all, there is no train from Sanok at this time.

Once again I heard the knocking. – A ghost, I thought. It's a ghost knocking.

Once again the knocking. I got up all my courage, jumped out of bed and, without even asking who it was, I energetically opened the door. When I looked, I jumped to the side with a terrible scream...

It was my mother-in-law.

She came into the room slowly and locked the door behind her.

- You got frightened, child, she was saying kindly. -Your legs are shaking. I know, you thought that I was not alive. But come, touch me and you will convince yourself that I am alive. I survived by a miracle.

I cautiously approached that shabbily dressed, ashen-faced woman, then suddenly threw myself into her arms...

After we calmed down a bit I told her to undress and put her on the bed, next to the child. The child woke up. She was extremely happy to see her "Aha"[?] (she never called her anything else by "Aha"[?].She called my mother Grandma) next to her.. We began to talk. She told me things and I told her. I found out that my parents were still alive. Now the time was passing rapidly.

It was already light when I began to light a fire under the stove. What time was it? I did not even look. Suddenly, energetic knocking with our sign. I opened. the door. There stood Marysia and behind her Henek...