Naphtali Karchmer

SOLITARY IN THE OVERWHELMING TURBULENCE

FIVE YEARS AS PRISONER-OF-WAR IN EAST PRUSSIA

ציור העטיפה: נחמה קארצ'מר

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Note to the Reader

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This English version of Naphtali Karchmer's amazing Holocaust memoir was made possible by the diligent translation work of his late widow, Pauline Braude Karchmer, who was assisted by her cousin, Dawn Braude. Its duplication has been supported by generous contributions from descendants of the Rabinowitz, Karchmer, Milner, and Davidson families originally from the Oshmiany Gubernia towns of Devenishkes, Lipnishki, and Vishnevo.

For additional information about our family and its history, feel free to contact Clifford Karchmer; email: ckarchmer@protonmail.com.

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A U G U S T 1 9 3 9

About four weeks before the outbreak of hostilities Mother wrote: " I am not well. Please come to me. " My Company Commander gave me compassionate leave.

The 100 km journey from Vilna to Lipnishky was an experience out of the everyday run of things. It generated a feeling of tension within me. Roads and villages sped by. Fields overgrown with thorns flashed and passed adding to the feeling of desolation and hopelessness.

The harvest had been gathered in even before the sheaves had properly dried. The harvest wagons had been piled high and rushed to the barns as if to save them from an oncoming storm. A feeling of doom and foreboding - of catastrophe, hung over everything.

The train was crowded with occupants from all walks of life. The minority groups figured prominently. The all absorbing subject was Danzig and the corridor and the great interest was the trade agreement that had just been signed between Russia and Germany. This affected daily living and the tone of conversation ranged from satisfaction, even controlled or contained pleasure, while one could feel repression, hesitation, disatisfaction and doubt.

Feelings were mixed. There was both hope and hesitation - a fear of hope. In the event of war breaking out they felt that an opportunity might arise for a change of borders. This could indeed affect their lives. In the event of war the strong could be defeated and that could mean their long awaited liberty and release from Polish oppression. They hoped and dreamt of this in their innermost hearts, hardly daring to imagine such a reality. I had, nevertheless, an all pervasive feeling of foreboding mixed with a dreaded anticipation.

The train rattled and shook, slipped and slided along the rails, accellerating its momentum, and then with a deep resounding

hoot it entered into the depth of the forest challenging its silence, It cut along the trees, shook and reverberated.

Startled birds massed together and upwards like a huge undulating, black, woven fabric wheeling round. Then swooping down sharply they spread out and merged into the tree tops.

The train slowed down and stopped at the central depots along the way. Passengers alighted and others came on. Many among them were Jews. Ideas, remarks and observations were parried back and forth. An old dignified bearded Jew had just come on. Loudly came the brazen observation, "Oh, just you wait! When Hitler comes he's going to finish you off good and proper."

Two other Polish soldiers in the carriage with me shouted"Shut up!". We let this insolent creature have it. We gave him such a dressing down that he made his way to another carriage.

Bit by bit our carriage came to itself again. Voices were lowered and remarks were exchanged in normal tones. I leaned against the window frame shaking with anger, my hand clutching my bayonet. If I had let go I would have pulled it out and impaled the speaker as I had been trained to do.

My mind went back to an incident that had happened the week before. I had been walking in the Vilna streets with a friend when we met two comrades-in-arms. One of them was a fellow that I got on very well with, Barkonetsky by name. He was not one of the usual run of the mill buddies. For one thing, he was doing his military service eight years late. He had been serving time for manslaughter, and was prone to violent outbursts. Nevertheless I got on well with him and for a Jewish soldier in the Polish army to get on well with another mate was not something to be denigrated. Barkonetsky and his buddy were slightly drunk and insisted that we join them for another round.

In spite of our protests we were persuaded and went to one of the side streets stinking with a mixture of cooking and blocked sanitation. Nearby were the cheap taverns and houses of prostitution.

We were served with tea glasses of Vodka and slices of beef and salami. Brakonetsky raised his glass and turned to us Jewish Comrades in arms. We were dazed after the second glass and our inhibitions were gradually disappearing, especially with Brakonetsky. His friend was silent all the time stuffing himself and eating like a pig. He looked at the table, at the food at the "young girls" who were strolling around the room. He did not say anything before or after his vodka. His eyes were turned over, only the whites showing, his eyes squinting at the corners. He speared the sausage with his knife and continued stuffing himself. He put the knife in the other hand a few times and in the end he stuck it into the table. The landlady shouted at him for tearing the cloth and damaging the furniture.. She cursed him roundly. He stopped his greedy eating, hiccoughed, lifted his head and said in Polish Bylorussian, "And when the Germans come I will be the first to butcher the Jews"and in order to demonstrate what he was saying he waved the knife in front of his own throat. In a second Brakonitsky had him by the scruff of his neck, lifted him and threw him over the side-board and shouted: "You bloody ungrateful pig!". We left him like the dum brutish lump that he was lying in his own vomit. A hue and cry arose. "A soldier has been killed." Busybodies rushed out to see what had happened.

Recollecting the incident heightened my depression now. I was in the grip of an anger that dazed and enervated

me and remembering that the incident in the carriage just made be feel even worse. My hand pressed down on the bayonet and gripped it. I was afraid that I would lose control of myself and pull it from its sheath atomatically and strike at someone unthinkinly as I had been trained to do in the military exercises.

The train started going faster and with it my tension rose. From the depth of my memory I remembered an incident that also disturbed me. One Sunday evening at dusk Borovsky and I had gone walking in the park. The gypsies were there in their colourful dresses and sparkling beads and dangling earrings. They were calling out to passersby to come and hear what the future held for them. It was on the eve of war and soldiers especially, were anxious to know what was in store for them. Usually I had no faith in fortune-tellers. My family had always deprecated "Gypsytalk".

A gypsy approached Borovsky and after giving her a few coins, she began to tell him in a sort of dazed sing-song voice what the future held for him. Finishing, she turned to me: "I don't believe in your foolish chatter, Gypsy," I said but being young and strong with the flame of youth burning in me though I was inexperienced, my future seemed bright and rosy and the pleasures of life were awaiting me - as for the war - I felt sure that even though it came on, it would not really touch me. The gypsy again came closer. In my heart of hearts I feared that what she had to say to me would embitter my life. I made up my mind not to be tempted. However, Borovsky pushed me on. Unwillingly I gave her a few coins saying the while: "I don't believe in what you say, gypsy." "You are far more stupid than you imagine", she retorted in her singsong monotone voice. "Here I look into your eyes and I see many things you don't

and you will be engulfed by it. You will be taken over the border by force. Your feet will go unwillingly but you won't cross the sea. You will be in a neighbouring country and your life will hang on a thread. You will have deep trouble....." Her singsong voice died down. "Give me more money - I can see in your eyes and the cards show a long journey...." "Enough gypsy!" and so we strolled along jocularly half believing, half doubting in mockery .....

Now in the train I remembered her words and they ate into me. A cool breeze blew across my burning face but did not cool or calm me down. Two unknown soldiers stood opposite me lost in thought. Silently they looked out of the window smoking .....

Waves of pine scent filled the carriage as we thundered through the forest. This refreshed me wiping away the gnawing fear and worry. I breathed and relaxed. I breathed deeply and felt only nostalgia, longing to be home with my family in the little town with its sad and worried Jews.

MY VILLAGE

Mine was a Jewish Stettle in Eastern Poland. It was one of many in that area. The inhabitants busied themselves in petty trading. Trading in pig-hairbristles was a lucrative occupation. These they bought from the Polish farmers. There were peddlers trading in haberdashery. Small shopkeepers who stocked textiles and groceries, such as sugar, salt, salt herring and household utensils. Then there were the small artizans, tailors, hatters and shoemakers. One had the waggoners or carters plying their trade in the immediate vicinity and finally the "luftmenchen" living on illusions. As in every little community there was plenty of gossip.

The community leaders each in his own way tries to guide and control. "He who pays the piper calls the tune" an those who had means used it to gain their own ends. Some wanted honour or local leadership and if they had the means they got it.

But there were a group of people forever living under the cloud of poverty and for these people there were the typical Jewish " " institutions. There were the "Matan-be-setter" (secret almsgiving) by those who were a little more endowed in worldly goods. The Hach Kala - the Bridal Fund for needy Brides enabling the young girl to get what was necessary to set up a home. Last but not least the - enabling the Wayfaring Jews wandering over areas stretching from Vilna across Polesia to Volme to find a nights lodging. Many of these wandering Jews were preachers expounders of-the-law.

They would come into the shull, say their piece - expound their ideas on the Holy Works as they felt driven to do.

They would collect money for those who lived in the Holy Land (On Chaluka). This meant that the money was to be distributed among those devoting themselves to the study of law in the Holy Land who did not waste their time earning their daily bread. Doubtless "a percentage" of the collection stuck to the palms of the collectors but that was the way things were.

However, there was a new spirit rising among the younger people. They were joining the Zionist Youth Movements rebelling against the older Jews and their " " ways. They felt that there was no future in the old ways any more. They were organizing themselves to go on "Hachshara". They were preparing for the struggle of Aliyah and settlement and work and life in Eretz Yisrael.

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MY LAST VISIT HOME TO MOTHER

I found mother at home in bed - fever had weakened her. In the joy of seeing me she pulled herself together, got up and kissed and embraced me. For a long time we just stood looking at each other without a word, taking joy in each others' presence. In spite of the ravages of illness and age, she still had the charm and some of the beauty of her earlier better days. She was perfect in my eyes. Sensitive, generous, understanding, great hearted, everything a Jewish mother could be. A quiet deep joy radiated from both our faces. After a long silence she spoke: "Do you really think there is going to be a war?" I could see the deep fear in those great green eyes.

She recalled the horrors of the First World War. Our area had changed hands several times. Murder, rape and pillage had been the order of the day. The area had changed hands several times, and each time the helpless civilians, the Jews in particular, had had to pay the price for which there was no-one to turn to for redress.

I had no answer for her. In my heart of hearts I thought: "Here was my mother, my brother and his wife and children; my sister and her family; all the Jews of the shtettle. I couldn't imagine the Germans killing them all." We were in for hard times but we would come through. The Polish army was ready for battle They wouldn't let the German armies penetrate that far into the interior. This I explained to mother, trying to quieten her unrest and worry.

I succeeded. She became more herself. I left her to rest and went out to look for some of the young people who were still around. It was August, 1939. A month before the war.

What a glorious evening that was! It was Dyllo Russia at its best - the village lay golden burnished in the setting sun. It was typical of so many others in that time and place. Shops were closing. Wagoners and peddlers were unharnessing their faithful work-nags giving them a change to rest and enjoy the light cool evening breeze wafting along. Coblers and others were also taking off their sweat soaked leather garments and hurrying home in the cooling down from the heat of the blazing day.

The air was scent-laden from the orchard trees and the late flowering blossoms. A wagon passing with a freshly cut load of cloves filled the air with its heady scent.

Jews were already on their way to "maariv" and in the distance one could hear the sound of the churchbells ringing the vespers. An anxious mother passed me, turned back, and clutched me by the shoulders: "Perhaps you've seen my son?... Is there really going to be a war?"

The glorious rays of the late afternoon sun luminated the greenery. The pollen laden air added to the golden haze. Evening and quiet was settling in the village so I became part of it again for the last time in a brief 24 hours. Together we were bound by the uncertainty. What would the future bring?....

I met my friend and we strolled along discussing the events of the day. The young Zionist Chalutzen were bitterly disappointed. The gates of Eretz Yisrael were being closed to' further Aliyah. The central core of their lifes activity, their all encompassing dream and occupation of their waking moments was vanishing before their eyes. What were they to do - They looked at me in helpless, hopeless and bitter disappointment. Some way had to be found.

Walking along, we came to the poorer part of town. Along

this road lived the poorer Jews. They were poor artisans, widows, orphans, and families with many children. Most of the year these children ran barefoot or shared only one pair of shoes among those it fitted, each one using it when the need arose. Here were shoemakers and butchers who carried on their business on a very diminutive scale. Here lived the solitary women, divorcees, old maids. They worked for the families who were better off doing washing, cleaning and collecting feathers. All this was hard back-breaking work.

The tumbledown, thatched-roofed houses made up this street. In the fall the wind whistled howlingly through the cracked walls. In winter the shacks were heaped over with snow and looked like a chain of hillocks.

From the tiny front covered window-panes, stuffed with old rags to keep out the bitter cold, pale-faced, dreamy-eyed children looked out, and sometimes one could see the startled eyes of lonely old women. They were always waiting and watching for someone or something to come.

Life here was lived on a different plane than on the larger more affluent homes near the centre of town. Life here was regarded from a different angle than in the better homes. Here there was a feeling of anger, frustration and envy towards those Jews in the better streets. The richer Jews on the other hand, few though they were, looked down on the unfortunates in "poverty lane". They tried to rule their lives, power in any form is always sought. But all were united in their feeling as Jews. They lived in an area surrounded by hostile elements. This kept them together. Inconsiderate shepherds were always crossing the "gdzir gissel" with their herds and flocks and pigs on their way to the richer pastures lying between the shtettle and the river flowing quietly along. The greedy animals in passing would trample the provender trying to grow round the tumbledown thatched structures. The "unclean" pigs in passing

dug their dirty snouts into the tumbling foundations leaving their twice dirty dung around the pathetic little structures.

This lane was partly a dugout ditch, the side about 3 metres in some parts. The dides were continually falling in especially after heavy rains in spring or autumn or the flooding after the (melting of the snow) thaw set in. Each year the water dug out the ditch more deeply eroding the ground and carrying it down the lane to the silt of the river bank. So the foundations of the dilapidated houses were laid bare.

Near a pathetically broken-down structure about 4 metres square covered with heavy straw, stood a cart with its pointed skywards. Not far away was a weak shaky horse whose rib-cage was clearly to be seen under the skin from which the hairs were falling out. In the house lived Reb Avremel. He had a thin sparse weedy beard. His deepset eyes saw and understood a great deal but he rarely said a word or expressed any opinion. He was a man who read both the Holy and secular books and scanned the newspapers. Liberal in his views he was gentle and kind to everyone. Reb Avremel never hurried. He would harness his horse slowly and eaily and set out early in the morning to trade and traffic in the surrounding country-side and return home late in the evening after the sun had set. All the way he would hum and murmer psalms. On Fridays he would come in late, after Kabalat Shabbat. Slowly and deliverately he would unharness his horse and prepare for Shabbat and obstinately go on his own to "Kabbalat Shabbat."

His son was a neer-do-well, a "batlan". His father never interfered with him. He let him be. In the course of time he married a rich widow who had a textile and clothing shop and sold textile wares.

At the end of the "Millgass" (the Mill Road,) which was completely inhabited by Christians, lived the only Jewish family. She was a widow called Beile. She earned her living buying and selling chickens and eggs and was called Beile "dee Hienerke". She was a heavy corpulent figure and had a broad plump face, salt and pepper grey hair, and big eyes placed wide apart. Her face was kind and gentle for all that and had a deep understanding expression, and a wide and generous smile. Most of her time was taken up looking after the poor, those in trouble and want. She was the first to know who needed bread and to supply it, or who was without clothing or without wood for a fire. She would go out collecting donations and give the necessary aid. The names of the people remained a hidden secret. No-one would ever know from her who had come to her for help. If the horse of a peddler died and his means of livelihood was cut off by that, another horse would somehow be found. If a cow died and there was no milk for the baby at home, Beile would come to their aid. She would sit the whole night at the bedside of a sick person, plying him with the simple medicines which she knew how to prepare from the herbs which the "goyish" women would collect for her. She had no time to go to the fields herself. She had remedies for colds, headaches, womens ailmenss. All this in complete secrecy for those who came to her. Beile die Hienerke in her time and place played the role of an entire Welfare Institution with its clerks and social workers

including the visiting nurse. She had a deep humane feeling. for her needy suffering fellow man and also a deep driving ambition to go to Zion and live in Herusalem. This she did.

As time went on she emigrated to the U.S.A., and remarried. This time to a Rabbi and they both went on Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Jerusalem in Batei Waraw. There she carried on her way of life exactly as she had in the Shtetl. She lived to a good old age and was buried in the Holy Earth of Jerusalem. No Nazi touched her.

We returned as the sun was setting behind light grey curtains of cloud casting a grey light over everything, heightening the feeling of darkness, fear and tension that pervaded everything.

A light refreshing breeze rustled the leaves. Groups of anxious Jews gathered in small groups talking in low tones. On the side of the market square with its arched shops stood the familiar life sized statue of Jesus. It was a stooping figure heavily weighed down and dragging the iron cross. I remembered a time long ago when playing there with a little "sheigitz". On seeing the statue he suddenly stopped, crossed himself and said: "Thus poor Jesus was dragged to the cross by you Jews." I was shocked. I looked at the suffering figure weighed down by the heavy cross. Could my father and the other Jews of the shtettle have committed such brutality? It just couldn't be! I ran to my father ..... "False and libellous .... untrue .... Don't you dare play with that child again!" he warned me angrily.

From that time on I used to look at the statue in fear and horror, completely estranged from my former playmate.

At the end of the roadway towered the great Church with its beautifully chisseled grey stone walls and its high delicately lace-like spire. It overlooked all the surrounding villages which housed its believers.

In the high windows the coloured glass angels usually winked down cheerfully in the flinting light. But now in the light of the rising moon they appeared to slumber.

Every Sunday and on every Christian holiday or Saint day the chiming bells and lofty spires called the faithful to worship. Thousands of Christian men and women and children made their way to Church. Some in carts, some on foot.

At the sound of the Churchbells the most pious already on their way to worship would halt, kneel down and cross themselves.before going on.

The Church gathered them all in under her protective wing. For a brief hour they were united with their maker within her walls. Then the service ended. They would find their way to the numerous drinking places in the vicinity. After imbibing a couple of glasses of heady "jash" they were no longer sober. The roistering began.

All their suppressed hatreds and resentments rose to the surface. Their frustrations found outlet in the smashing of iron rods over heads, and hurling stones. Police came on the scene to quell the rioting. Unrelenting heavy blows came down on all heads, meeting out blows with

equanimous objectivity. Then they dragged them off to cool off in the cells. After these incidents they hurried back to their villages but subsequently months of litigation followed.

Every Sunday and Saints Day there would be a repeat performance. When the Jews saw the oncoming storm brewing they would close their little eating houses, shutter their windows and prepare to wait out the 'duration' of the next storm.

It was not unusual for these riots capriciously to turn on to the Jews. The incited crowds would break open the shuttered windows falling on the hapless innocent Jews.

Here the brawn of the community came to the fore to give an account of themselves. They would emerge from the little side streets where they lived and form a defence group. They would remove the shafts from their wagons and wielding these and other similar weapons, would "welcome" the intruders warmly.

There was a deep well on the street corner. A bucket would always be hanging from the chain. As a little boy I remember peeping over the edge of the side. At night one could see the twinkling stars reflected in the depth. Drops would fall from the hanging buckets. As a drop fell it caused ripples blurring out the stars momentarily till the surface smoothed out and the stars reappeared.

Once a woman threw herself into the well. All the people sighed mournfully and said sadly: This was done because of trouble and dispair. For a long time after that the stars were not reflected in the waters below.

In the street of the well lived the Shochet and Chazan. He wore a thin yellow goatee from which the white hairs were already clearly discernable. He walked with a perpetually hurried gait and would get angry very quickly and his greatest anger was his delay in starting prayers because the "Ballebatim" were arguing about the raise in fees he demanded for slaughtering and prayers. The butchers and the shul committee would complain bitterly but he stood his ground. However, after such a stormy day he would be mentally and physically exhausted and take to his bed for the next day or two.

The Shochet was eternally quarrelling with the Rav or the butchers who were doing him down. worked hard to maintain his family of five souls in comfort.

He was shortsighted but never once made use of glasses. He would bring the prayerbook up to his nose but would not use glasses. Once when he was called out on a winter day to one of the butchers, he was muffled up to his eyes with a woolen scarf in case " " he caught cold and would not be able to sing. But his eyes betrayed him and he missed the way and after being missed for a time and there was a hue and cry, the whole village went out looking for him and found him in deep snow completely outside the village. So badly had he missed the way. He was not to be counted amongst the most famous Chazoniem in the world but he knew how to read notes, However, note-reading and "negun" were two disparate things with him never to be equated. On the Day of Awe, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, he was a faithful servant to his God and his "Musaf" prayers were the finest that could be sung. He poured out his prayer fervently and passionately. He was not only well

informed regarding the Talmud but also read the secular writings of the day. He was a "talmied Chacham". He brings up many memories of my childhood. How my beloved mother when preparing fish for the Shabbat would knock it on the head and cut it up when the fins were still twitching. Or when she sent me to take a chicken to be killed I would turn my head aside until the Shochet threw me the still twitching fowl that would jump on its tied legs with flapping wings scattering its blood. I would feel a mixture of revolt and pity. As far as I can remember there were no slaughterers or butchers in my family but as the saying goes: "The Shochet slaughters and remains just." Then, in my childhood, I did not dream that Men could be slaughtered as well .....

Night had already fallen. The moon sailing across its sea looking down in all its delicacy enveloping everything in a gauze white haze. Stars flickered and winked to each other. Now appearing, now fading away. Suddenly a shooting star cut its fiery way across the heavens diving down into eternity. The frog chorus began croaking up cutting into the deepening silence. As if at a given signal the night sounds came up. It was an all pervading dreamy whispering, blended into an orchestrated harmony. The night white and clear seemed to carry a message of peace from the heavens above.

A group of gentiles sitting out in the evening air seemed to be consulting together whispering and speculating on the fate of their Jewish neighbours, and a group of Jews meanwhile had gathered round a radio. Its raucous sounds blaring out its hysterical filth seemed to pollute

the all pervading peace and quiet that reigned. There was no illusion. The Nazis were already marching. The invasion of Poland was imminent. The Jews were the target. The soulless merciless inhuman steel Golem was already on its way.

The fear of war could be felt by old and young alike. From every house, from every street, from the sudden shooting star, the howling dog, everything in some way or other expressed the fear of the coming war.

Hatred, and blindness the baser elements dominant in all men were aroused by the blaring brutality coming over the ether.

Fear of the ever returning violence that had been reappearing from time to time throughout the year hung heavy in the air. It seemed to be a rading river threatening to burst its banks - inundating everything within its wake, leaving destruction and desolation after it.

I found mother at home deep in prayer. The worn prayer book with its yellowed pages showed countless tear marks. After deep prayer in which she had been at one with her Maker, she closed the prayer book and with a feeling of more confidence she continued: "My son, G-d will not desert us in our hour of need. The Christians will help us. Whenever I happen to meet any ofhthe local farmers we still talk about those terrible times. Those times of hardship and starvation during the First World War. Your father, Yitzchak, may be rest in peace, and I, saved many from starvation and even death. Starvation took its toll from both Jews and Christians alike. People came to the mill from far and wide. We gave them wheat and barley. We baked bread

and gave it to everyone in need.

Since we were first married, your father and I have been donating to the funds of Rabbi Meir Baal Haness through "Mishurlochim", that come from the Holy Land.

May he intercede for us as well. We have done this without expectation of any reward. This is a Holy command, "Man is obliged to help his fellow man in time of need."

G-d forbid we did not rob nor cheat nor amass wealth for ourselves. We divided the fruit of labour amongst others. Nothing has remained for us."

After a minute's silence she continued in all innocence. "Why should Hitler murder us? The Germans also believe in G-d. Why should the Jews be murdered? Human beings be exterminated?" In all innocence: "Hitler also has or had a mother. He can also be mistaken and correct himself. He is mortal like the rest of us." She spoke slowly as if thinking aloud. I had no answer for her but felt refreshed and invigorated by her words. In amazement and wonder I gazed at her. From where had this simple woman garnered such a love of humanity and such spiritual strength? Such a belief in the goodness of man! She seemed at that moment to grow in my eyes in dignity and stature. A veritable angel from above sent to exorcise the turbulence and agitation that held everyone in thralls. Would the innate goodness of this frail woman help her and support her in times of trouble that were to come?

Would G-d remember what she had done to help others and help and save her in turn .....?

The early morning sunlight endowed a new and changing beauty to the little town. The dww shimmered on the trees and grass around. The little songsters jumping from branch

to branch lifted their little beaks skywards as if in prayer and sang out their renditions of their morning prayers. Trilling and jumping and bowing, expressing their joy at being alive. Suddenly they all burst out in a full throated united chorus. It was a glorious stream of near celestial sound, reverberating and echoing in the clear morning sky.

It was then I bade farewell to my mother. Deep sadness was reflected from those wonderful eyes. Her simplicity and integrity, her natural nobility had given me strength and courage to go into the unknown future. She leaned her head on my shoulder. I held her head like a precious diadem in my hands. "Be careful", she whispered. "Mother, I am armed and I am in the army, with hundreds upon thousands of soldiers, Poles and Jews." She eyed the bayonet at my side. "Don't harm anyone unnecessarily" ..... I left her, then seeing the quiet tears rolling down that wonderful beloved face.

On my way to the station I passed the yard and the old deserted synogogue. The old "Shul" had been built with specially high walls that enhanced the accoustics. The Chazans singing their prayers there had taken full advantage of it. It's alongated windows "protruded" and many a fine song and prayer was heard to good advantage because of it.

The "Chevra Kadisha", the only chronicles of the little village used to write their long leather 'klaffs', or scrolls, According to them, the previous "Shul" had burnt down 70 years before then. It was then that this now decrepit deserted building had been built. And now even their building was no longer used and its foundations were sinking.

Delapidation and decay held sway. Spider webs were festooned around the ceiling. Bats flitted in and out through the broken windows. Birds nested in the walls near the ceilings, their twittering resounding whistfully in the unusually high-walled interior.

There were dark, damp stains on the "Aron Hakodesh". In winter everything was covered over with a thin powdery snow.

Children feared to pass that way after dark. Strange "goings on" took place there, "ghosts walked", said people.

However, the Community fathers had a deep veneration for the place. How many Jews had not spent their time there at their devotions. The simple, the learned, the sophisticated Rabbis ..... Now all were resting peacefully in the village grave-yard.

In the courtyard stood the big Shul. It was a firm and solid structure built of brick. At the entrance on both sides of the corridor were rooms that were used for a nights lodging for travellers, Jews who were passing. Maybe looking for work and also those without means.

In the "Beit Knesset" the learned would sit at a table and study the "Talmud", and "Torah" and the "Shulchan Aruch" till the early hours of the morning. The simple unlearned folk sat in a different corner telling each other the days happenings. This was also the place where people came to for advice on different legal and practical problems. Here they discussed the various government intrigues which were designed to their detriment. Here they were told what to do to help themselves. It was not only a community

complex but also a place of worship.

Several wall paintings in oil decorated the Western Wall of the Shul. One painting was "The Tomb of Rachel the beloved of Jacob". Above the painting were the words from the text of Jeremiah, Chapter 31, Verse 15, "..that Rachel was weeping for her children and refused to be comforted because they were not ...." The Tomb and the words seemed to cry out in sadness and I as a child was very impressed by it. Baskets of fruit and "four kinds" of leaves for Succoth and the first fruits of Shavuot were also painted there.

As a child they would fill me with yearning to go to Eretz Yisrael to see the reality. The painting of the Western Wall with the sorrowing Jews bowed over in prayer and shedding the tears of the 5,000 years over them left a deep impression on me. As a child I would get up in the night and say a prayer of mourning for the destruction of the temple until my parents put a stop to it, fearing it would harm my health.

The last and most impressive depiction were the words and pictures of Isiah Chapter II, Verse , "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid and the calf and the young lion and the falling together and a little child shall lead them." These words and this picture have both in the concrete and the abstract left their mark on me. Even when my faith faltered, my childhood belief of this reality has not been entirely destroyed within me.

And on this cloudy morning I met Baruch, the builder. He was a fine figure of a man. Very tall and big limbed

broad and well-covered. Every hand, foot, arm and leg were solid as if cast in bronze. He was slow and heavy in his movements but everything was performed steadily. His whole life had been spent building houses and ovens in the town or surrounding villages, or on the estates of the wealthy. It is hard for me to remember the colour of his hair. He was olive skinned and he had an untidy growth of beard on his chin. His clothes and face were eternally covered with mortar and dlay and he never managed to wash it completely away. Even on Shabbat one could see the remnants of clay in the wrinkles on his face. When I was a child he loved me and would spend hours telling me about my dead forerunners, many of whom incidentally, he had buried and whose tombstones he had engraved. He was also the official gravedigger in the village and could chisel out fine calligraphic letters on the grave-stones.

When I was a child I often thought that if only he were able to move a little faster he would have made a fine guard in the market place and been able to beat off attackers who were always lying in wait. Now in the early morning light with his bag on his back, his , hammer and plasters, took in his hand, he was setting out to work and would only return in the evening with the waning light of day. He was a specialist in making long ovens in the village homes on which an entire family could lie on in the winter and keep themselves warm. In spite of his big clumsy appearance, he worked slowly and relaxedly and spoke quietly and could talk about many who had lived their lives in that district. Even though Reb Baruch worked in the town or village he was able every year to build on a room to his own house and it was now a labyrinthine structure. He was eternally optimistic, full of plans and hope.

His wife on the other hand was a tiny shrunken creature without teeth. She was always disgruntled, without teeth, and continually quarrelled.with the neighbours.

On this last morning we greeted each other, and embraced in farewell. I thought to myself, "For whom are you slaving your life away, And my heard was filled with an inexplicable madness.

As I was walking along, I caught sight of Moshe, the chimney sweep in the distance. He was walking along confidently and in the early morning light. His long weighted broom was trailing along behind him. Even though Moshe was old one could never see a grey hair on his head. The soot stuck onto his hair and kept it dark. He only washed on Shabbat. Then he appeared in dazzling glory. He would wear a high soldier's hat with the peak turned upward and striped in red and blue. His trousers had blue and red stripes running the length of the side seam. In winter he would wear an army coat with a wide belt which had a shiny brass buckle. This was the uniform of the army of the Russian Tzar in which he had served for eight years and in whose service he had crossed the length and breadth of Russia. He would always say: There is nothing new in the world and everything the Polish Government has done has been done many times over by the Tzar's Government or by the Bolsheviks. Moshe was not observant. He mocked the "do gooders" in the village. For him the Shul was a social meeting place. He was an honest, straightforward man. He did not live in the present but in the past. His favourite subject was heroic feats.in the battle especially his own.

From the age of six I used to watch and admire this man from afar. He would always walk on the ridges of the houses. He would walk upright, he never crawled nor fell. To this day he is a wonder to me.

At that time on my way to war the ideas were imprinted and remained within me.

All around me Jews were hurrying to their "Sachrit". morning prayer before starting another anxiety-ridden day.

Going to Shul was the mystic or the "unknown one" as he was called in the village. He was thought to be one of "the lamed Vavnikom". (One of the 33 Tzaddikim that were able to uphold the world.) He usually slept on his hard wooden bench in the Shul. No-one knew from where he had come. It was said that he arose at midnight keening and dorrowing for the temple that had been destroyed.

By the light of a dim candle he would study kabbula and it was said that he even knew the date of the coming of the Messiah.

At dawn he would wander through the crooked lanes of the poor quarter bringing the old sick widows food and water.

Now he had already made his morning rounds and gone walking on the dew-covered fields. The bottoms of his trousers tops were soaked through. He had blessed the fields to give forth a good harvest. He was now slowly and with the effort of the aged, making his way to Shul for "Shachress."

Once on his early morning wanderings, someone had thrown

a stone at him, hitting him full in the face. He had never said a word. Slowly and in silence he had returned to Shul, washed the blook off his face and gone on with his morning prayers.

Little did I know then that this was the last time I would ever see my "shtettle" again. Here it was and on the morrow no more .....

I caught the train - the rantings and ravings of the blaring Hitlerian utterances coming back to me. Would we too be invaded? Would my 500 year old Shtettle go on living? Would the chevra kadisha still continue to chronicle the annals on the long sheepskin scrolls? It was not for me to say.

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I was on my way to battle. Hope lies hard. In my heart of hearts I still hoped that that terrible raucous voice resounding from the radio had been a bad dream. I hoped the maniacal voice would fade out as if they had never been. The grizzly marrionette fall apart or like a monstrous giant balloon rise up and burst, and like a soap bubble disappear and be no more.

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THE SECOND WORLD WAR

At the end of August, 1939, our division set out for the East Prussian border. We were from Vilna in North Eastern Poland and our division was made up of young regular army recruits.

A high morale and a happy atmosphere prevailed. We belonged to the famous, almost legendary, First Polish Division whose deeds had been sung in song and verse and the young men were eager to show what they could do to add to the glorious deeds of its already famous past.

So our morale was high. We boasted that we could overcome any foe that stood in our way. The soldiers cracked jokes at the expense of the passers-by and mocked the already fleeing Jews. At wayside stations school children welcomed us with flowers ..... Little did we know about what was to come.

On September 1st at Malchinia, nearBialstok, the Germans bombed us. There were many casualties. We were obliged to change trains and wait for the lines to be repaired. The war now took a more serious turn. The boasting and cracking of jokes stopped.

Other Polish divisions that had preceded us had come up against a steel wall of resistance from the German invaders. They were soon broken and retreating.

Within a few days the Third German Army from East Prussia, under Command of General Von Kuckler, had penetrated deep into Poland, spreading terror and leaving massacre in their wake, amidst the fleeing civilian population.

Our job was to stop the invader and release our fellow Poles from the encircling trap they had fallen into. While

pushing back the invader, we ourselves, the famous First Division, fell into a trap and were encircled. For two weeks we struggled to get out. Between Shedlitzer and Weingrin and along the Bug and Narev rivers we had the most gory hand to hand fighting. Every village in the area was a battlefield.

The Polish army was slowly being made to retreat, incurring heavy losses at the same time. Many were killed, wounded or became prisoners.

The encircling ring grew ever tighter around us. The ever growing German pressure exhausted us. We were beginning to be demoralised and began to discover vast differences between the real Polish soldier and one belonging to one of the minority groups which made up a great part of our army. The end of everything was betrayal, desertion and the crumbling away of the lives.

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W I S H K O V

(THE FIRST BAPTISM OF FIRE)

We were brought to Wishkov in the night. The streets were completely blocked out. It was pitch dark. The city lay on the crossroads. Units came and went and some were spread out, organising the defence of the city. The civilian population hurriedly loaded a few essentials on handcarts and prepared to get out of the way as soon as they could. A very few Jews remained and they stayed behind closed doors and shutters. Here and there someone surreptitiously peeped forth. Armed civilians patrolled the streets helping to organise the city's defence.

Typical Polish September weather prevailed. There was frost and a sharp bite in the air. Clouds covered the face of the moon, blackening the inky blackness. Now and again the moon was revealed, showing us the prosperous orderly city. The signs on the few Jewish shops stood out in lonely abandonment .....

After being dragged from one end of the city to the other, our unit was finally stationed on the road leading to Pultus . We were quartered in a beautifully appointed mansion to a very senior Polish Official who had fled the city with his family. The garden was a gorgeous blaze of autumn colours, flowers and strawberry beds were soon dug out to serve as communicating tunnels and gun emplacements.

The German army advanced from Pultus to Wishkov, slowly and with the maximum of caution. Our unit was detailed to guard the railway line. We patrolled the length of the road and parallel to us, were a group of armed scouts.

Tanks from the German vanguard tried to approach and were beaten back by the anti-tank fire. Two of the German wounded

were brought over to our rear. For two days the Germans shelled and bombed unceasingly and we returned with anti-tank and anti-aircraft fire. Then we were ordered to retreat. We were told to hurry and to cross a bridge that was to be blown up to cover our retreat. This bridge spanned the river Bug in that area.

Our Company of heavy machine-gun and mortars were detailed to cover our retreat. It was a time-consuming affair. We remained there for ages. We ate up all our food and only had our battle rations left.

Before leaving the city the soldiers went to all the shops and houses looking for food and an opportunity to loot. It was too late.

We only found empty boxes of matches and combs and we made off with that. In one of the houses in the square leading to the bridge I also went into a shop and an abandoned house. To me it was a ghastly experience and almost a foreboding of what was to come.

In one room stood childrens unmade abandoned beds, in the next the parents'. Family pictures were scattered about while the two portraits of the grand-parents on the wall looked down serenely on the debacle.

A white cloth had been spread on the table. On it was salt, the crust of a loaf, mainly crumbs, and a little butter. It looked as if the family had left the house only a short time ago. The room brought back memories of home. The place seemed to me a Holy of Holies. I touched nothing. I turned and left.

Our Company with its heavy equipment hurried to cross the bridge but we were too late. We were directed to the river bank and there took to boats. The crossing was hard.

We were under heavy fire and Messerschmitts dived low over us, the bullets sizzling as they touched water. The river seemed to be a huge tidal wave. On the opposite bank a mortar shell exploded and the backwash upset our boat. We swam to the bank and were helped out with planks and ropes.

Once on land our Company was reorganised and we got ready to thrust forward to the highroad that overlooked the bank.

The bank was steep and completely exposed to firing. Refugees were scattered all along the bank lying exposed to fire, exhausted and abandoned.

Quite by chance my eye caught sight of an old man with a long untidy white beard. He was wrapped in his blanket and coat. His head was resting between two ivory handles which I clearly recognised to be a Sefer Torah. The old Jew lay without moving. I touched him to see if he were alive. His eyes didn't move and were half closed. I asked if he needed help, but there was no reply. I asked again, in Yiddish, and he raised his head from between the handles, looked at me and returned to his meditation clasping the Sefer Torah closer to himself and covering himself with the blanket and sinking even deeper into his coat.

I crawled between loaded carts, wounded horses, among the dying and the dead. The Germans continued their battering of the unprotected bank. With a slithering, snake-like thrust we reached the top and were swallowed up into the thick forest.

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THE BURNING FOREST

Our Company was soon reorganised. We dug ourselves in and camouflaged our heavy equipment properly. Our mortars were trained in the direction of the Bug. We covered the main road and the retreating forces.

I had a momentary respite and had a chance to look around to see what the Germans were doing to the Wishkov population even before they entered the city. Most of the Jews, I got to know later, had stopped fleeing the city about two days before.

Some I saw in the forest or on the road dragging themselves along, G-d knows where they were going. We heard rumours that the Germans had already entered the city - had already crossed the river and were encircling us.

As evening fell the presence became greater. The Germans came closer and began to fire. The battle was on. Our mortars returned the fire and the Germans did not venture forth or initiate any attack for a number of hours, but they kept up an unabating and ceaseless barrage of fire on the fleeing population and our army.

They battered the road, the ascents and descents till they were completely reduced to rubble and of no use to anybody. They then turned their attention to the forest where thousands of refugees had found shelter. Their flight had proved to be catastrophic. The neighing of the wounded and terrified horses rang in the air, with it were mingled the cries and shrieks of lost women and children and the roar of the planes above the forest. Together with it all was the sound of crackling, burning forest trees. The cacophony of war. We seemed to be at the gates of Hell, and everything about us seemed to be swallowed up in it. The unit officers' commands were drowned out by the cries of the civilians. There

There was just one great roar of confusion and the officers lost control.

Now the Poles began to realise what they could expect from the Germans. Many Poles had secretly in their heart of hearts, hoped that the Germans would bring them better times. I had often overheard their :"At least we'll get rid of the Jews". But the Angel of Death is not always selective. He does not carry out instructions exactly as given. The Angel of Destruction always has a reason for doing what she does. So think the Christians as well as our Wise Ones who know the mysteries.

The "Sitra Achra" (Devil's Aide), had changed the forest into a "Valley of Hell". Jews, Poles, Ukranians, Bylo Russians and Volksdeutch were all whirled about in their cauldron and fed into the jaws of Moloch. The bombs and the explosions shut out the shrieks of the unfortunates. A soldier from my Company came to me and told me that not far away was a Jewish woman with a child, lying fainting in a shell hole. She was hungry and in tears. I collected some rusks from the men in the Company and gave them to her. She told me that she had not eaten for two days and that she and her parents had wandered in the forest until they had fallen down exhausted. I also gave her my battle rations, told her to strangthen herself and flee eastwards.

The artillery fire increased and later in the night the entire forest was on fire. It was one great conflagration. Everyone wanted to save themselves as quickly as they could; to run for their lives. People bunched together falling over one another, the weaker trampled by the stronger. In their inferno the soldiers held on until, at midnight, the order to retreat was given.

K A L U S H I N

In a mad frenzy of destruction the Germans kept on pounding at us, on land on from the air. The area had many Jewish villages and these were razed to the ground, completely unrecognisable. Women, children and the aged had taken shelter in the fields. They were hungry and thirsty. The German planes dived low over the fields rattling their machine gun bullets out over them and what the artillery bombardment had left intact was finished off by the machine gun bursts of the low-diving planes. In every village there had been Bylo-Russian and Volksdeutch spies who signalled to the German planes. There was no difference between civilians and soldiers, everyone got their "share" of the machine gun fire. We felt that we were being enclosed and encircled and looked for some way out. The only way open to us was to get to the town of Kalushin and force our way out of the iron pincers that were threatening to crush us. We rushed out as fast as we could on anything that could be called a vehicle. We rushed on horseback and even on foot. We literally devoured the miles until we came to the outskirts of Kalushin that evening. We knew that the Germans had already reached the place. Our job was to keep ourselves hidden so as to have the element of surprise to our advantage and prevent them from entrenching themselves. In this we succeeded and in the bitter battles that followed we succeeded in getting something of our own back. By nightfall our infantry were literally on the outskirts of Kalushin, the houses being about 800 metres away from us. The artillery had preceded us and had already taken up positions and begun the "softening up" process. At first the enemy did not return fire with the same potency we expected. It was to our advantage. Later, we were to know that at that time the Germans had been busy with their famous "ordnung" and had been brutalizing and harrassing the civilian population, particularly

indulging in their favourite sport, the despoiling of the helpless, hapless Jews.

Our Company spread out across a perimeter of about one and a half km. The earth was swampy, peatland, wildgrass, bushes. We hurried with the setting up of our heavy equipment. Then we went on patrol along the edge of the city and managed to take a German patrol prisoner. They were not worried about the custody and began making up to the minority element among us telling them that they had only come to root out the Jews who were poisoning the earth and they had no quarrel with anyone else. They even openly boasted about what they had done in a nearby village, maintaining that finally the Jews were getting what was coming to them.

The Poles, especially the minority element amongst them, did not look upon them as the diabolical invader and enjoyed hearing the description of their atrocities. It would not be difficult for the Germans to win them over. I began to realise that only the Polish Jewish soldiers were the ones whose loyalty could be relied upon.

When our communication stopped working I was detailed to be runner between the various emplacements and the Commander of the detachment. I was able to reach the most advanced positions, right under Germans' noses. I would give the Commander's messages to the emplacement telling them to change direction of fire and the like.

I was tireless, fearless and acted without hesitation. This was my war and all the while I was crawling under the noses of the Germans from emplacement to emplacement I thought about my family. Fear and anxiety would grip me. Let them not experience what was happening to the Jews of Kalushin. Let that be prevented at all costs. With all my might and main I would keep the Germans from reaching Eastern Poland. For me, the war was a Holy War; everyone standing together; Jew and Pole.

The high ranking Polish officers would remark: "This time we will gain the victory and overcome the beast of the German. Unfortunately reality proved to be otherwise. The hatred of the rank and file towards the Jewish soldier was so deeply rooted that nothing could change it. This was particularly so among the petty officers and the lower ranks, who acted as if they were generals. However, in the midst of battle under threat of death the taunting and the baiting of the Jews would cease; when the threat had passed the mockery, animosity and ridicule would start afresh. However, in my particular Company there were only two Jews and our relationship was neutral if not friendly.

Our Company consisted of 17 men, the majority being from Rad , Tchechanov and 'Mlava areas. They had grown up in the villages as farmers and had had the minimum of schooling. They spoke a simple Polish Mazuriet dialect and their lives centered round the rural interests of their surroundings, their local gossip and other village matters.

They were ardent Catholics but their religion found expression in mainly routine Hail Mary's, blessings and genuflections and crossings as the need arose. Their religion neither enriched nor deepened their lives. Judas Is was and remained for them the symbol of the traitor, the hypocrate. He stood for greed and the betrayor of their G-d and they likened him to the Jew in their midst who was the concrete object against which their hatred was directed. This fact was indelibly printed in their minds and no other aspect of Evangelical philosophy could in any way change it no matter what the teachers and priests tried to teach them in their daily lives or on Sundays.

Politically like all the other village denizens they belonged to parties preaching anti-semitism. The rest of the men in the Company came from the big cities, most of them had

criminal pasts. They were older than the others and had already spent years in prison for robbery, murder and sex crimes. They were also tainted with anti-semitic sentiments, though they were not as fanatical, nor were the sentiments so deeply ingrained as with the others. They did not belong to any anti-semitic party. In the beginning I managed to get along better with them than with the others. They had a broader, more tolerant outlook on life and had wider life experience and had more human understanding, but they had one grave weakness. They were extremely impulsive and had little control over their emotions. This could endanger both themselves and the Company as a whole, and happened after they had been drinking heavily.

Taken by and large except for the few that I became friendly with and whom I will speak about later on, the whole lot were imbued with anti-semitic sentiments which they did not bother to hide. In the P.O.W. camp they had no decency nor spark of nationalism to lend a land to a one-time comrade in arms. It was clear, no Jew who ever found himself in the Company was to be envied. He simply found himself in a snake-pit. As I said before, we were two Jews in the Company, Kopelowitz from Wishneva, near Vilna, and myself. He had lived all his life in a Yeshiva and could never have dreamed that he would ever find himself in the midst of a group of people or way of life that he found in the army. He was particularly short and had been weak physically when he first came to the barracks. However, his adjustment to his new life was little short of miraculous. He settled down to the new reality, but in his own way. They called him "Rabin" (Rabbi) half in Mockery and half in earnest. He took no notice of their taunts and was not taken aback by their aggressiveness, nor did he try to integrate or submit to them in any way.

In the beginning the persecution was bitterly cruel, but he had the strength of will and character not to let it

touch him. He simply lived with it as a part of barracks conditions. He was master of his fate and changed his way of life to suit the change of circumstances.

He did everything in his power to keep up his Kashrut observance, this he managed well when we were in the barracks, but later during the time of battle he would not eat any meat. He found his place in the Company and the secret of his success was his complete lack of self righteousness, his honesty self-control, and discipline. He carried out every order given to him and he was a model soldier. In this way he gained the respect of his gentile company mates. They stopped taunting him. In time of battle the relationship with our company mates changed for the better. The everlasting Jewish problem that eternally occupied them became the subject of least importance. We became comrades and friends, often sharing our last crust with each other. This relationship remained between me and some of my company mates during our long trial together and even in the P.O.W. camp.

My morale rose considerably during the time of battle when I struck up a real friendship with two of my company mates. Borovsk had been an orphan and had cared for himself for a long time. He had been earning his own living since early childhood. He had definite left leanings but never told me to which party, if any, he belonged to. He would say: "Fascism is the curse of humanity. If we don't wipe it out, we face a bitter end." Nevertheless when we spoke about other matters, he would angrily remark: "Jews exploit the farmers. Many of them get much at their (the farmers') expense."

The other chap, was Kachmersky. He was a typical village denizen in every way. The village was the end all and be all of his life. There was and could be no better community. Borovsky was a professed atheist, Kachmersky an ardent devout

Catholic belonging to the Catholic party, He could quote whole chapters of the New Testament by heart and even many parts of the old, which he would continually analyse in his own way. He had no axe to grind and never taunted anyone or felt any animosity towards them. If he were insulted he would good-naturedly point out the stupidity of his attacker's action, usually illustrating it with some quotation or other from the Scriptures.

He conducted his army life quietly and confidently without much fuss and bother, and he never was a boaster. His slow quiet manner would irritate his superiors who gave him a hard time because of it, but he stuck to his ways, and continued in his typical slow manner. We would often converse and through him I found out the reason for many things.that had worried or depressed me. He was older than the average soldier because his army service had been postponed due to not being able to be released from the farm sooner. He understood me and my problems and position as a Jew. I was always amazed at his quiet calm in the face of the most turbulent situations.

The autumn chill could be felt in the air as evening fell. High flying, and low lying storm clouds, covered the skies. Sometimes shrouding, sometimes revealing the face of the moon. Like the clouds, we felt as if we were being driven from place to place, with no control over our own destiny. The regimental headquarters too,seemed to have lost their bearings. They didn't seem to know where the enemy was or whom they were attacking.

Our advance on Kalushin continued. The guns fired continually and close behind our mortars joined them. By ten o'clock at night all the heavy artillery we had was being used. The city in which the Germans were sitting was being thoroughly pounded. Suddenly we were in the grip of a rumour that Germans were on our flanks, but this was simply an attack of nerves.

Our communication lines had broken down and runners were substituted. They law low because they were easy targets both for us (though not on purpose), and for the enemy. In the midst of this general confusion, many minority soldiers in our ranks who were secretly siding with the Germans used the opportunity to fire on our ranks, thus adding to the general confusion.

The noise of breaking and falling buildings, the shrieks of women and children from the burning buildings, the shouts of the army commanders and the nervous yelling of the soldiers in battle caused a mad uproar.

Waves of Polish infantry advanced with open bayonets on the Germans who were unable to withstand the primitive savage attack. They began to retreat and were soon fleeing for their lives. It was soon clear that they had never even approached our lines. They tried to hold on to their forward positions as long as possible but these were soon broken and they fled.

I was a runner in the forward positions and I saw how the strong fire of one German position we were unable to advance. Our Polish commander called for a volunteer to climb the roof and attack from there with grenades. A short, fair haired broad shouldered, bandy-legged Jew came forward. He was raised to the roof in an unceasing rain of sniper fire. He clambered like a cat on the tiles till he got to the right place. He threw down a pack of grenades tied together and so silenced the position. According to the men of his company, he was from Radom or its surroundings.

At that time the gunner of my group was wounded and I had to take his place. Our Commander was a reserve First Leautenant and from Eastern Poland. He was a student, the son of a railway worker and knew how to assess the position correctly. He was a particularly brave and loyal person and under his

command our company achieved incredible feats of daring and bravery. It was just then that I happened to notice two incredibly shaken individuals joining our rear. They were Jews, who had succeeded in escaping from a nearby village where the Germans were brutalizing the inhabitants. We gave them something to drink and they recovered somewhat soon. However, some of our company voiced the suspicion that they were spies. I spoke to them in Yiddish and proved this to be false but in spite of what they had been through, the Poles dragged them away to be interrogated. Even the commanders were unable to do anything to stem the wave of anti-semitic sentiment. There were two Jewish Reserve Officers, a very rare thing to be found in the Polish army. One was from Galicia, the other from Warsaw. They were very assimilated and would have no contact whatsoever with the Jews in the regiment. It was said that they weren't Jews but their typical features and colouring belied the fact. Fearing to be accused of one-sidedness, they would not lift a finger to help in the case of the two Jews.

The minority groups "Mazurin" and "Kashubim" who were situated close to the German border, were a very unreliable element in our ranks. They would snipe at the Jews from behind the bushes and shout anti-semitic slogans behind our backs. They used every opportunity to devise insults and humiliations against the Jews. As a runner I was particularly aware of this situation. I took no notice of those bastards. I crept up in front of them, right under their gun-barrels, where they were lying in ambush. They knew me well, and what my task was. I didn't hesitate to tell the officers what they were doing but in that confusion they were completely helpless. They themselves feared being sniped at. But on the other hand I remember another Polish soldier coming up to me, saying: "Avraham is wounded, and he refuses to leave his post to have his wound attended to. For G-ds sake talk to him!". They thought that as a Jew I could sway him. I saw that Avraham was wounded in the hand.

The bandaged hand was bloodied but he refused to leave his post. Avraham Artishefsky was from the town of Lydda in Eastern Poland. When he was first mobilised he looked like the proverbial bean-stalk, tall, over-thin, a long face. No uniform could fit him. He could hardly speak a word of Polish. He was the but of all the jokes in his company. Their sadism had been deliberately malicious but Avraham ignored it and completed his training. Within two months he had adjusted himself and become a model soldier. As much as I knew of him he had leftist leaning. He was kind-hearted and sociable and this was well taken advantage of by his comrades in arms. He showed no reaction to mockery or tainting, going his own way. During our training exercises they would load the long mortar on his back but they in no way lightened his tasks in spite of his heavy burden. He was a determined and obstinate man and did exactly what he had in mind to do. "I will not give in to anti-semitism. I'll show them how one fights Fascists", he would tell me. I met him some time later in the P.O.W. camp. They had taken away his jacket and he was literally a bag of bones. He was starving and silently gnashing his teeth.

I took the place of the wounded gunner in my group and began firing my rounds. Suddenly one of them called out : "Look to the right ..... They are attacking us!" Even from other positions they began shouting ..... "We are being attacked, Fire!"

To my mind these figures did not appear to be attackers. For one thing, they did not begin to fire. One could immediately determine in spite of the darkness that they were not Germans. In the light of the rockets that were fired on both sides and from the background of the burning houses a shocking sight revealed itself. A group of barefooted civilians wrapped in blankets crowded together trying to get shelter from each other slowly and fearfully approached our position. They were Jews!

In a flash I understood the position. Again I heard the cry: "Fire on them!". I shouted to the Commander: "These are Jews, civilians, who are running away from the Germans!" The Commander gave the order to stop the fire. However,I still don't for a moment imagine that the soldiers could not distinguish between Germans and ragged barefoot civilians wrapped in blankets.

The next morning when we were combing the city I got to know what had happened. When the Poles were attacking the city the Germans arrested the Jews, they robbed them of their gold ring and earrings, they made them take off their shoes and pushed them into the line of fire. In this way the Germans tried to fend off the Polish attack. It appears that they were fired from the Poles in the front and the Germans in the rear.

In this battle the Germans were not successful and they lost a lot of men and equipment. They took their wounded with them and left their dead, a thing they did not normally do. We had a lot of P.O.W.'s this time, even "Feld-Fabelim" but there were many losses on the Polish side as well, among them Jews I had known. A Jew who had been wounded by machine-gun fire begged the doctor to put an end to him and his suffering, but the doctor said: "It is forbidden!". In the same battle the Vice-Commander who had been the acting Commander was also killed. His name had been Engel, a short sturdily built man. Even when fatally wounded he said: "It's better this way. I would rather die than fall into the hands of the Schwabs." I would also like to remember Captain Sheppet, a brave fearless patriot, understanding and straightforward.

When combing the city we did away with the German emplacements usually on the roofs and top floors of buildings in the city. In the cleaning up operations I got to know the city of Kalushin that lay on the main highway to Warsaw and Shedlitze. There were wide squares and shipping centres now completely deserted, many being stone paved and cobbled.

In front of the Church was a wide spacious square. Here we were trapped in crossfire, from German snipers who were ensconced in the tops of the surrounding buldings, and in the Church towers. Our mortars were completely open to attack. We were as if transfixed to one spot and could not lift our heads. The bullets whistled past out heads for about an hour till we were able to cross the open sandy area and reach cover.

Then my comrades in arms were amazed to see that my face was covered with blood. It seems that a sharp stone had hit me on the forehead above the eyes - I had thought that it was sweat. In the end we wiped out the snipers' nest and also the machine guns in the tower.

After about five hours of comparitive quiet the Germans again began a canonade, but in the meantime we had widened the wedge and partly broken the encirclement and utilized the position for orderly retreat. We had taken a lot of war booty and improved communication equipment, optical instruments, cannon and vehicles. Their losses had been enormous. It was said that this had been one of the bitterest battles that they had carried on, on Polish soil. The Poles were very encouraged by this. They had managed to beat the modern German army in spite of their superior modern equipment. The Poles had been fighting with wagons, horses and bayonets. In this battle and in those that had gone before, the Jewish soldier had fought with all his might and main and had given an excellent account of himself. The Commanders didn't have to spur them on. The Jews couldn't say to themselves the way the Poles did: "If the worst comes to the worst, we will be P.O.W.'s". The Jewish soldier knew what would happen to him if he fell into the hands of the Germans. He risked his life on every occasion. There were many fighters like Avraham who I had mentioned previously. In the time of battle they were the initiators and fighters and in spite of being continually mocked and derided

they were always to be depended on. "You the Jew must fight the Germans - will have us as prisoners of war, but you will get it in the neck". Not only the minorities but also the Poles would say this. The Jewish soldier swallowed all the insults and we did not argue. He simply did his best and fought.

The Germans invaded the town twice and were thrown back. The third time they advanced, they conquered it. The first time they were thrown back by the Schelsee Youth Movement who fought with the armed citizens. The Poles and Jews fought shoulder to shoulder. Kalushin was one of the cities which had managed to organise its inhabitants during its two weeks' of battle. It was a typical army organization. Both Poles and Jews organized its defence. The Germans were entrenched in the Christian cemetary and in the fortified heights that overlooked the Warsaw Shedlitz highway.

On the 11th September, the Germans began to bombard the city and set fire to it. Jews remaining indoors were burnt alive in their houses. When the Germans again penetrated the city, in which action they were helped by tractorous elements, the Germans brutalised the inhabitants in a most inhuman manner. In actions against the Jews it was not so much the SS of whom there were few in number but the ordinary German soldier who took part. They looted and murdered. The fate of the Jews who took to the open fields was bitter indeed. They fell from the frying pan into the fire. Those who returned were completely demoralised. They didn't know what had happened to their families. They looked for each other in vain. Bereaved orphans uprooted, they awaited their bitter, inevitable fate.

The Bombardment of the Wehrmacht increased and came nearer. As we were retreating through the breach we had made, the Germans returned to Kalushin.

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T H E " DAYS OF AWE " 1939

For more than two weeks our division fought desperate battles, extricating itself from one encirclement only to fall into another trap. The Luftwaffe battered the population ceaselessly. Our orders were not to run Eastwards but to break the encirclement in defence actions of the roads and the cities. We were to slow down the German progress and bring them to the point of exhaustion. Perhaps there would be a second miracle on the "Wielas". This was the hope and wish of all believing Poles. In most cases we organised counter attacks and succeeded in carrying out our orders.

We slowed down the advance of the enemy in bloody battles. We took them on face to face, but we did not tire them out and the miracle of the Wielas did not come a second time.

PART I TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY

T H E C A P I T U L A T I O N

Our division tried to break the encirclement around Schedlitze twice, but in vain. This city was our last hope but it was too late.

On the second day of Rosh Hashana, 15th September, 1939, the Germans were victorious and took the city with great force. Day and night they bombed the city and the surrounding forests. It was in the forests that we had dug ourselves in and were prepared to attack. The city went up in flames. Slowly it became clear to us that we would not be able to break through here as we had done in Kalushin and in other cities. Our units were stopped on the outskirts of the city. We knew there was no way out. We were enclosed and encircled on all sides in a tight ring. We had tried to attack and

break through a number of times but with little success, and had retreated after suffering severe losses. Our discipline had started to crumble. I discerned the helplessness of the commanders. The rank and file had become demoralised. The army was breaking up before our very eyes.

This army that had been the pride and joy of its people for more than two decades; the symbol of valour and glory; it had, alas, bred in the nation a feeling of false confidence. It had given them an illusion of strength which in reality was non-existent. We, the Jews, began to perceive that the Polish Army was crumbling and that the different minorities were breaking off into their own groups; the Bylo-Russians, Volksdeutch, Ukranians and so on. They no longer hid their sentiments and dared to speak impertinently. For a year we had been together in the barracks, in training, and in the short period during the battles. Our relations had not been ideal, but nevertheless the enmity had been restrained. The Jewish soldier had always been the butt of mockery and taunting, but now they overstepped all bounds. Without restraint and with pure malicious intent they humiliated the Jewish soldier whenever they could. The Commanders had lost the authority to restrain them. We saw what was coming and the feeling of desperation began to gnaw at our vitals.

In spite of casualties and other setbacks that our Company had suffered we were organised into two smaller units under the command of a reserve leautenant. We dug ourselves in again, camouflaged ourselves properly and were ready for the next round.

We waited tensely for about two hours for what was to come. I felt sure that this was to be our last fight against the Hitlerian army. The fate of the Jewish soldier, we knew, would be no different from that of the Jewish civilians, in and around Kalushin, that we had been witness to. Though I

still clutched the machine gun and had my finger on the trigger, I knew in my heart of hearts that I would soon be in the same helpless situation without arms and my fate would be the same as that of the humiliated helpless Jews of Poland.

The fateful hour arrived. It was in the afternoon. In the distance we saw German horsemen on the horizon carrying flags. They trotted a little stopping from time to time. It was clear they were afraid we should surprise them and open fire. Slowly and hesitantly they approached. We lay tensely waiting. We knew that in our rear the soldiers particularly the minority groups, were already throwing down their arms in an evergrowing pile. Our officers were sitting silently on one side with bowed heads. Some of them had already removed the insignia of their rank.

The leautenant, the commander of the two reduced reorganised companies, gave us the last instructions"When the Schwabs are within 200 yards .... Open fire!" But knowing what was going on behind us demoralised us. One by one the men got up and joined their comrades in the rear, throwing down their arms. My G-d! How it broke my heart!

We could clearly see that the Germans were drunk. They gained more confidence as they slowly approached, even though they were still afraid that we might open fire. Suddenly they stopped,lifted their flags and remained motionless like that for some minutes. There was a breathless silence on both sides. On our side we were in a grip of fear,most of us still clutching our guns in our hands and on the side of the Germans there was also fear that we still meant to open fire. A few got down from their horses and with forced self-confidence came still nearer. They watched the entire length of the forest. They were not steady on their feet, still under the influence of the "schnapps" they had had to give them false courage.

They spoke quietly and mumblingly. In the end one spoke up loudly and clearly "Throw down your arms into one heap!" They watched from afar while we obeyed the command. Soon a Polish officer appeared from among the trees. He was an elderly man who had participated in the Wars of Liberation and Independance. He was wearing his insignia and medals of valour which he had removed a short time before. Tense and pale he addressed us: "Now we have one way open to us - captivity - ". Painfully he added, "A worse fate awaits you Jews". He spoke silently and seriously. These were the last words of farewell ..... Again a resounding silence seemed to grip us. The words of the Polish Officer benumbed us, specially the Jews. A new oppressive reality awaited us. From the other side our leautenant called out: "I told you to fight! One doesn't throw down arms! Now all is lost."

I had known this leautenant from Vilna when I had first come to the barracks. We had soon become friends. He was popular and well liked by everyone both Poles and Jews. He was a sincere person and despised the so-called exaggerated patriotism of his peers. At first he thought the Jews were slackers but he soon changed his mind. I served with him practically the whole time. On every mission he would send for me. We had been successful. He relied on my carrying out every task and command. I had been encouraged by his friendliness. I knew very little about him. His father was a railway worker helping him with his education at university. After the leautenant had shouted his comment he mixed in with the soldiers so that no-one would know him. I searched for him a long time and found him collecting Jews and Poles from the East and was planning an escape at the onset of darkness. He based his plan on the fact that there were breaches that the Germans had not yet succeeded in closing. In his opinion if we broke up into groups of three we would be able to pass through these breaches unnoticed and find ourselves on the

other side of the German lines. From there we could make our way Eastwards. He condemned the Bolsheveks and did not expect them to give his people freedom, but he felt that there was no hope with the Germans. Another officer interrupted his plans saying that two hours ago they had got a despatch saying that they were hermetically sealed off and there was no village forest or field in which there were no Germans. His sharp and cutting words frightened us all off. The leautenant was disappointed in us all and said decidedly "I am going". He broke through past me, "You will be sorry!".

By morning we learnt that he had been shot trying to escape and was lying bleeding in a nearby hayfield not far from us.

We hardly knew what was happening to us. Two German Companies began to take over and shout at us. They encircled us in a ring of soldiers and guns.

The first night in captivity we lay down in the open, concentrated into small groups. Commands reverberated round us. This was allowed - that was forbidden.

They had not touched the Jews in any way as yet. They had only asked if there were Jewish prisoners. We began to feel a growing isolation.

The minority groups began to speak their own tongue amongst one another, and left us to one side as if we were suffering from something contageous.

They began discriminating against us even before the Germans began. In the night some of the Ukranians began to try and take off our coats but the looters were thrown off and the other prisoners shouted at them in disgust and condemnation.

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THE CITY OF SHEDLITZE and PRISON

Our guard was changed the following morning. Young soldiers took over. They arranged us into rows of four and under heavy guard the march to Shedlitze began. We were marched kilometres and the curt barking orders from the German guards sounded strange to Slavic ears. We were finally brought to Shedlitze which we had striven to reach with all our might and main, but two days before. Our wish had not materialised then because in spite of our reinforcements our forces were puny in comparison to that of the enemy. They outnumbered us many times, both in men and in weaponry.

In the streets of the city the rows of utterly weary prisoners stretched out endlessly. Those wounded in the legs leaned on the shoulders of their comrades. Those in the head or hands, pulled themselves together and in spite of their weakness tried to keep up with the others. The German Red Cross gave no aid at all. Prisoners died from loss of blood. Those wounded in the stomach or those who had lost legs were transported in peasants hand-carts, covered with blood. Some of the men in my unit, who had been badly wounded held up their half-amputated stumps in their hands, trying to save themselves the discomforts of the bumps. They were grimacing with pain. Some begged to be killed outright to be put out of their misery. The wide city streets were paved with cobbled stones. Every stone brought pain and blood to the weary tired feet anyway. I had taken off my shoes and wrapped my feet in rags. The endless walking tortured and exhausted us. The streets were endless. Houses were burned and destroyed completely. However, in the centre of the city there was less destruction than on the outskirts. The cavalcade progressed painfully and

slowly. In the houses alongside the SS and their officers were running back and forth in the yards of the Jewish residents. They broke into the houses and chased the people out, shouting, screaming and beating them at the same time. A German SS had grabbed hold of a young Jewess by the hair and was dragging her along. Her screams were horrible to hear.

Others threw out blankets and eiderdown, ripped open, with feathers in huge clouds, flying from the open windows. They kept demanding raucously : "Where are the arms you have hidden?"

The prisoners looked on aghast at the proceedings. I was amazed at their behavoir. Borovsky had been my partner in the march. Turn and turn about we had leaned on each other, supporting one another. I said to him: "Do you really think that those Germans believe that those helpless Jews could hide arms to organize an uprising against them?" Those are ruffians", he said, "the flotsam and jetsum of the underworld. They are the rabble that applaud Hitler's every word. I once worked in Germany and got to know that scum of the earth, but I also got to know real type of Germans, the workers with consciences. No real German with a conscience would behave like that scum, towards helpless people. I once told you, old chap, that there was nothing to expect from Fascism. Not only for the Jews, it will be very bad for the Poles too. The most important thing for us all will be to keep going right now and get something to eat. We could collapse on these long endless streets. Old chap, they know all about it in the outside world. The Great Powers won't leave Poland in the lurch." So spoke Borovsky with a modicum of optimism in the future. Again came the command: "Continue!".

One or two of the Jews managed to creep like shadows into the dark corners of the courtyards. Their evasion

being followed by the body of the prisoners by mocking remarks and taunts.

Here were a group of Jews being pushed and threatened by the Germans. Their hands above their heads they were kept going at a running pace by threats and firing from the German revolvers. They were being taken to the municipal prison. At the entrance of prison yard these Jews were made to pass through a double line of SS Guards armed with coshes which they used freely, being in a state of Choleric rage.

We, the P.O.W.s, were also being marched into the great prison yard. They made us stand in rows, emptied our pockets and threatened death for every misdemenour proven or unproven. So it happened that when they found a razor among one of the prisoners they shot him on the spot. The prison cells were occupied by the Jews of the city and other Poles. On our arrival they emptied the cells and took the Jewish civilians into the great entrance hall. They pushed 15 of us into a cell that usually held 5, and 12 into cells that usually held 4. The prison house was a huge long building and with the first bombardments of the Germans the prisoners broke out and escaped.

On the ground floor there was a huge hall and along its walls were the entrances to the prison cells. Above the ground floor there was another floor perhaps two. I don't remember. On the upper floor there were also cells and the entrances to those were from a long and wide balcony that overhung the hall. This hall and balcony were used for the daily short walks.

Now the prison was full. In the hall were the Jewish and Polish civilians in no small number. They were residents of the area and its environs. Already at the time of our entrance I discerned that the sanitary pipes along the wall

of the upper balcony were blocked; probably on purpose. The faeces and urine flowed down into the hall where the Jews were. It was the same in the cells but there the stench did not reach us to that degree.

In the night they took out the Polish minority groups to the yards and only the Jews and Poles remained in the building. They also kept the young Polish priests in their black gowns there and the old railway conductors in their dark blue uniforms with their eagle crested brass buttons. They were especially hateful to the Germans because of their strong opposition to Fascist philosophy. There were also many of the Polish Intelligensia among them. As I said the majority were Jews and among them the eminent and affluent in the city. There were chassidiem wearing their black silk frocks with girdles round their waists. "Rabbis and Rebbeiim" were among them. I was told by the Jews that the famous "Byale Rebbe" was among them. Rabbis from the surrounding countryside who had been trying to escape were caught and raked in. There were others whom I will speak about in due course.

From the long balcony the flood of filth flowed down. There stood a great big well-dressed man. From time to time he gave orders in Polish and German and French. He gave orders,cursed and threatened. He cursed and maligned in the usual anti-semitic Polish fashion. At first I thought he had been appointed by the Germans to keep order. Later he began to talk disparagingly against the Germans. In the end it appeared that he was one of the Jews of the city. He used to visit Germany and France and could speak these languages well. He was known to be eccentric. Possibly at that time he was insane, possibly not. He had been brought along with all the other Jews. It seemed as if he would be freed if he pandered to the Germans. An hour later he stood there naked and barefoot. Behind him stood the SS with their deathshead helmets armed with revolvers and coshes. Round

him were Volksdeutchen, laughing at his antics. This strange madman continued to mock the Jews in Polish and afterwards even in Yiddish; he ridiculed and mocked the Jews in language and gesture. Then he went over to German. He said the Germans were suffering from lack of bread and pork and wished them quick relief - between remarks and mimicry he raked up a bucket of filth and poured it down on the heads of the Jews below. Again and again he told the Jews down below that though General Petain was slow in coming he would nevertheless come.

The filth already reached up to 30 cms.and the maniac above continued with his "job". The Jews stood in a stupor as the filth continued to be poured over them increasingly.

From time to time the SS in rubber boots and raincoat carrying torches passed to and fro. Whoever happened to be in their way was thrown into the stinking filth.

One of the young Polish priests raised his voice and shouted and told the Germans that their day of judgment was coming and they would be getting their just deserts. One of the railway workers shouted at the Germans: "I am a true Pole and I condemn you here for your inhuman behaviour towards the Jewish and Polish civilians here!". Another spoke up and told the Jews not to lose their morale, to keep up their courage. A few days later the rumour went round that the Germans had fired on the priests. Later on the long march, I saw how they were chasing the priests and railway workers, making them run even faster.

On that same night of terror it was as if the Jews had shut themselves within themselves. Each one closed up within himself, both mentally and physically. No-one spoke. They stood with bent backs and closed lips in the flowing filth and stench. They suffered hunger among other things. A tall middle-aged Jew dressed in a fur coat told me he had money on him and asked

me as a prisoner of war if I could find him something to eat. One of the Chassidiem asked me if I could find a piece of bread for his Rabbi. It was the second day that no food had come to them. I collected some rusks from among the P.O.W.s, both Jews and Poles, who were in the separated cells and gave it to the Rabbi and the other Jews. The Rabbi did not eat.

In the same hall I found a number of members of the "Young Chalutz Movement", and "Hashomer Hazair". They had been about to start on Aliyah/when by chance they had stopped in the city and had been raked in. They had all been forest workers. Depression and sadness could be seen in their faces. All I could tell them was to take the risk when the Germans opened the gates and make a run for it. They were familiar with the surroundings and perhaps they could evade the Germans in the forests. Then they should go Eastward because of their civilian clothing. How it hurt me to see the Jews in these humiliating circumstances!

But why had one not heard a word from the Admorim either in rebuke against the Germans or giving encouragement and comfort to their followers. Their influence had been so great. Jews had rushed blindly to them. Why did one not hear them now? Where were the reprimands of the Rabbis that were heard in the Beit Haknesset and especially now in these terrible days? And you, the supporters and leaders of the community in normal times, who knew how to fight for the rights of your followers with courage and without fear, where were the leaders of the communities now whose court, deliberations and advice could teach the "goyim" what right and justice and wisdom was?

Now you stood bent and bowed in the filth. Bowed down in deep sorrow. You did not give one word of comfort or encouragement to your followers. One did not hear one word from Admorim, from Rabbis or from any leaders of the community who were there.

Here your inspiration vanished. The Divine Presence was

not to be found. Belief was undermined and doubts arose and an awful feeling of helplessness.

What remained was practical calculation as to what was worthwhile, or not. Personal self-preservation alone held sway. They were paralysed and intimidated by the swastika and the deathshead helmets of the SS by the sword that was threatening death. With bowed heads , humiliated, the Jewish community accepted their fate.

The madman on the balcony was hoarse. He had stopped talking and amusing the Volksdeutch. In the silence of the darkness one could only hear the clanking and scraping of the bucket as the filth was again and again thrown down on the helpless heads below, and in the silence from time to time the shouts of the SS. "Verfluchte Jude" could be heard and the sound of the whip lashing on the back of a person and the shriek of the man as his flesh was cut, terrorized everyone.

Later in the night the Polish civilians were taken out into the yard. Only the Jews remained sinking into the stench and filth. In silence everyone prayed in his heart for strength to live through the night. So the night of horror - the game of mockery and cruelty of the devils under the direction of Ashmadai, passed.

In the early morning, the madman was shot and what the fate of the others was I will yet write about. I met them on the roads. Very few of them reached the camps. When dawn broke we were taken out, exhausted from the building and the yard. We were arranged into rows for the long and endlessly weary journey.

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THE LONG AND PAINFUL MARCH TO AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION

On the 22nd September we started out on a march of humiliation and death. The horror and monstrous cruelty was that of Gehenna. No spark of humanity was to be found, no mercy or compassion nor self-control was to be found among the guards. The battering cosh ruled. There was no-one who could escape from it. I was among the forgotten and cursed by G-d and man. I was among those crushed and downtrodden by the Prussian boot.

Four abreast, shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand, we dragged our legs along the dirt roads of the Mazurim Plains. At every crossroad more P.O.W.'s were collected. There were Polish civilians too, especially Jews, young and old. The sick, the lame, the paralysed were pushed along in peasant handcarts. The pitiful cavalcade was surrounded by German reservists armed with guns and bayonets. Soldiers on motorbikes and SS on horseback hurried and chased the scared crowd with gunfire or wielding their coshes. Those who fell behind were shot and thrown into the ditches by the wayside. Anyone trying to escape was shot or bayonetted. To hurry the staggering crowd, the SS would spur their horses and ride into the marchers lashing mercilessly with their whips. The frightened horses would trample the people underfoot. That was the way the Germans treated the surrendered. Also the Ukranians, sons of the "Black Earth", who until now were treated kindly by the Germans. Now also they got their share of rough treatment. Bandera and Bulba (two Ukranian leaders who collaberated with the Germans) also got their share of rough handling.

The September nights were cold and the days cloudy. From time to time the sun broke through heartening us with its warmth

and light. Farmers and their children were harvesting potatoes, cabbages and carrots in the fields. One of the marchers broke out of line, rushed into a field and broke off a cabbage head.

One of the farm women threw carrots to the marchers. A German soldier rushed to her and attacked her, throwing her to the ground beating her.mercilessly with the butt of his gun.

So the march continued for countless kilometers. We passed towns and villages. At one of the crossroads stood a statue of the Virgin Mary with the Infant in her arms. She calmly looked down on the tragic scene where more P.O.W.'s and Jewish civilians were pushed into the weary stumbling group. At the head of each community group walked the leader, wrapped in blankets. Some had broken shoes, some went barefoot. Their legs were covered with sores.

As if in a moment the way of life of the Jewish communities that had existed for hundreds of years were wiped out. They were cut down and destroyed and forced to leave everything and join the endless march. The women of this village seeing the broken-down women in the cavalcade, crossed themselves and ran away. The men too ran into their houses to evade the horrible yet heartbreaking scene.

On the paths and over crossways, through footpaths in the fields, and along the roads the cavalcade snaked its way along, as far as the eye could see.

The stumbling bowed and down-trodden crowd, slowly and with difficulty, made their way in a North Easterly direction. At every crossroad they were stopped for a short while to gather in those who had fallen behind. The rows of marchers were pushed more tightly together and stumbled along like a bewildered flock of sheep. Only the German SS monsters in their blue-grey uniforms moved backwards and forwards along the struggling rows. They

brandished and lashed whips, shouted raucously and fired at anyone committing the slightest "misdeed". They were trying to organise "order" into the poor wrecked miserable marchers, but in vain. The progress was very slow. They had no strength left. Life and death were all the same to them. They were so utterly exhausted.

At the crossroads stood a mouldy moss-covered cross. Opposite not far away stood a Jewish home and store with a yard around it. The occupants had left and had closed it up. Volksdeutchen and farmers of the area had broken in and taken anything worth the taking. They dragged out the cow that obstinately refused to move and the little calf that followed on thin spindly unsteady legs beside her.

They broke into the store-room and pulled out bags of salt and barley and loaded it on the handearts. Boxes and barrels fell noisily down beside the porch into the yard. In a few minutes the entire shop was emptied. They then energetically began to break the windows in their frames, pulling the doors off their hinges. They pulled out stools and tables, kitchen utensils and bedding. The looting farmers had left behind straw and broken household goods. Rows like paths of salt and sugar were strewn around, even buttons were scattered all over the place.

Covered with sweat but pleased with their handiwork, they loaded all their loot on hand-carts. Only once in twenty years could such an opportunity arise. They enjoyed taking the loot and breaking up Jewish property like this. Those on horseback whipped up their horses and rushed from the scene as quickly as they could, shouting at us and taunting us with remarks half in Polish and half in German.

The house remained empty, deserted and distorted, the wide open yawning doors and windows gave it the appearance of

an empty shell. The cross and the pitiful broken-down statue beside it that was listing to one side and seemed about to fall over, seemed to give the impression of grief and shame at the deeds of its faithful followers. I had never before understood the reality of the evil in the desire, forbidden in the Tenth Commandment: "Thou Shalt not Covet", but now, during the years of war, I began to understand what it meant. The urges to take what is not his is so strong in Man that each time he comes across deserted property he has to contend with this temptation. He loses his self-control and gentility which his upbringing gave him, he humiliates himself to the absolute, the ridiculous. He crawls on all fours. He crawls on all fours, his eyes protruding the saliva slobbering from his mouth. He grabs what there is to take, his pockets bulging under his jacket and he runs home as quickly as he can with it. I don't speak of those who are starving and under pressure when they take something to ease their hunger and they take to preserve their lives. Here, however we are talking about satiated well-fed people, who by their actions are caught spoiling their good names and status. These were well-to-do farmers who earned their livlihood from the land and land that is theirs. Their priests tell them what good deeds are. They hear this almost every week, if not every day. They did not hide their loot the way thieves do, they looted in broad daylight for all to see.

The overloaded carts rocked from side to side as they were taken along the field paths and in them one could see the cushion, eiderdown, sheets and the legs of chairs and tables.

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THE P.O.W. CAMP AT WENNGROV

We came to the little shtettle of Wenngrov completely broken, worn out, hungry and thristy, dragging ourselves along with difficulty. The population outdid themselves in kindness. Jewish women carrying babies in their arms ran back and forth along the lines of the prisoners giving out slices of bread. They gave to Jews and Christians alike. When they got blows from the guards who chased them away, they ran to the other side of the town and started giving out the bread there. The Germans ran after them, boiling with rage and so it went on.

It was a humane deed that was unforgettable. Years later, I met members of the Polish and minority groups who had been in the march and they could not say enough in praise of the women in the face of blows - they kept giving out fresh slices of fresh bread. In the entire time the only ones as far as I can remember who aided the P.O.W.'s. They broke into the lines and gave the men bread. Years later the civilians of that area who had witnessed the butchery of those good Jewish mothers still remembered their humane deed and how they had given out bread to the starving P.O.W.'s. These women were later exterminated or died of hunger in the ghettos.

Wenngrov was a picturesque typically Jewish shtettle. There were wide uncobbled streets without sidewalks. The wooden houses were one and a half stories high each with an attic. The roofs were of thatched straw or covered with wooden tiles or long planks, clapboard style, they stood out against the sky, with a steep gradient tilting either to one side or the other, as if they were about to fall over or giving the impression that they had been built that way from the start. Round the houses were high wooden verandas with steps leading up to the attics. The attics each had pairs of windows.

Here and there near the houses were wide spreading trees.

They were covered with thick bark deeply rooted in the ground showing gnarled roots. The trees were very tall and gave wide outspreading shade from the many branches radiating out from the thick, sturdy trunk. In normal times children would have played in the shade and mothers hold long excited conversations, sighing deeply the while. Now the place was empty. No Jew was to be seen. The windows were covered by shutters. In a narrow doorway through a crack in the shutters frightened eyes looked out. The day was dark and black. Rainclouds threatened ominously above, one piling up on the other, creating a threatening depressing atmosphere.

We were brought into a big wide field. Once it must have been used as a market place for horses. ' Now it had been enclosed by barbed wire and was to be our camp.

The camp was packed with Polish civilians, the majority local Jews and Jews from the surrounding areas: from Shedlitze, Sokolow, Rossow, Djelikow, Stochek and others. Here the Germans began to organise and make "order". For the first time the P.O.W.'s were separated according to nationality. Every National group had its place which meant around its own tent. The most favoured were the Volksdeutch and the Ukranians, the lease favoured of course being the Jews. They were not even given a tent. In any case most of the tents were crowded with the sick and the wounded. Even worse was the fate of the sick and wounded Jews who had no tent and were exposed to the elements, the continuous drizzle.

For hours we were soaked by the steady, dripping, soaking rain that slowly grew stronger and started coming down heavily, accompanied by thunder and lightning. For two hours the rain came down, and for most of us there was no shelter. The field was filled with water. The people stood crowded together in groups. One supporting the other so I also stood when the rain poured down on me as if from buckets. I was at the mercy of the leaden skies.

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Slowly, bit by bit, the rain stopped. The clouds parted and let through a narrow strip of sunshine. People crowded onto it to try and get dry. After a brief struggle for place the clouds again closed in and so the sun shone and disappeared at intervals. Suddenly a strong wind began to blow, the trees swayed and were bent down to the very ground. The tents were torn from their wedges. I stood in my place as if turned to stone. Now even Nature began to turn against us and I suffered with the rest.

The winds died down, and the women from Wenngrov came to give bread to their husbands and sons who had been imprisoned.

The guards did not let them approach the barbed wire. They took the food and gave it to the Poles. The Ukranians who promised to give bread to the husbands took it for themselves or sold it to the same Jews at exorbitant prices. A slice of bread was worth its weight in gold. The Ukranians took good advantage of the situation and the Germans continued with their "ordering" - beating people over the heads, hitting and kicking everyone, irrespective of nationality. A little Jewish boy of about eight crept into the camp under the barbed wire, bringing his father a blanket. An old soldier caught the child and hit him over the head. The child gave a piercing scream, swayed dizzily and fell into a pool of water. A short cry of "shame" / went up from the prisoners, many holding their breaths. Those devout Christians among them covered their mouths and eyes and cried out "Dear G-d". The Ukranians rubbed their hands together with satisfaction: "The Germans are going to teach the Jews a lesson, from the youngest to the oldest,you'll see." In the meantime the German who had hit the child so brutally felt the eyes of the thousands on him. He was embarrassed and shouted to the child to get up and when he didn't get up, kicked him with his boot. The child completely wet, was aroused from his faint, saw the German before him, burst out crying and began to run to the other side of the

fence. The German with his raised baton chased him. The child ran, weeping loudly and in complete terror all the while shouting "mamma"! The word echoed in our ears for a long time.

The rain and wind stopped, the sky cleared, the P.O.W.'s stood in groups talking and arguing. They were nearly all of the same opinion excepting Poles from Kongress Poland - the German people were the most highly cultured in the world. They were the only ones who knew how to organise and create order. They had no problem of minorities. They had no unemployment and they expressed themselves:- "Look at the German soldier. It doesn't matter if he is a "Kleinbauer" or a "Grossbauer", a "Knecht" or a factory worker, most of them smoke cigars and if they want to smoke pipes for their pleasure, they do so.

The German soldiers' clothes are well cared for. He is always neat and tidy. Even when there is rain his clothes are always clean and ironed. One can forgive that people even its bad deeds. We must remember his main fight is against the Jews. They have an account to settle with the Jews and that is their business. The Germans are not Mongolians and Hitler is not Genghis Khan. The Germans also believe in Christ."

These were the opinions of the Polish minority groups. The more fanatic among them said: "The Germans will tame and clean up the Polish flotsam-and-jetsum. First we must finish with the Jews and then we can start with the "Lech" - at the end of the war the Slavs will be given culture."

Nevertheless a good many of them still had a healthy fear of the Germans. Doubtless the neat ironed uniform, the shining boots and gloves and above all, because of the whip they weilded in their hands: "But they continued : "This does not justify the murdering of believing Slavs because they took a few carrots and cabbage from the fields and they shouldn't have ridden down the P.O.W.'s by riding into the ranks on horseback. And this last

incident beating a child like that even if he was a Jew." The second butted in: "Don't be sorry for them. The Jew is like the German, shrewd and cunning and he wants to rule. They want to destroy each other. This time the German got in first and he will hunt the Jew down till there are none left." A third supposed: "When the war is over they will be comrades again, embrace each other and rule the world".

These were the opinions about the Germans, the Poles, their governments and the war between them that were aired again and again at Wenngrov Camp. The first item on every agenda was of course "The Jew". These conversations and arguements were typical of what continued during the entire time of the war.

It is worthwhile explaining about the various minority groups in Poland. Their general outlook and their political opinions. So one will better understand the confusion and misunderstandings they had. Among the pro-German minorities were the Volksdeutche, most of them were Lutherans who lived in areas close to the German border. They regarded themselves as part of the German people. They spoke both German and Polish, were shrewd and clever and well orientated into Polish life. Nothing was hidden from them but because of their presence in the Polish army they were also taken as P.O.W.'s. They were given most favoured status and aided the Germans in every way they could. In the camps they carried out the duties of officials and they were most active in their hunt for Jews (There were those among them that knew and understood Yiddish and they were devoted aides of the SS. Nevertheless as I will still explain later the conquerors regarded them with suspicion and were in no hurry to free them from the ranks of the P.O.W.'s or grant them the rights of the German citizens in spite of the fact that they maintained they were pure Aryans. I had good reason to know them well. They made my life a misery.

The Ukranians lived far from the German border in: Galicia,

Volin, on the river Bug. They saw themselves as the descendants of theEstman Knights. These were considered to be their leaders and they were fanatic Greek Catholics; the owners and the tillers of the Black Earth. Nevertheless we knew that they were the "brothers" of the Kossaks who served the Russian Czars the Russian "Provoslavs" who put down uprisings in a most cruel and inhuman way.

The Ukranians in Poland were organised in a national underground, fascist in charactor.

Every year, they crossed the border and stayed in Germany for a year or more. There they worked in factories and in the fields and contacted their exiled leaders who had their centre in Berlin, if I am not mistaken, in "Unter den Linden Gasse". From there a Ukranian paper was published and crude Nazi propaganda pamphlets were sent out for the simple folk. For the more sophisticated they distributed novels and books of poetry. These were of a high standard and written by Ukranian writers.

At the beginning of 1940 and in 1941 after the outbreak of the war between Russia and Germany, these books were given out to the P.O.W.'s without any charge. Every Russian writer who was born in the Ukraine or had lived there for a long time, or got his inspiration from the Ukranian scene and described it in his work, were considered to be Ukranian writers. So they considered Pushkin, Lermentov and others to be Ukranians.

The Ukranian activists and there were many of them, returned from their stay in Germany well indoctrinated into Naziism. Now with the outbreak of the War with Germany the Poles mobilised them as they did many others into the Polish army and when the time came they also fell into German hands as P.O.W.'s. These people became experts in German order and ways and knew how to explain the wonderful way of life that existed in Germany.

A good many of the Bylo-Russians were also pro-German. Living as they did far from the German border the simple unedu-

cated folk could not know very much about the German Government. If they were at all pro-German it was more because of the hatred they bore for the Polish authorities, whom they regarded as their greater enemy. They were not allowed to develop their language or culture because the Poles saw them as allies of the Soviets.

After a few years some Bylo Russians "exiled" to Berlin (I met them during the war and their fate was no different from those of other prisoners of war. They had no rights.) Those that had been to Berlin returned spreading Nazi theories including hatred for Jews amongst their people. In their propaganda they stated that they were different from the Russians in their dialect and it was from them that the Russian language originated and developed. So they explained that the Bylo-Russians were and had always been enslaved by so many conquerors; the Princes; the Russians; the Lithuanians and the Poles. They lauded the folk heroes from their nations history and said that their brave deeds had grown to myths and legends in the course of generations. These Folk Heroes always fought against sorrow, slavery and injustice. They would come out of the forests, attack the "Pani" of thePoles and the Lithuanian landowners who had robbed them of their lands and enslaved the poverty stricken people who lived close to the forests and the rivers in huts in the swamps. In the last years before the war they had a fascist nationalist underground. Later when the Germans conquered ByloRussia they asked for their co-operation and they promised them independance when the war ended. However, as much as I knew of them they did not really believe the German promises and they had very little enthusiasm and mixed feelings about the leaders who had been trained in Berlin - whom they had never heard of or seen before. Nevertheless in 1941 after the outbreak of the war they helped the Germans in their plans of liquidating the Jews.

The Mazurs like most of the Poles who lived close to the German border, used to rush across the border to Prussia in their thousands for seasonal work. For some reason the Germans treated

them with more respect than their own German "knecht". The Poles saved a little money and returned to their villages in Poland satisfied. Meanwhile they had also inculcated a feeling of hatred towards the Jew during their stay in Germany.

As far as I heard from these people themselves many of them served the Germans as spies and also spread racism and anti-semitism. When they returned to their native soil they co-operated in extreme nationalist and anti-semitic movements like the Endekim. They were also active in Catholic parties who incited and instigated people to open hatred against the Jews and in the end they took part in pogroms and the killing off of Jews in the villages.

At Wenngroff where the Polish army was captive, one could already see the early signs of the "breaking up" of the Polish people. They began to disintegrate, to break up into separate groups and to alienate themselves from the values of the Polish people. To their sorrow and disappointment the Germans kept to their laws of race purity. They had no trust in what they called the Polish "riff-raff".

The Poles represented themselves as Bylo Russians. Although their religion was Catholic, they were also to speak Bylo Russian which they used in their daily dealings with Bylo Russians whom they lived among. However, it was not their mother tongue. They got no further rights nor freedom. In any case, they did not expect anything worse as Poles. The Germans bunched all the different groups together contemptuously referring to them all as "Polacks." There was another reason for their passing as Bylo Russians. There were rumours going round that in the Russo-German agreement, the P.O.W.'s would be sent back to their homelands. It was a vain dream. The Soviets were not interested in people who had fought for the Poles. They suspected them of spreading Nazi propaganda and spying for the Germans. The Soviets had one idea: They were all the same in their eyes. It didn't

matter what language they spoke or whether they were Catholics or Provoslavs. They had all come from a Polish hierarchy and were imbued with Polish values and cultures. As such they regarded them as enemies of the Soviet Union.

Thus the Poles began to crumble and divide into the various national groups . Every group acted in the way that seemed to be to their greatest advantage. After a few months they realised that they had been living in a fool's paradise.

In many cases history has shown that in time of war or conquest many of the conquered want to be like the conquerors. They want to take over their values and their way of life; they admire the strong who conquered them and they want to copy them. Of course there were those who acted differently too, but enmity only appeared after a long time; the enmity and revolt against the conquering power. In short, they began to long for their independance.

The Bylo Russian disappointment came later. They were not taken up with the idea of an independant Bylo Russia. They had strong doubts about this idea.

In the case of the Ukranians, if I am not mistaken, three years of war passed till their disillusionment came - they heard that their leader "Bandera" had been killed by the Germans. They were amazed and they felt cheated.

The Mazurs who lived close to the Prussian border were the first to lose their hope of independance. Before the war they would cross the border and go and work for the Prussian farmers who were also mostly Catholics. They had had a good relationship with them. All this stopped with the conquest of Poland. After three months of being captured all personal details of every P.O.W. had been registered. For example, Religion, Nationality and so on. The Catholic Poles had to sew the letter "P" on their lapels, usually a red cross was

painted in oil paint across their backs on their jackets. A sign that they were P.O.W.'s.

The P.O.W. who said he was a Volksdeutcher of the Lutheran faith had more freedom and he was liberated after about a year or two. Nevertheless he did not get his full rights, the freedom he hoped for which meant that he was recognised as a "pure" German. Only when he was mobilised into the Wehrmacht were the limitations lifted and his status as a citizen changed; but the status of his family was still considered inferior and was not taken up by the Germans in a hurry.

Again we return to the Jewish prisoners at Wenngroff. The nature and type of people the Polish minorities were is now fairly clear. Their national aspirations and what they wanted regarding their religion and finally their relationship towards the Jewish prisoners has been explained.

I described how we Jewish P.O.W.'s lived amongst these people and will continue to explain how I related to them as a Jew and more objectively on a human level.

The next day the Germans brought a field kitchen. There was a long queue which progressed very slowly. The Jewish prisoners were kept in a special line. This was the first time that the Germans openly differenciated between us and our other comrades-in-arms of the past. The Polish P.O.W.'s used this opportunity to taunt and mock the Jews standing in the line and when we came to the kitchen the cooks let us have it as well. They were mostly Mazurim, Volksdeutch and Ukranians. Our portions were even smaller than what was meant for us, so in order to avoid further humiliation and trouble many Jews would go into the Polish lines and get good food through the protection of their Polish friends, but not all of them succeeded in this. Most of the Jews who infiltrated were discovered by the Germans, aided by the Christian P.O.W.'s who

pointed them out and denounced them. The Germans chased the Jews out of the Polish ranks with curses and blows. The civilians also got their food from the field kitchen in yet another line. The Jewish civilians suffered the worst of all. They had to go through the seven circles of Hell before they got to the place where the food was dished out. The guards were continually busy creating "order", meaning continually counting them to the accompaniment of blows and when he finally got his ration it was insufficient. Furthermore the cook would take the soup, and pour it over his head and he would be forced to drink it together with the blood flowing from the wounds he got from blows on the head. Usually Jews would leave the line without food so that they would not be subjected to the violence.

The next day a fleet of opulent cars approached the camp, stopping near the fence. Well dressed German civilians smoking cigars approached the fence. They had the Party emblems on their clothes and had swastikas on their sleeves. From time to time they gave the Nazi salute with the "Heil Hitler" greeting. They began to talk to the Hungry P.O.W.s, and they said they were landowners and farmers who had people working for them all their lives and were happy and satisfied in their place of work. They promised that there would be order and plenty for the entire Polish nation but that would only come after they had got rid of the Jews. They said that the prisoners would be brought over to Germany to work in the fields and that there would be plenty to eat. They gave out fragrant cigarettes to the P.O.W.'s and one man threw two loaves of bread among the prisoners. The crowd fell on it making a high pile of bodies. Heads, hands and legs fought over every crumb, beating and thrashing each other. One German

photographed the struggle for the bread from all angles. At once a group of "Wachmen" appeared and thrashed and kicked at the group of struggling bodies, shouting "lazy, dirty Poles, pigs". Quickly photographers again got busy. About 200 yards away from there another German threw another loaf of bread amongst another group, again the same thing happened. Again the guards fell on the people beating them, chasing them to their tents. Shouting after them: "We Germans will teach you order! You are Polaks without manners!" A few months later in Germany the Germans showed us pictures in the newspapers. Crowds of prisoners were rolling on the ground, each person grabbing a morsel of bread from the other. Under the picture the caption read: "Only the German soldiers can bring order to the Poles who are being starved out by the Jews."

We were in Wengroff for Yom Kippur and as usual we suffered blows and other humiliations. On the 25th September 1939, before Succoth we went on another long wandering march in the same way as we had done before and with the same guards and blows and cruelty. In rain, wind and cold the march took us to East Prussia. For Jews in the usual times these were the days of peace and rest, but with us the P.O.W.'s, our most terrible time was only just beginning.

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WE APPROACH THE PRUSSIAN BORDER

The tortuous march continued for days and nights. Hunger and thirst and lack of strength was our lot. We were many from all the sections of the minorities. Jewish and Polish civilians died along the way and were thrown into ditches along the roadside. I was one of a group of five Poles and Jews. We looked after each other. From time to time one of us would rush into the fields to gather sugar, beet, red beet carrots or cabbage. We divided the already rotten vegetables equally amongst each other. Every cabbage head, even if it did not cost us our death, cost us kicks and blows and lashes. We endangered ourselves in order to get a little more strength so that we could go on to the unknown. I believed that all of us lived on vegetables alone but this was not the case. We got to know that some people had money and secretly got bread. We parted from them. Three of us, myself among them, gnawed at raw potatoes. We ate the vegetables for three days and vomited all the time. I leaned on the arms of my comrades and was dragged along by them - not to be left at the wayside - not tobe shot.

From that time on hunger did not leave me and from time to time during the entire war I was to suffer from it depending on the conditions I was in. There were times when I had comparitively plenty, after that I was again caught in its web and it could nearly drive me mad. For long periods of time I suffered continual hunger or it became my second self. It was like a stained and polluted image that attacked and disturbed and did not leave me night and day for weeks and even months. It happened at times that it changed my personality to someone almost unknown. In these cases I always felt that something was happening to me and I fought to keep my inner balance.

I will still tell more about this constant companion

hunger, as I go along.

The plains of the Mazur countryside changed and we came to a different scene. We approached the Prussian border. First we passed the town Ostrolenka which had not suffered from the war. It was a Jewish town in the German style. Neat, clean and orderly. The stores were closed. We did not see any Jews. The German army was everywhere to be seen and the farmers in the neighbourhood prowled about and scratched around in the houses, and took what there was, loading it on their handcarts.

At the station at Ostrolenka we were loaded on to cattle trucks. We were impossibly overcrowded. There was hardly standing room. We were closed in with heavy bolts and we heard the guards all round us. Before we got into the trucks we were tersely warned "From now on you are travelling on German soil. The same Germany that you wanted to conquer and whose girls you wanted to rape as you said many a time. You are of the terrible people who emasculated our brothers, the Volksdeutche; but now you will be in the Germany you wanted to be, but as P.O.W.'s. If you are anywhere without the guards you can expect the punishment of death." So spoke an old German officer with a long thin face. He wore glasses with thin light frames. His facial muscles creased and distorted his face as he spoke to us. In his hand he carried a thin switch with which he hit his gaiters from time to time. A German soldier next to him translated his words into a broken Polish.

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E A S T P R U S S I A

The train hurried on: the windows in the cattle truck were barred. I was at a window and with my eyes I tried to take in as much of the scenery as possible. From the window I saw wide plains. From time to time the scene changed and the horizons became steep and mountains . One saw rounded green hills and among them red tiled roofs of houses could be seem dotted amongst the spread out valleys and hills. The train began to slow down. It went uphill, made a further effort, dragged along and again gathered speed and momentum. The short blasts of the locomotive reverberated. Farms flew past, high asphalt roads neat exact and well cared for, Church towers with their crosses stood out and went by. The train carefully crossed bridges that joined hill to hill. A farm peeping out among the trees, a home, a silo and a barn. A dog put out his head and barked at the running train. A farmer ploughed his land with two huge harnessed horses.A herdsman with a herd of cows and geese. Oh, what a pastoral scene! Hard to believe! Peace and calm reigned supreme. Not a thing was broken or out of place. An old Polish P.O.W. broke into my train of thought. A Blessed Land. They are Catholics like us - "Pan Jesus" is guarding them. Let Him also guard us, the believers. Thinking about his words I was shocked. Before my eyes I saw thousands of Jews, old, young, barefoot, wrapped in blankets, being lashed and beaten on their heads and backs. Running away in terror from burning houses were mothers holding their babies in their arms; shouting and weeping. I shuddered. I saw my sister and her three children wandering in the fields. I closed my eyes and with that I saw hundreds of years of Jewry burned and shattered to its very foundations. From within me there burst forth a silent cry: How could murderers have been brought forth from such a blessed land! How could the calm and peaceful land have created the monstrous murderous helmets of the SS? I covered

my eyes with my hands and wanted to shout: "Could it be that "Pan Jesus" was guarding murderers? and was it possible that the G-d of my father and mother, my people, had betrayed them?" I turned to my old and naive neighbour and to the others: " I have become tired . Let me sit for a minute on the small section of the floor."

Rain began to fall outside. A Pole spoke to himself: "Yes, the rain is a blessing. The German families are sitting peacefully in their homes. They don't know what their sons are doing to our Poland." Another sadly added: "We left our farms, our wives , our parents, our children. Who is going to work on our land? Who will care for our families. Where are the Schwabs dragging us to?" "Don't worry", said another confidently. "We will be divided up to go and work on the lands and we, the Poles, will show them how a Pole works in the fields. We will have enough food for our needs. It's better to be here than at the front, especially now at the beginning of winter."

From the time the train began to travel on German soil the handful of Jews who were in the carriage kept silent. We Jews had not taken part in any conversation. A feeling of depression and unrest had taken hold of us. We felt that only misfortune awaited us. Our position had got worse even before we left German soil, even before we had been taken to the P.O.W. camp. It does not always mean to say that we were kept apart when we were among the Polish soldiers. I now want to say something about the life of the Jewish soldier in the Polish army.

When he first came to the barracks, the Jew was an outsider, taunted and mocked, especially during the breaks in the exercises; on days of rest, on Sundays or before going to sleep when the talk was about amorous adventures, jokes and laughter. At times like those there was no place for him in their society. This period lasted quite a considerable time. However, in the course of time, the Jew would come to himself, and find he had an easier

time. He would break the bans that kept him out. With his own efforts and personality he looked for a way of getting included into the company. He kept a firm upper lip, took part in the jovial conversation until he managed to win friends. I will not say that every young Jew had the ability or the daring to do this, but I am sure most Jews had to endure a period of humiliation and suffering, mockery and taunting. He had to endure blows and the treading underfoot of his personal and national honour, even though the rules forbade this as it were. They saw the Jew as a stranger. Their relationship with him resulted from preconceived prejudice. A completely negative view about everything. Their religion, their pronounciation, their circumcision, everything gave them a reason to mock, taunt and laugh at him. This was in spite of the fact that the minority groups spoke Polish much worse than he. Even though the minorities were not all Catholics, at least they were all Christians and this bound them together, while the Jew in this respect would always remain an outsider. All in all the relationship towards the Jew in the barracks was a distorted affair, that was not, if I am not mistaken , ever written or described by any Jewish writer.

I would like to point out that the atmosphere and way of life of the Polish army in the barracks, in the field exercises etc., was similar to that of a concentration camp for political prisoners; but the Jew suffered more than anyone else; beginning with the non-commissioned officers right up to the commanders.

These practices of sadism and humiliation were carried out in contradiction to any accepted army criterion or educational practice that was designed to uplift the soldier and enable him to cope with any difficulty that he might find himself in, in the field of battle or the course of the war.

In the barracks the people appointed to organise the excercises, were drunkards, perverts, and boasters without any

conscience. Under these circumstances one can imagine what the position of the Jew was when types like these acted in the name of holy nationalism. But when the Jewish soldier was able to pick up the slang of the Poles and the Christians, then he rose in the estimation of his comrades and he himself, gained confidence.

In fact, because of his background and education, I would say that the Jewish soldier was able to be of great moral support to his fellow men. True among the Jews just like among the Poles there were men who got a lot of money from home. These were not flexible. They imagined money could buy everything and they aroused hatred. But the Jew was forced to change his ways very soon. He soon stopped throwing money around. Reality taught him to change his ways and to act in that society, the way one should. He had to live with this company for a long time. The Jewish soldier proved to be honest in his dealings and was disciplined. He never tried to back out of any task he was to do. He did everything he was asked to do (The right to back out of things was a privilege the Poles reserved for themselves).

From that time on, and it happened more than once, he not only knew how to take blows, he also knew how to return them. He did not have to be physically strong in order to do this and this also raised him in the estimation of his Polish comrades. He had a good name in his company and section.

Now I will return to my story. A group of Volksdeutch were in one corner of the truck. They were non-coms and one Zelinschak had been on friendly terms with me in the army. He had a water bottle full of water. As a past friend I asked him for a little water. In anger and with a suspicious glance he turned his back on me. (They lived in the Mlava area and had been affluent people. They wrote their letters to their parents in German. At that time the Poles in the company did

not know what the Volksdeutche really were).

So we were completely isolated in the truck. We could not express our opinions, we tried to make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. We just listened to the others talking and thought "We are not a part of that, we had not done anything, and there was no hope that we would be taken on by the farmers."

The cross and the statue were also seen along the Prussian roads and this gave the Poles and Germans something in common. -In their religion there would be no place for the G-d of the Jews. We were strangers to both Slavs and the Germans. In short, we were pushed aside. With lowered heads we held our peace. We were like a flock of sheep crowded in the carriage. There was hardly any place to stand. After hours of standing many were exhausted and close to fainting and lay down under the legs of their comrades, suffering from stomach pains, from the stink and from weakness. Because of lack of space the stronger ones stood or sat on the bodies of the weaker. When a prisoner realised that there was a Jew beneath him, he would give an extra curse and kick.

No banging with the fists helped when the train stopped. The door did not open. Only when the prisoners broke a plank in the flooring did things become easier for everyone.

After two days of travelling and long stops at different stations and in the fields, did the train stop near Königsberg. The door was noisily opened and a cold wind blew on us, raging round us till we could no longer take in the freshness and I held my breath. We were pushed out of the truck by the shouts of the Germans and loaded on to lorries. We were brought a long way till we were brought to the camp of which it was impossible to see the other end. This was the camp that was known as Stalag Al, that was situated near the town of Stablach, where there were many barracks housing soldiers. The inhabitants were permanent army personell and their families.

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P. O. W. CAMP STALAG A1

The moment we came to the camp the Germans began to separate the officers from the men. The Polish officers were known to be intolerant nationalist fanatics. More than once the guards taunted us with the remark that Ridz Schmegly and the officers were the cause of the War. Often, they would sarcastically remark: "Where have your officers vanished to?" Perhaps that was why the officers that I knew kept back and did not declare their rank, especially those in the reserves - and most of them remained in Stalag that was under the Military command and the SS. After a few days I saw a group of officers of the permanent force of different ranks living alone in one tent but they were soon transferred to the camps intended for officers - "Oflag".

The camp buzzed and hummed with thousands of captives of all ethnic groups, Poles, Jews, minorities. There was also a tent for the Jews. In this way we were finally and completely separated from the rest. Everyone who passed us chuckled at this genius of German "inventiveness". The Ukranians pulled out the Jews from among the other groups where they had tried to hide themselves and dragged them to the tent intended for them. There were a great many clashes between the Jews and the Ukranians, but the guards "intervened", beating up the Jews, hitting them over the head with their "Koshes". There were a few Poles, not many of them, who were revolted by this barbaric behaviour but they were helpless and kept quiet.

During the early days of our stay at the camp the other captives mercilessly exploited the vulnerable condition of the Jews and robbed them of everything. The Ukranians, Volksdeutch, Bylo Russians from Polesia, Poles from Posnan, Lodj and the Mazurs - took away our long army coats and jackets, and left us to suffer the cold with only our thin tunics. They

sold the clothes to others for bread and tobacco. They enthusiastically carried out these robberies in a spirit of ardent nationalism and religious fervour, as if they were following G-d's Commandments, saying: "They tortured our beloved Jesus. Now let the torturers be tortured." This was an especially good opportunity to loot and humiliate the Jews, take off their clothes and leave them to face the cold, unprotected. The Ukranians rubbed their hands in satisfaction, repeating the while "Now horizons are being opened up in our lives. We have finally been liberated from the Poles who opressed us and the Jews who exploited us." The Ukranians put fear into everyone. They volunteered for every "aktia" the Germans demanded. They were appointed as those responsible in the tents and also those responsible for the distribution of bread. They were the most faithful henchmen the Germans had and of course were the hearers of all tales and the main informants. The other Poles soon got to know this and did their best to avoid them.

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AND I AM AS A WORM AND NOT A MAN (THE PLACE OF NO MERCY)

It was expressed with sanctimonious hypocracy "The duty of the Jewish P.O.W.'s to be respondible for the cleanliness and sanitation." We were divided into groups and dispersed over the entire area. German organization above all.

At dawn we were brutally dragged out of our inadequate coverings. One could hardly call them tents, and marched off at gun-point and were forced to clean up faeces and all manner of disgusting offal with our bare hands, not even a stick was provided. As yet we were not aware of the sinister intention.

There were no lavatories or even sanitation pits. An area near the fence had been set aside for the necessary evacuation and urination. It was used by thousands. Even the smell was beyond description.

There, with the guns everlastingly at our heads, kicks and blows freely dished out just for the "schadenfreude" wherever a head or shoulders were in the way we were forced to dig "ditches" with our bare hands and cover the faeces with our bare hands. The guards danced around like maniacs. Whoever did not work fast enough to please them were targets for their trigger itching fingers. The corpses lay twitching for a while in the filth and excrement until they grew still.

Those early October days were the most ghastly of my life. Bent over, we were made to crawl around in the faeces performing this so-called sanitation. The cutting autumn winds blowing mercilessly from the nearby Baltic (We were in Ost-Preuse), added to our suffering. Heavy grey-blue rain clouds gathered ominously overhead. Occassionally a ray of sunlight like a sign of hope from G-d would show itself for a brief moment only to be pushed back behind the dark cumulous semi-twilight of a "gotterdamering". The clouds seemed to take on the colour of our sadistic inhuman captors.

The all over dirty devilish blue-gray pervaded everything, it never left my senses even in my brief moments of slumberous exhaustion, that nightmare colour pervaded my dreams - to this day it returns -.

Torential rain lashed us and our guards scurried away to the commands of the SS with their black "Deaths-head" helmets. Far worse however were the sky blue eyes with their inhuman expressionless stares as they stood under the shelter of the watch towers, training their guns on us. The rain was drenching our bodies and helpless tears our souls.

Nearly under tent-cover we heard the mocking laughter of our so very recent Ukranian and Polish "Comrades- in-Arms." Lightning flashed, cutting each cloud in turn. Thunder rumbled and the clouds driven on by the icy winds were followed by others with even icier rain. Helpless and drenched, clad in thin summer vests that long since seemed part of our icy skins, we stood bent and groping at our "task".

Near me in the downpour stood a "Yeshiva-bocher, murmering psalms. I was drawn to the words of Psalm 83, "Keep not thou silence of G-d. Hold not thy peace and be not still O G-d, for thine enemies make a tumult and those that hate thee have lifted up their heads. They have taken crafty council against they people and consulted against the hidden ones.

"They have said, : Come let us cut them off from being a people that the name of Israel be no more in rememberance." I thought to myself: Is there still a G-d to whom one can turn? Does the G-d of Abraham pay any attention to the cries and supplications of his chosen people? Does he see this suffering and torture?

It seemed to me from what my parents and teachers had taught me that G-d was not to be blamed. As it is said: "It is too soon the measure of our tears is not yet filled and the

gates of prayer still shut."

One thing I knew then: To live as a Jew was to be damned. I, and those with me cursed the day we were born. We cursed our parents who had brought us into this horror of existence.

After standing for what seemed hours in the merciless lashing rain, we were chased at a pace beyond our strength to our tents. Some stumbled and fell dead in their tracks. Suddenly out of no-where the shrieking diabolical SS Death's Head helmets fell upon us. They were foaming at the mouth. "Louse!" they shrieked in German. They beat us mercilessly with the backs of their rifles. Heads, backs, shoulders, whatever was in the way. When I instinctively put up my arms to ward off the blows I was doubly punished. Blood spurted afresh from the war wound which had begun to heal. Blood flowed from my teeth and mouth. A short month ago I had been treated as a soldier fighting for my country. I had had dignity. Now I was being deliberately crushed and humiliated. This was the German dehumanizing process.

Shocked, in trauma, we staggered into our so-called tents. I fell on the straw burying myself deep in it. Covering myself with it. Burning weals seared my back. I lay shuddering and shaking. I crouched on all fours breathing deeply, trying to warm my body. I rubbed my arms and legs until they steamed from the friction. Thus I fought to stay alive.

The silence of death and deep depression enveloped the tent. Some shrewdies amongst us, in an effort to protect themselves, began toadying to the enemy. When the Germans came in they shouted: "Ordnung!" and "Ditzipline!" They took upon themselves to clean the place.

The Germans pushed them aside like the lice they really were. "Who among you are communists?" they yelled raucously.

No-one spoke but the tension in the already death enveloped tent was tautened to breaking point. Here was another torment suspicion. As yet no word of politics had passed our lips. We had not even dared to utter the name of Hitler.

In the semi-darkness of the tent, one could see the oscilating forms whispering prayers, sobbing all the while, and moaning in pain. I knew I had to overcome the cold or I would not see the dawning of the next day.

Thus ended the day of the Jewish P.O.W.'s in Stalag Al.

Dysentry spread rife in the camp and we, the Jews, were ordered to go and clean the camp. The rain continued unabated. Jews collapsed and fell down where they were, never returning to the tent.

Those remaining continued but we were already aware of the fact. The fact was loud and clear ..... Extermination in filth faeces and with blows.

I went over the events of the past month in my mind. How we had carried arms. How we had had the dignity of men. Soldiers defending our homeland. The equals of our Polish comrades-in-arms. Equally sharing our last crust with them.

The idea began to take root in my mind. I must find my former comrades. I had to speak to them and ask for help. I had to find them soon or it would be the end of me. I was not prepared to meet my death so meekly. The idea was like a shimmering ray of light. It gave me courage.

I had to find my Polish comrades and put them to the test - would they help me or let me die without lifting a finger. But I was so utterly exhausted, I simply didn't have strength to carry out my plan. I tried not to sleep when I lay down, I was in fear of not being able to wake again.

The moaning and groaning of the helpless sufferers in the tent almost snapped my already overtaut nerves.

Again and again the thought came to my mind. Why were we so terribly estranged? Thrown out like pariahs from the world of men? Why did the Germans so brutally maltreat us (Was I to know of the Wansee Conference) Why had my Polish comrades deserted me?

It was hard for me to think ..... to concentrate ..... I was in a state of sonambulance from exhaustion. I couldn't understand the senseless animal hatred of the Germans.

I lay somnolently in a state of wakeful slumber. I could hear the murmering whisper of the Jewish prayer: "Eli, Eli, lama Azavtani, my G-d, my G-d, Why has't thou forsaken me?" My deliverence was far off. Our hopes lay in the same dispairing cries of our ancestors. The words mingling with my thoughts resusitated me.

So cried David when harrased and pursued by Saul's men, he had hidden in the caves. So Jesus the Nazarene had cried out on the cross. Thus groaned the Jews of Spain in their anguish as their bodies had been maimed and crushed and broken on the torture wheels of the Inquisition. And so too had cried out the Jews of Poland a brief month ago, when barefoot and broken they were driven stumblingly to the forests to dig their own graves.

"Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani!" My father used to repeat these words in seasons as night was falling. I as a child at the time could not yet grasp their meaning, but I had caught the fear and emotion engendered and which now I understood all too well!

So Jews down the avenues of time had begged and pleaded their G-d of Mercy to deliver. The low weeping and pleading of prayer and supplication cut into the heavy silences hanging like the doom above our heads.

The crying and supplication died down as we heard the approachin echoes of the Germans.

Perhaps it is only imaginary this soul pacifying prayer which can give one a brief mistaken respite from the horrible reality for a short while. It diverts the mind from the all encompassing awareness of the horror of our approaching death. It uplifted us despite ourselves and gave us a spark of light and hope. For a short time we were able to push away the fear and horror of the complete extermination we knew was waiting for us. Again and again it became brutally and simply clear to us that this was the way we were to die. They would sap our strength with blows and dirt and excrement till nothing was left of us. I was broken and in utter despair. This last brief month under the Germans had taught me to expect only the worst. Hope or expectation of life had descended to the depths of oblivion. Day by day we were made more aware of the fact that no help or saviour and no power existed to hold back our inevitably approaching death, and yet no-one dared to admit it openly.

In our overpowering silence born of despair, my one-time "Yeshiva Bocher" friend, to pull us out of the complete despair we were falling into, tried to convince those around him that the deeds of G-d are true. "They will soon stop brutalizing us. They will not kill us all. They just want to frighten us into submission."

Then my friend began to draw a comparison between our position and the position of those in Sodom and Gemorah. He spoke about the conversation between G-d and Abhaham when Abraham begged him not to destroy Sodom for the sake of 50 good men (Gen 23) "Peradvanture there shall lack five of the fifty. Wilt Thou destroy all the city?"

And Abraham drew near and said : "Wilt though also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there be 50 righteous within the city , wilt Thou also destroy the place for the 50 righteous that are within ...

and so on till the Kodesh Borcheku said ..... "I will not destroy the city for the sake of 10 men ."

But his friends did not entirely agree with him. One fellow described the suffering of a comarde: "he was a friend from home, a good chap, who worked hard from the time he was a boy, looking after ailing parents and he was shot in the filthy excrement. Was that Justice? Could you explain why?" The "Yeshiva Bocher" in answer brought forth more arguements and "Perushim" and finished with the words: "We live in a generation that is under complete obligation and the son of David will only come when a generation is completely righteous or under complete obligation. Now is the time of the coming of the Moshiach ..... the time of Deliverance .... "

In the night the German SS again broke into the tent shrieking like maniacs and beating and brutalizing us.

The Jews "responsible for order" tried to intercede but the SS cursed and threw them aside.

Hardly had they gone when the Ukranians came in and pulled the clothes off those Jews lying helpless and unable to resist. We did our best to resist and chased them out. A little later, the Ukranians and Germans came in together and attacked some of us ..... the unfortunates never returned.

So some days and nights went by. Every day there was the same "sanitation" work, the same humiliation. Many of us got dysentry.

I decided not to eat or drink. I might overcome the illness in this way.

In the meanwhile the rumour went round that the Camp Authorities were planning to give everyone a fair share of the food available. For this reason they wanted to know the

exact number of people in each tent. Also in our Jewish tent. A list was prepared and given to those responsible. However, we did not get any food.

At night we could not sleep because of the terrible cold, the hunger and anxiety.

Despite my despair and the dim expectation of life, the desire to remain alive grew all the stronger within me. Every time the clouds passed over light came into the tent.

The rumour went round that some Jews had managed to get into other tents among the Poles and other minorities. This made me even more determined to get in touch with my former comrades before it was too late. The question was, where would I get a jacket?

MY MEETING WITH MY FORMER COMRADES TAKES PLACE

Every day thousands of P.O.W.'s moved about the entire area of the camp from early morning till late in the evening scavenging for food and drink.

Next to me in our tent was my friend, Alderowitz. He had high fever and was suffering from terrible thirst. He was lying in a half faint. He kept moaning and begging for water to moisten his lips.

Near the tent was a barbed wire fence. On the other side stood German reservists. They would come there in their off-duty time; clean shaven and smoking pipes. They would watch what was going on in camp out of simple curiosity.

As there were no guards around at that moment, I went to the fence and spoke to them in German. I had once learnt to

speak it fluently. "My comrade is lying ill in the tent: Could the Herr please help me with a little water?" The German looked at me with kindly eyes. "Are you from the Jewish tent?" "Yes", I answered, "I am a Jew , and my friend is lying with high fever and begging for water just to moisten his lips." After some hesitation he answered: "Guter Mensch". This was an unusual and rare address to any P.O.W. especially a Jew. "I had bread and water. I gave it all to the prisoners", he added, apologising: "I am sorry I cannot help you or your friend at the moment." I thanked him for his good intentions and kind words. I went around asking others, P.O.W.'s who had water bottles but got narry a drop.

I came to the Polish area. I was dressed only in my vest and really shouldn't have dared to appear like that in case the people would betray me. Only Jews were in that condition and if I fell into the hands of the Jew-baiters, it would be the end of me.

For some reason I passed through unnoticed.

"Karchmer, is that you? my G-d, man, how awful you look. Man, you look like a walking skeleton, a ghost! What have they done to you? Those Lutherans and Provo-slavs." It was Ketchmersky. Our names had also been called out together and mixed up when we had been in the unit. It had been a kind of game when letters were given out. The Sergeant would call out: "Katch....." and we would both be on the double ..... He was with his buddy Mankosa. I answered: "Do you think that they are bad because of their religion?" "I know it. Even our Polish Catholics aren't any better. They also attacked the sons of Moses' faith"(He didn't use the word Jew).
"Old chap, our Poles are also arse licking the Germans. They had it too good in Poland. They were pampered and

didn't want to fight. That was why they were defeated. G-d has punished them." Suddenly he stopped talking and turned to Mankosa." Old Chap, we can't leave him like this without a jacket! Quick! Go into the tent and find him something to wear." In less than ten minutes Mankosa was back with a jacket he had filched from the straw. Ah, how warm it was. A shield from the wind. Strolling between my two one-time comrades-in-arms, they stealthily passed me a small crumbled piece of bread. Katchmersky was talkative. He walked along cursing the Lutherans and Provoslavs. His own people he called traitors who did not want to fight for the Motherland. He was sure the Germans would be defeated. As proof he quoted passages from the Old and New Testament and especially from the words of the Saint in particular St. . I had never heard of her but Katchmersky's words were really humane. Monkosa, I knew was a large chap with hardly a word to say for himself. He was still young, but one could see the signs of hunger and suffering on his face. He was worried but kept his peace.

We were all three exhausted but we went to scavange in the rubbish where we found some bad cabbage leaves. We ate and at once vomited. We continued our scavenging in all types of heaps. I had hoped to find something for Alderowitz, but in vain. On the way I met Polish acquaintances and other unit comrades. They were amazed to see me walking around so freely. I was afraid of them. Their main subject of conversation was Jud.

As my two friends told me pointing out that one and this one had taken part in "Jew-baiting" raids along with the Germans.

After looking in every possible place we realised that our search had not been successful. In the end I turned to my two friends: "Look, you chaps, the way the Germans are

treating the Jews there is no doubt that they are out to do away with us. We won't have strength to withstand their attacks much longer. They will finish us off in a very short time. We are completely at their mercy. As you see it, tell me truly, how can I escape them? Have you got any ideas? Are you able to help me?" Mankosa answered: "We fought together, we were buddies, and you could be in the tent as one of us either in this camp or elsewhere till the end of the war, but it is dangerous for you. Understand, in our tent no-one trusts his neighbour and they would be liable to betray you to the Germans at the very first opportunity." Katchmersky stopped him: "The Poles sold their motherland, be careful of them, they wouldn't hesitate to sell you to the Germans for a slice of bread. Remember Judas Iscariot sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver." After this they were quiet for a time. They were genuinely sorry but unable to help me. I knew they would have helped me if they could. I accepted their statements. I knew what was happening. They were friends but also enemies. Yet hope dies hard. In spite of all my understanding I could not accept their final decision. I was deeply hurt. What misery is man! Couldn't they understand that it was a matter of life and death? I gnashed my teeth together - tears came into my eyes. I blinked to hide them.

I felt hopeless, overcome with despair. We stood with lowered eyes ashamed to look on the creatures in the shape of men. Had they been born to human values? I left them. Monkosa put his hand on my shoulder and said: "Be well, my friend" Katchmersky added: "G-d keep you safe."

In utter despair I dragged my feet to the Jewish tent ...

I had found a fresh cabbage leaf for Alderowitz. He had had a very good Polish education and knew Latin well: Sucking the leaf he said "Homo homini lupus."

I fell on the straw, my head turning. Hunger had bitten into me. I was suffering from nausea. The dysentry had also taken it out of me. I was washed out.

I went out dragging myself with the last bit of strength I had in me.

I had no hope of ever reaching the kitchen in our line...

There were six such lines ..... (Each national group had his own line to the kitchen).

In the long, long lines the figures stood bent over, wrapped in their battle dress, faded wrinkled. They were jumping to keep warm. The movement also helped to give vent to their impatience and frustration. Around them the guards were "keeping order", chasing, hitting or knocking down anyone in the way. Their heavy knobbed canes rose and fell .... rose and beat down at will wherever the head of a wrapped up soldier was in the way.

I went as usual to the Jewish line but without hope of ever getting anything. I saw Jews slipping away from the line and infiltrating into the Polish line. Some succeeded, some were dragged out to the accompaniment of blows raining down on their heads and bodies and thrown back to the Jewish line ...

I passed four different lines and came to the Bylo Russian line. Their language sounded like 'home'. From my childhood on I had known this dialect as well as I knew Yiddish. I listened nostalgically to their lisp and twang and the peculiar music of their speech, their way of talking and without being noticed I approached ..... They were the last in the line. They did not throw me out. They even let me in closer. They were depressed and spoke little. Now and again I made a remark using their tongue. The hunger we were suffering and our common tongue drew us together. They

responded to me. They had no idea I was Jewish. The soup was finished before we reached the tank and all our hopes of ever tasting anything vanished .....

We left the line and parted from them. But they invited us to join their company. They also called my Jewish friend who spoke bad Russian to join them. In the tent we fell on the straw. We looked for warmth from each others' bodies. We lay and sighed. We thought about the lack of hope. Three of our hosts were people from the village. Our hosts had left parents in their homes in Eastern Poland as well as their wives and children and arable land. They had not managed to gather in the harvest because of the call up to the army. Their faces were tired and wrinkled and they were tense and depressed.

After an hour of rest one got up, murmered something, felt in his pockets, turned it inside out and found dried cherry leaves with which he rolled a cigarette in thick paper. He suggested we all look in our pockets and we all found crumbs of rusks or some dry bread. We divided what we had equally. A morsel for each one. We also had a draw each from the cigarette. We tried to sleep but could not.

I closed my eyes and fell into a kind of slumber filled with strange ununderstandable dreams, full of threat. I was exhausted and fixed to the place, I could not move. I struggled to awake and escape the dark reality - to break and tear open the fog that was between me and the blurred reality. It was so near and yet so far; it did not allow anyone to touch it; to get to my parents' home and tell them about the terrible world. To put forth my complaints before them: Why had they never told me that one man could act so horribly and violently against his fellow man. Here I was 4 years old. It was after Shabbat in the dusk just before the lamps were lit. The stars were not yet in the sky. There was still light coming from the windows. Trees were blowing lightly

and moving near the windows and the shadows fell on the floor and the walls.

My father sat in the corner quietly humming a tune. My mother was walking up and down and in a sad voice repeated three lines of a poem in Yiddish and they meant one thing:

G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
The Holy Sabbath is passing
Also the week and the month.
Don't leave us in tension and hunger.
The second time I called
G-d in Heaven
Don't leave us in tension and hunger
Send Elizah the prophet to our house for
salt and bread
Don't leave us in tension and hunger.
I called for the third time, etc, ...

And as a child I wondered amazed in the darkness of the twilight, I was afraid of the shadows dancing on the walls. The tune continued and became deeper. The darkness spread to all parts of the room, the shadows became blurred and became dark blue masses. Heavy clouds came nearer within which there were fiery sparks shooting out. White teeth gnashed showing themselves more clearly. These were bears climbing on to me. The officer shouted : "Fire!" I remained alone. A bear raised his hairy paw. I began to shudder. I was face to face with the animal, I went backwards. Soon his hairy paw would be on me, and his steel helmet on which the death's head emblem was drawn. He chased me in a circle. I stumbled and fell. A terrible cry was stuck in my throat. I awoke broken. I found myself on the straw. What ailed me? I was thrown from one horror into another. I was shuddering and shaking with fear and cold. My neighbour covered me with his blanket . The dizziness did not leave me. A pain in my

chest disturbed me. My new friends moved, apparently not sleeping. After a long time they fell asleep.

The back is most sensitive to cold. I lay on my back to warm it. I looked round. Also here like in the Jewish tent they lay exhausted without strangth. But here the Germans did not come very often. In the centre stood people whispering, coming and going, buying and selling. Most P.O.W.'s here had jackets and long army coats and some even blankets. Here and there they knelt saying prayers, crossing themselves. They kissed the prayerbook and the little cross in the rosary. Then lay quietened.

It was already two weeks that I felt a constant wetness on my back. It seemed as if my tunic was wet from the rain and did not have a chance to dry out. But in the last few days I also felt an irritation. It seemed that the sores on my back had broken open and the pus had spread over my whole back. Nothing to be done. It was impossible to change or wash under these conditions. The last blow added to my troubles. The trouble got worse and was very worrysome. I saw black before my eyes. I never dreamt that such a thing could happen to me. I felt I would not overcome these sores. They ate into every healthy part of my body - I was putrifying alive.

My friends became aware of the fact that there were lice in the straw. Worried about this, everyone began to discuss what to do- how to get rid of them. They said that the straw had to be removed with the lice, not to cause typhus. Understandably the Germans were not to know about this. The thing frightened everyone.

I fell asleep for a minute and again I was tortured by nightmares. Again I woke up on a state of stupor. Every time I had a dream it left me in a very bad state, and disturbed my

psychological balance. It put me into a state of fear of extermination. The imaginative dreams and the realistic awareness came one on top of the other or the one in the other, until one did not know the difference between the terrible imagination or the horrible reality that was not less terrible. Suddenly I was startled. In the half-dream state I awoke to the sounds of the voices of the Ukranians: "Where are the Jews?" They had torches and lit up the prisoners. One of those lying down kicked a Ukranian in the face, jumped from his bed and shouted in anger: "Get out of here, if not I will kill you! We are hungry for bread and you are looking for Jews! You gorge our rations, you servants of the Germans, you devils." A fight started in the darkness. My nerves were tensed. I felt as if I was being burned up by the trouble taking place. I got up and shouted at them and was ready to take part in the fight. I was pulle backwards and fell onto the straw. It was my fair-haired friend next to whom I lay. He whispered into my ear and warned me severely "Don't interfere, lie quietly". The fight was stopped with the interference of the Germans who pulled some people out and they had not yet returned to the tent.

We were wet to the skin. Rain came in under the straw that welay on. The water flooded the low lying part of the tent and remained there. My friends and I went to a place a little higher up. In the new place I found an old ragged blanket. Because my coat had been stolen from me a short time before,this blanket was of great value to me, but during the night it began to itch and disturbed my sleep. I got fever and became weak. Opposite me sat P.O.W.'s naked to the waist bending over their tunics, looking for lice. I struggled not to lose my awareness of time and place. The irritation on my back unnerved me and I didn't know whether it came from the lice or the sores. So I was afraid to tell my friends about it. The sores spread so that I could neither

sit nor lie, but could only keep a half crouching position. I knelt, while my head was on the ground. I moved back and forth like a baby. My friend said: "Hopodi G-d" and cried to himself. The blond one tossed from side to side, sighed deeply, cursing the Germans. In the middle of the tent people whispered together planning mischief, crying was heard and moaning and rustling in the straw. I could not go out. From there one heard shouts and curses in German. The sound of beating and moaning and shooting came from all sides. Suddenly the sound of Halt reverberated near and far. An old prisoner was crying bitterly (How terrible it is to hear an old man crying about the loss of the coat that could warm his body in sleep). Everyone woke and began to examine their belongings. Another saw that his bag with bread was missing. His neighbour who had lain next to him for 2 days was the culprit.

I did not fall asleep. A few days before I had been beaten and my festering sores had all reopened. In waves the pain came and went. Every second throbbed, my flesh contracted expanded. The pain from the sores pulsated on all sides. The pain gripped me in a vice, burning in deeper, cutting into me and breaking me. For a minute there was rest and again I was gripped in a vice of pain.

Though I was with strangers and good people who didn't know where I came from, I felt even more deserted and helpless than when I had been amongst the Jews, and at the mercy of everyone. With my last strength I tried to control myself and stupify my senses and stop the wave of suffering that hit me from time to time. I shut my mouth not to let out a moan or groan. I fell into a faint on the straw. I awoke late in the night when it was pitch dark.

The evildoers of the night came out of their hiding-places and their eyes bagan to flash in the night darkness like cats. They began to smell out their helpless victims,

the Jews, and attack them. Many of the minorities took part in this violence. The sponsors in this activity were the Ukranians. The fact that they themselves had been defeated kept them from attacking during the light of day, but in the shades of darkness many took part in the looting. The desire for the last clothes of the Jews overcame all shame and qualms of conscience. Their brutality to the Jews continued till the light of day. They found Jews hiding among the Poles, pulled them out, laughing the while with amusement and malice. They took off their jackets and coats and handed their victims over to the Germans. Only the Polish civilians in the camp when they saw this brutality would curse the perpetrators for what they did.

Ho! Dank and terrible nights, what horrors and terrors they hid! The faint morning light spread into the tent. The day was approaching.

Cold wind came up from the sea, blew and whistled and smothered the cries of the tortured. Clouds piled up in the morning light and covered the morning sky casting fear and terror. Thick fog wrapped around everything preventing one from seeing anything.

The P.O.W.'s lay tense and suppressed. If at first they had spoken politics or looked for food, now they lay quiet. It was the 4th day without food. Whenever they brought a field kitchen, thousands were in the line but the soup was guzzled quickly by the bold and shameless and the more timid would go back to the tent without anything, miserable and broken. So it went every day. As it was, the Jews had their own line but here, too, the bolder, stronger, non-Jews would push in and grab the lot.

There was also dysentry in the non-Jewish tent. They lay weak and ill on the straw unable to move, soiling themselves

where they lay. There were those who passed away in silence on the straw.

My friends and I decided to go out every four hours to look for food and smokes. But we did not find anything.

After there was a stock of coats from Jews and from the dead the exchange for bread began. The importers were the cooks. They would go out and bring back food from the kitchen. In this way they brought bread and tinned food and sold it at fancy prices. Understandably only a few got it. Many could not eat it. Thousands remained hungry.

The camp was full of German soldiers and SS. They were busy making order. One saw them in every corner of the camp. Near every tent, near every field kitchen, near the gates of the camp.

Wherever they were, they left behind them hurt or wounded or shot Jews who were dragged from Polish forests from Shedlitze and Tzechanov and suffered a great deal. A man was shot and bleeding and already his shoes were taken off. They left the corpse in underpants. The Ukranians would scratch among the lot; when they found a Jew they left him completely naked. Naked in the eyes of all it would lie there for a few days. This of course, with the knowledge of the Germans. They would point with laughter at the corpse and at the sign of the covenant of Abraham. They would put a sign next to the corpse on which was written : "These are the circumsized Jew-boys."

In Stalag Al the looting passed all limits. All restraints that there had been previously were thrown off completely now. In the name of his religion every group saw it as a duty to rob the Jew. Among Christians the saying was : "Hitler, the messenger of G-d was sent to punish the descendants of Judas Ishkariot, the traitor. " The extremism of nationalism and religious fanatism was strengthened. Liberals or free thinkers, and there were

somein all the groups as I knew them - remained quiet. On the contrary everyone became a more fervent nationalist. This was his protection so that the Germans would not suspect them of having ideas of Jews or Communists. In short, all the Slavs were believers in "Jesus". The Nazis who were anti-religious respected the religious declaration of the prisoners. This helped them to differentiate between Jew and non-Jew. The Jews remained outsiders.

In their religion and race they were isolated, they were without human values in the eyes of the others. They had no mercy and brotherhood and none was given them. They were deviations from G-d. Jesus the tortured was imprinted in the forehead of every Jew. So they were alone and cursed. The German, man of culture, proved this beyond doubt by his action now. The life of the Jew was there for everyone to take.

This was now accepted by the Christians. Now they were convinced after 2000 years of having the right to destroy them. The Germans would throw them out, isolate them and this was now done in the camp. Now even the Christian prisoners did not want Jews among them. This disinclination became part of the entire camp and even became a superstition, as if there was something dangerous in the Jewish tent and line that could bring disaster to others and disease could spread from them. Even when one looked at them, their broken down appearance could bring misfortune to the others. But in their heart of hearts there was the fear that they could reach such a situation themselves.

When the Jew was naked and nothing more could be taken from him the groups began to fight each other. Each national group began to praise itself and to deprecate its neighbour. Each in the name of its religion even though they were all Christians, those of different churches began to praise his faith, his nation, and to him his euphorious rich language. They spoke of their fair land and rich earth.

Every national group began to accuse the other of historical atrocities in the past. This heaped flames on burning embers which caused fights between the different groups.

So I saw the minorities in a state of retreat. All liberal ideas that time had brought were wiped away and they were back in the dark ages. The lessons of the past, the misfortunes of fighting were all forgotten and the new ideas of liberation and socialism became obsolete. The axe sawyed and ruled over them. Fights broke out amongst the groups and this was what the Germans wanted.

My friends and I continued with our tiring tours of the camp. We were stopped each time by groups arguing about politics. We left them with sad hearts.

Here we found a group arguing lustily and lively. Each one in his own language yet able to understand the others. After arguement, one began to talk in Ukranian: "Know you Poles, we are the chosen ones here. Our future lies with the Germans and we'll help bring "order" in this camp." One shouted to him: "It won't help if you aid the Germans or not, we'll all rot together in this camp. They won't release you before the others." The tall Ukranian with black eyes was angered and said: "We are the descendants of the "Zaparodge" (a city South East of Ukraine having a tradition of being racially extremist) bearers of religion and nationalism. In the wars we were famous for our heroism. We will be established again by the Germans. With the defeat of the Poles and the Jews the time of the Ukranians will come again and the Black Earth will be triumphant. The earth that was robbed and humiliated will flourish. We will be masters of the fruitful earth.

My blond friend seeing Bylo Russians in the group and banking on protection shouted "Just as hair will grow on the palm of my hand, so will the Germans give you an independant Ukraine." The atmosphere became tense, fists were raised, and my friend with

the blue eyes signed to us to move away.

The area of the camp site had been farming land for vegetables, clover, and cattle fodder. We went to an area where we had not put up tents. We found withered and rotten sugar beets, and ate until we vomited, but we had wet our lips with the juice of the withered root. I suffered from hunger and sores and anxiety. I was tortured by this yet found no relief Likewise my friends were depressed by what we had seen together during the hours we had been together. We were quiet. The older man said: "Were Hitler to taste what was in my heart now, he would be poisoned on the spot." We did not speak, we preserved silence. We kept our curses within our hearts. I would like to tell about my two friends, the blond, blue-eyed fellow, with whom I passed most of the years of captivity, and the older one with dark hair, green eyes and with a depressed, sad face with whom I also spent many years of struggle, misfortune and hard labour. Both were Bylo Russians, orthodox Christians (The Germans registered them as "Greek Catholics.")

We stopped for a while in front of the tent. Both of them looked at me for a long time as if they had caught on to the dangerous secret I held within myself. They wanted to talk but realised that silence was better. Completely discouraged we went into the tent, moved the straw which was infested with lice. I fell on the the moist earth. An inner force strengthened and cut me off from my silence and I uttered what was within my heart. It was an expression of what was within me. It flooded my being with a wave of righteousness and honesty: "Earth you are tolerant, quiet, listen and wait. You absorb many things. You don't discriminate between the bad and the good. Both the upright and the sinners walk on you. Everyone is sustained from your bread and salt. Both the good and the bad. Some enjoy more, others less. In the end you gather them all in your arms. All are equal to you, those with bowed heads, those who express sorrow, and those who feel remorse. Oh, Earth, you are good and quiet.

Stop my ability to discern; blank my senses. Stop my feeling, make me blind and deaf. Open your arms and take me into your lap. Cover me up so that I can disappear forever as if I had never been and hadn't heard nor seen what the scoundrels and men of evil have done on your face. Hide me deep within your bosom as if I had never lived and let no sign of my onetime existence be seen on you. I would be released from my sorrow and pain. I would be freed from my deep distress and hopeless vain expectations. I would be free from this horror now and forever. I would gather myself unto you and become a grain of sand. I would be a worm that crawls on its stomach. I would be part of your great body. Perhaps I will provide food for a beautiful brightly colored fragrant flower that could touch someone's heart. The craglet would hold both dew and tears as if sadness and smiles were contained within it. Perhaps a man would see it and be touched by its innocence and beauty. Perhaps it would bring forth a hidden hope of love and goodness."

My meditations quietened me and made it easier for me to accept my end stoically. But I was not released from my troubles and I remembered the distant past. It seemed that somewhere in my memories I relived my mother's stories.

Soft and weak I was pushed out into the light of the world. I burst forth into the world with a sharp cry, I choked in my crying, and at once I was placed on her soft bosom. I slumbered, I slept in her warm arms which protected me from anxiety of what was to come. Afterwards high, deep blue skies covered my childhood. The twittering of birds and the murmering of the stream next to our home was part of the atmosphere. The stream flowed day and night and disappeared into the distance. Father, serious as always, taught me to believe in the G-d of Israel and the traditions of our race. I learnt about the G-d of anger and goodness who protected his own people. Father, it was, who taught me to perform the mitzvot, to believe in the goodness of

men where he is a man. Mother taught me again and again: "My son, don't call him a goy, it is insulting and don't hate men no matter if they are Jews or Christians. Everyone is equal in the eyes of the Lord." In her life experience she learned that it was nonsense to hate people." Oneday a man may hate another for some passing thing and the next day he would turn into a friend. It is better therefore not to hate."

From the youth movement I absorbed the best of the fragrances of the spring blossoms. I strived for the highest and the best in love and happiness. These things made me yearn for the past. In the magic Bylo Russian nights I saw myself in the hills of the Galil or in the Jezreel Valley under the skies of Canaan. In that yearning I found my peace of mind. Everything was an illusion. Every beauty of the chosen people and their G-d were weakened and humiliated in the eyes of the Gentiles. They were trampled and crushed. It was empty vanity.

I was so weak that every time I thought of my past I became tired and started shaking. The events of the recent past left a deep impression on me, had sunk into my subeonscious never to be eradicated. Every slumber, no matter how light was filled with nightmares. It brought back scenes from the past. The events of my childhood were interwoven with the recent battles I had fought and these were stamped indelibly on my soul. I was a slave to the nightmares. It was as if I was tied with ropes and could not get free. The dreams were master over me and tortured me. It appears that I lay for a long time. I was feverish. My blond friend bent over me and pulled the blanket over me to keep me warm. I opened my eyes and he asked in a whisper: "Drużzek druch (good friend) what is your name?" "Theophile", I answered almost immediately. In order; "Apparently you were crying in your sleep. Be quiet; also our friend Vasiel was crying." After a short time I answered:" I am going mad with pain and I don't know how to lie."

"Yes, be strong, druch, perhaps tomorrow we'll manage to get some hot soup." After a minute I asked him: "And what is your name?"

"My name is Pavluk", answered the blond one. We remained quiet but alert for a long while, while our eyes looked into space. My body covered with sores was prickly and as if being pinched. My friend Pavluk sighed. Vasielie turned from side to side. He was kicking the earth and in a weak voice said: "Bradki (brothers) my end is approaching. I left two little girls at home. I will die of hunger in a strange land."

After a few minutes he quoted a few lines from a Russian poet:

" ..... I would like to sleep and slumber
and not the sleep of the cold grave ..... "

and added: "Before my death I would like to see the fall of satan with my own eyes."

My suffering brought me to despair. I had no prospect of healing my sores without medical treatment. I foresaw my future. I would slowly die or some German would put an end to my life: I made a supreme effort, ground my teeth together, to overcome the pain, and fell asleep.

I awoke to the sound of whistling bullets, single shots and batteries of shots from all sides. The bullets made holes in the tent and one hit a prisoner. There was the sound of running feet and a shout of "halt" and wimpering, with whispering inside and out.

Suddenly the Germans burst in, flashed lights in every corner and stepped on the sleeping bodies of the prisoners. They were looking for Jews. In front of them ran big thin dogs, panting and smellingout everyone lying there - as was said, the dogs were trained to smell out Jews. I heard German and Ukranian being spoken. My friends held their breath. I

paid no attention to them. My pain began to worry me again. I was dizzy and fell asleep again.

I dreamt I had fallen into the waters of the river Bug. All the soldiers crossed the river swimming, but I got into a whirlpool. My comrades reached the bank but I was pulled downwards. I tried to keep my head above water, using arms and legs, I threw my body forward but the whirlpool was terrible. It was black and bubbling, the bank was faraway and there was no-one to save me. With one hand I took off the bullets that were round my waist. Fish with sharp fins surrounded me. Underneath me was a deep, open cavern. The water came up to my nose and throat. My breath stopped and I was dragged into the world of these creatures. In their open jaws I saw sharp white teeth. They attacked me and I kicked at them while holding my breath. They retreated, waiting for me and I kicked at them holding my breath the while. They retreated, waiting for me. I saw green water plants and plenty of green leaves from water plants. I sank down on the green leaves and stood on them and on the slimy frogs there. It disgusted me and I found myself on the bank of the stream near my parents' home. I was 5 years old, lying on the grass, surrounded by flowers which covered me and looking through the stems and watching the water foam and turn the mill wheel. The water splashed and broke into a million bubbles. The foam flowed away,separated and came together again joyfully farther on and flowed and splashed quickly seemingly gay over smooth pebbles. It flowed and splashed till it disappeared from sight. It saddened me not to be able to see them any more. They amused me with the mischievious jumping and splashing and filled my innocent being with joy. I felt as if I had lost something precious and it hurt me. I ran along the bank, rushed on to be able to catch sight of the foam which my eyes had followed along the path of the stream. In vain they vanished and did not

return. I was sad and longed to have it. I heard the voice of my mother calling me. I ran to her crying, telling her of my loss. I fell into her arms, perhaps she could help me. I tried to cross the stream where the water was shallow. I stood on a smooth stone and fell into a deep hole. I awoke again, stunned Pavluk bending over me, said : "Be quiet 'druch mois' (my friend)". Vasiel lifted his head, touched my forehead, in amazement: "Brother you are feverish."

I heard how they were asking for water from the others for their sick friend. It took them a long time till they collected it. Vasielie put the water to my lips. I knew that they were also thirsty and I would not drink until they had drunk and they each took a few mouthfuls. Then I wet my dry burning lips. I held a mouthful in my burning mouth. It was like a drop of water on red hot iron. The mouthful took me out of my bad dream for a while. After that my face again fell on the earth with a deep thirst and desire to drink freely from the waters of the stream. My face was wet apparently from tears, I whispered a prayer and united with my second self, with the G-d of truth and justice, with the G-d of the conscience that is hidden somewhere within the weak .....

It was not the "G-d of Vengeance" but the G-d who listens to the heartstrings of the righteous who unites with the outcasts; that tragic soul within the depths of man and again the time and place became befogged as in a dream. It was a fine clear day filled with sunshine and I was completely free of troubles enjoying peace and happiness. Suddenly I heard my mother's voice calling. I rushed across the stream, slipped and fell into the well under the millwheel. I kicked away the hungry monsters and managed to get to the bank. I gripped it and I found myself under an overturned cart which a German mortar shell had hit. On the side a wounded harnessed horse was lying. His long, thin legs were shaking. One eye was

open and he was breathing heavily from his nostrils and groaning and his loose underlip was shaking like that of a man with a paralysed face. The horse tried to raise its head above its big body but could not. I shouted: "Fellows we will crawl across the road."

I opened my eyes. It was quiet in the tent, only sighs and murmers could be heard. I felt nauseous and had stomach pains and my two friends felt the same. Vasiel spoke to me in a whisper: "Theophile you apparently spoke in your sleep in an ununderstandable language ..... (He meant Yiddish). Be careful", he warned me. From then on my friends did not doubt my origin.

It was about 8 o'clock in the morning. The camp was awake and people were busy looking for food in all kinds of places. Scratching in the rubbish heaps they examined every peel without taste. Tasted and swallowed and a part was spat out. The chief aim of everyone was to have a piece of bread or swallow some hot soup. To fill the mouth, the body, to have the feeling of satisfaction of having eaten and drunk. The aim of breaking the feeling of hunger, it was not important how, caused distortion in the character and soul of a person, it caused egocentricism and isolation from his fiends.

To walk about the camp like an animal who can cause trouble for his fellow men. With that I would not say that hunger could cause a situation like that. Alderowitz, my two friends and I came to the conclusion that in order to remain alive in that mad place we should organise a group of five or six people, a closed circle of friends to have protection from violent attackers.

In the afternoon hours we got the news that we were to get enough soup so that everyone could get some. Within an hour six soup kitchens were brought to the camp, each placed

100 meters away from the other. At first the prisoners stood waiting tensely. The Germans had not yet opened the covers of the containers and one could only smell the soup in the air. The longer the people waited, the more they crowded together and pushed and hit each other. The line did not move. Those at the back began to push their way forward to the front of the line. As was usual in cases like this, the Germans continued to arrange and make order, this time in the lines. They arranged the prisoners in threes and fours, counted and straightened the lines dealing out blows with the butts of their revolvers. When they did not succeed in straightening the line and the numbers of people didn't tally with the number of rations, they hit the heads of the prisoners blindly without discrimination. The more they counted the more people there were for the amount of rations and the chaos increased. In the end the famous order of the Germans was obliterated and taken from their hands.

The SS officers stood some distance away with feet apart. They had angry looks on their faces; they were tense holding on to their holsters in silence. The 'Wachmänner' were afraid of those above them, the 'sergeants' and the 'sergeants' in turn feared the officers. They lost their nerve, they hit out right and left at everything and everyone that came within their reach. They had sticks, pieces of rough wood, coshes and heavy canes.

In the meantime the limits between the six lines were obliterated. Prisoners from the adjoining camp broke through the barbed wire and joined the 'scramble'. The 'Wachmanner' were pushed into the crowds. They were tripped up by piles of prisoners without being able to act. Now the crowds were freer. The pressure towards the soup containers increased. At that moment the Germans brought in SS cavalry riders. It is in the nature of horses to stop before trampling people either standing or lying. The SS spurred the horses, urging

them on, and tried to scatter them by hitting out with whips and sticks.

The dishing out of food was not important at that moment. Hunger pressed the people forward, the steam from the soup excited the people and increased the pressure till it was impossible to control it. The crowd formed one big mass in spite of the SS horsemen which the crowd paid no attention to They did not run, they rushed on to the containers and overturned them. The food was spilt and the bread, and marmalade was spread and scattered over the area. The SS officers gave a signal and opened fire on the crowd and after them came the riders and the infantry. In spite of many being hurt, the prisoners did not run quickly. People piled up fighting for the food. They drank the hot soup from the ground. Ten people grabbed one loaf of bread, fought for it and crushed it to crumbs. They licked the margarine and jam from the ground. This happened while prisoners were lying wounded on the ground. When, however, they heard the moaning of the wounded, the prisoners started running to every corner of the camp and left behind them earth, food and death. When the Jews who were standing in their line saw what was going to happen and were afraid that the Germans would use it as a reason to attack them, they ran away from the place. After the disturbance the Ukranians came out of their hiding places and said that the Jews were to blame. The SS entered the Jewish tent and began beating the people there. They entered the tents of the Poles and began beating them as well. They did the same in the tents of the Bylo Russians. The fate of the Jews, however, was the worst.

We lay deserted in our tent without any hope or help. The steam of the soup was in the air and added to our hunger. For a long time the prisoners spoke about the violence of the Germans but they had no-one to complain to. The feeling of all the peoples, except for the Ukranians, was that they had

"fallen into trouble". Many were disappointed in their expectations of the Germans. Those who were believers had the only comfort. They poured their hearts out before Jesus of Nazareth, because who would know about suffering and torture more than He. He would understand their sorrow and answer their prayers.

A man knelt opposite me for a full hour. He was completely absorbed in his prayer book. On one hand he held the prayer book, in the other the rosary with the cross. As he finished a prayer he would kiss the crucifix and then continue. He raised and lowered his voice and in the end spoke with great expressiveness: "May your name be holy and may your kingdom reign. Give us thisday our daily bread and forgive us our tresspasses as we forgive them that tresspass against us." He read the prayer a few times and after a while he read: "Don't kill, don't steal, don't bear false witness. And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love of one's fellow man does not need hatred or wrath ... G-d we thank Thee." I thought about the familiar words. So, more or less it is written in the Torah. In Pirkei Avot . So our wise ones expressed their ideas. In the same way my people prayed. The entreaties and the pleadings of the "believers" and the non-believers (Jews) were practically the same. All the prayers came from Man's feelings from his weakness and pain which is expressed in his wishes, his meekness and humbleness, in his condemnation of sorrow and injustice and it is all in the strain of repentance and piety.

Perhaps under different circumstances I would have gone to the man, taken his hand, and said: "My brother, in this way my people, the Jews, pray. We are all to be pitied. If so know that sorrow is the misery and sadness that we all share. Let us repent of our bad deeds. We who are all in need of good deeds." People lay without talking. Silence

pervaded. Peoples thoughts were far away in their homes and with their families. Suddenly the silence was broken. One of the people attacked his friend and began to choke him, to bite his ears and the nape of his neck. It caused a disturbance and shouts reverberated. They overpowered the disturbed man with difficulty. He had become mad with hunger and threw him out of the tent. Things like this often happened in the tent and outside. Again people lay quietly. Everyone suspicious of his neighbour. Perhaps he was planning mischief and would attack him in hunger madness. However, we decided to defend ourselves with our last strength in any similar case. We lay tense, covered by one blanket. A few hours later our tent was again disturbed. There was shouting: "Where are the Jews?". Someone pointed to one of those lying. The attackers jumped on him and took off his shoes. This incident roused most of the people in the tent. When the attackers were about to leave, the man, who had prayed, was lying opposite me. He got up and pointed to me, "Here lies a Jew boy, take him. Because of the Jewish unbelievers pure Christian blood was spilt to-day." The attackers grabbed me by the legs and began to take off my shoes. Instinctively I kicked their faces and my friends at once came to my aid, and threw them out of the tent. One of the prisoners went to the informer, grabbed him and shook him, shouting: "To whom were you praying all the time, to the German saviour? Traitor Judas!" It became clear to me later that the informer was an older man who had been mobilised from reserve duty and he was a Catholic fanatic from Eastern Poland. In these last days three more people had joined up with us. We were therefore a group of seven people. We made a pact to protect each other from thieves, attackers and deviators. We would look for food together and for something to smoke.

I want to tell about a group of friends whose friendship

began in the camp. It was the most difficult time of my sojourn there.

Pavluk Kudashov: Young, good hearted and optimistic and rebellious. From a Provoslav Bylo-Russian family.

Vasiel Gursky: A reserve soldier of Provoslav tradition. Had absorbed Bylo-Russian and Russian culture to a great extent.

Pavel Gal: A Polish Catholic and a reserve officer. Was wounded near Modlin near Warsaw. A noble soul had absorbed Russian Polish culture.

Michal: A reserve soldier had left a wife and children in his home in Polesia. Was openhearted and had a great deal of practical common sense and wisdom.

Idzef: The oldest of us all, Catholic, a clever man, was of Bylo- Russian and Polish culture. A man from the area in which I was born.

Alderowitz: A Jew from Eastern Poland of Polish Russian Culture.

In addition to those mentioned there were many others, many of whom were connected to me (I will still write about them). Some for good and some to my disadvantage. The latter made life very difficult for me. About myself, I have this to say. From my childhood I was brought up to love my fellow man. During the war I had to fight fiercely as every war demands and especially as the son of a people who was

persecuted and at the mercy of every flotsam and jetsum and the scum of the earth. The sentence of my people was clear. They had no rights on this earth.

My friends went to look for food and came back empty handed. They were worried and their despair increased as time went on. I told them: "Fellows, from what I can see the German-s intend to starve us to death."

Michal remained optimistic: After a short silence he answered: "Even if we starve more days I am telling you Bradki (brothers), the most important are the bones. There will still be meat in the future. My feeling is that we won't remain in this condition forever." After some thought he added: "Perhaps I could sell my coat. I could get a loaf of bread and tobacco for it. As we said in Polesia. The dry bread will stop our hunger and the tobacco will dull our minds." I was against selling the coat." We are on the verge of winter and the coat is a great thing. I have learnt that from my own experience. Better for you to have it for yourself. Let us be hungry rather than lose the covering for the body." The others were also against Michal's suggestion.

My health was the worst of the lot. Just recently I had found this company and I was already a burden to them. I felt this and I felt I had to speak the truth. They looked at me in sorrow. I understood that their consciences would not let them leave me. After a silence I confessed: "Know that I have sores on my whole body. My back is covered with pus. There is irritation between my fingers and toes. Without medical aid it won't get better but to go to the doctor is like committing suicide." Also Vasiel admitted that he had nits in the hairy parts of his body. Michal interrupted and said: "I will tell you about my experience (He always had long stories to tell from past experience and knew how

to fit them to present conditions)" Before I married I worked in the city. As you know the city has many "prostitutes". From one of these I caught "parasites". What did I do? I rubbed my body with kerosene. My skin burned like a flame, but I got rid of the insects to this very day." With his story he lightened our depression and we smiled.

It is true that hunger pressed us, and I felt how I was going under from hour to hour. I became very thin like a little skeleton. Also Kadashov became very thin and when I looked at him I saw myself. We were all very embittered. They lay and cursed the world and all the saints. As they said curses were a form of relief from the anger that was built up. The curse was sent in the belief that it would fall on the name of the person or saint. I had had enough of it already during the war when I saw women and children in the open fields who were looking for shelter from fire and when I heard Jewish women and their children crying. I saw my family, and in my heart was a prayer of peace for the unfortunates - I cursed the murderers. But my curses did not help me and the many Jews and did not stop the tears of the children and the bereaved women. The curses did not fall on the Germans. The tears dried in the wind. And the foundations of the world were broken down. In the end it was the German who laughed. Laughter of mockery and victory, wild and demented. That was why I was indifferent. Curses did not relieve my depression and I was quiet. I lay on the ground and asked for relief of my sufferings. In the end the earth quietens the sufferings of man. Wipes it from his face and makes him forget. Mans' sufferings do not justify his existence. The pleasure of life, the brightness and happiness of joy are so short in comparison to the deep sufferings and pain that man has to go through. Actually it was not important to me at that moment what the reason for the sufferings were and who caused it to happen. If it was

the German who was the perpetrator of the sentence on his own or if it was the Evil One who had to punish humanity for its sins as my Christian friends said - or perhaps the words of the prophets were fulfilled : "That they will be cleansed in a fire like burning iron until they were free of blame." Was there a possibility of being judged by anybody? Could one find someone to listen to our troubles ? Someone to whom I could lay forth my sufferings, my complaints and my anger that I was absolutely justified in? If I did not succeed in persuading Him and justice was based on worthiness and had nothing to do with the feelings of man, could I show Him that I was innocent. Could I measure myself up to it? Could I break the iron fist that pressed down. Even that I struggled at the front and did not succeed. As a son of a people without aid or help I was without aid and helpless. It was clear that Justice was with the power of the whip. The despot and his rulers were the righteous in their bad deeds. Look, people were supporting them who were able to listen to the cry.of the oppressed. And what remained was only the grievance against the day I had been born.

Lonliness and helplessness gripped me and left me in deep despair and suddenly I began to curse with the deepest curses there was against myself and my parents.

"Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said: There is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkness. Let not G-d regard it from above neither let the light shine upon it .....

..... Because it was not upon the doors of my mothers womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes ."
"Why died I not from the womb - why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly, why did the knees pre-

vent me or why did the breasts that I should suck

Job 3 Verse 3-10,11,12

These were the words that I said once without hesitation. They fitted my condition and I identified with every word. They were cut into my body and I accepted this truth as an expression of my regret as a fact of life. Because both mans existence and living is a mistake. The truth discovered my weakness and the weakness of all men. Man ignores the essence of his weakness and fear that is hidden deep within his soul. I studied the book of Job as a boy. I then did not understand it. I would go back to it because of the sadness of the rythm in it. I did not wish to understand the realism but it did not help. The words of Job left points to think over. They embedded themselves in my memory and the catastrophe touched my heart. I was young and healthy, gay and rebellious of the social ideas accepted at the time. The ideas of weakness and pain did not touch me deeply at the time. I rejected the work then. I tried to forget the words of Job but they did not go from me. Suddenly I saw nature distorted. I saw leaves hanging downward instead of standing out straight and fresh. The flowers in the garden began to droop. Perhaps then some of the lonliness and helplessness that freezes a man to inaction touched me then and he sees the darkness that awaits him. I shook off these thoughts. Golden lights penetrated me. The flowers with their many colours blinded me. They vibrated before my eyes. They refreshed me and gave me pleasure. They encouraged me and made me shake off the depression that the words of Job caused me and I loved the variagated colours in Nature and every creature living increased my wonder. Could a youth who grew up beneath the skies come to a stage where he would curse the day of his birth?

My lying on the damp earth tortured by the sores that were on my back made me meditate again and again; when I

was born I brought joy to my parents. They had great hopes for me. Now I saw them as victims of an illusory existence. They themselves pass on the misconceptions to the next generations. Oh, if I could now have seen my mother! if I could have told her of the black heart of man I could break her belief in man which she conceived of in her daily life. To my friends I would say not for us the lily blooms in the spring and to the elders I would have shouted: "The G-d of Israel is helpless. Leave the Chosen People both the people and the G-d have been humiliated and ground to dust. The shouts of the Jews from the burning town reached the heavens to the highest conscience. "Would he be shocked? Would he raise his voice before the monster would reach Eastern Poland?"

What is suffering and crying of mothers and children who are fainting from cold and hunger? What is desertion and helplessness? Listen to the pariah, the untouchable that whimpers on the wild lonely roads. Listen to the bird going down and circling her nest again and again looking for her young ones that are lost. Listen, and you will hear the strings of your heart reverberating and you will shudder.

I remembered very clearly the recent past. It was about a month ago near the city of Poltusk when our company dug in on the side of the wood. We camouflaged the mortars very well. With taut nerves we waited expectantly to get the Germans. In front of us stretching out for kilometers were the fields. At the moment all was wrapped in mist. Directly in front of our position was a piece of land enclosed by barbed wire, there was deep clover field in the area from which dew drops were glistening. Here and there a bee was buzzing. Suddenly in the thick mist of the morning we saw figures of men stretched out about two kilometers. They were creeping up quietly. Many German figures were approaching growing bigger and more numerous before our eyes. We let them

approach to within a short distance. The Germans con
dently came up and stormed us. Our fire cut down the
front line. The dead and wounded hanging onthe barbe
wire, heads down completely helpless. The wires move
vibrating from the weights on them. They got entangl
in the wire and died there. Those following ran back
But the Prussians did not give up and shot at our pos
tion for a long time. After the bombardment a second
wave tried to attack us. They managed to cut the wir
and began to storm us shouting "hurrah!". They were
down. They lay in the clover with arms outstretched.
still managed to scrape the earth with their noses.
stiff legs hit on the earth. In the end they lay sti
We threw over the bodies of the swastika heroes, empt
their pockets and found loot taken from Jews and Pole
and pictures of their families. I kicked the German
bodies. They seemed pathetic, without value. They d
not move again. So useless their previous boasting s
I looked back and saw a heavily wounded soldier. He
been hit in the stomach. He was begging "Kamerad Was
I took out my water bottle and though I loathed him I
"Will you drink water from a Jew?" He fell back and
paler, then looked at me and repeated in a weak voice
"Kamerad Wasser". My company comrades called to me:"
him to the devil. Give him shit, not water."

The bodies were like sieves pumped with holes.
faces were cut to pieces by our grenades. They gurgl
and lay in the red blood (not blue) and in their spil
guts. The bodies had no value as they / lay in the field
clover. As they had held themselves proudly before d
so they were beastly rumps after death.

In the distance we saw the third wave of infantry
storming but I ran back to our position. When I look
at the field again a sad thought filled me: In two ho

the sun will have dried their blood, stink would arise the bodies. The same sun would dry the dew and the bee go round the bodies and buzz and suck from the flowers drop the sweet honey.

Our soldiers rushed to take our dead. As I said t Germans stormed a third time. They bombarded us for an Trees broke and fell, stones and earth and branches spl up together. The woods and the clover were pitted with Dust and earth covered us.

We retreated quickly and took our dead and wounded us. The badly wounded begged us not to leave them to f into the hands of the Germans but we did not succeed in ting everybody.

I fell asleep. I had a long deep sleep. Michal w me. Pavel and Michal had returned from outside and had sold something of theirs to get "Machorka". Michal roll three cigarettes half for everyone, and said to me: "Smo Druch, wake up a bit." I breathed the smoke deeply into lungs. I sucked more and more. I got onto my feet. I in even yet more and moved like a drunkard. I was fille with courage. My indifference and weakness left me. I sucked until the end of the half piece and a ray of ligh penetrated my depressed soul. It wakened me and put hea into me. It remained with me a full day. I waited for opportunity and hoped I would still remain on my feet an here the moment arrived. I felt that I was starting to under. Without fear that my "cursed weakness" would be covered and with the desire to pay back the "pious praye I pressed my fingers into his face and burst our: "Where the prayer?" I shouted and added a curse in Russian, I shouted loudly in an unusual voice and a hot wave passed over my face and tears of anger were pricking in my eyes and I wanted to settle accounts with him if it was the l thing I did.

"Where is the prayer?" I shouted again and shook with
I looked for the fellow and he wrapped himself in his b
The prisoners in the tent were amazed at my daring but
outburst. (As I learnt later my outburst made it more ce
that I was not a Jew). I jumped on him and hit him wit
right fist while my left hand clutched his throat. My
took me away from him and brought me back to the place
I was lying saying especially Josef: "Be quiet Zimlak"(
my area) in Bylo Russian. "He has got what he deserved.
of hypocritical informers we all suffer and we will sti
suffer." He made me lie down and covered me as I was
with cold and anger. Michal spoke in his strong, mockin
voice, speaking in broken Polish in spite of the fact th
he had served in the reserves for the second time. He
to us but he intended that the whole tent should hear: "
you understand fellows, when the Pole must defend his hc
land he is as scared as a rabbit; he raises his hands an
surrenders. What is he to do then? Kneel down, raise hi
eyes to heaven and begin to murmer, murmer and kneel til
he doesn't understand what he is saying. Instead of acc
himself he accuses others who fought for him with all th
heart and soul. Now when the Polish knights have clippe
their wings, new heroes appear; Ukranians, Knights of
Zaparoges fight in the barbed wire of prisoners camps."
People chuckled, someone in the tent shouted in Ukranian
"You can mock as much as you want, but we will have inde
endence. Listen here, the Germans are very clean. To
stupid who have lots of crawly things in their heads the
will not give independance. Your fate will be to sit st
in the corner and kill fleas. Under the best circumstan
if you are an obedient horse you will carry bags of pota
till you fall over."

A wave of laughter followed. He expressed himself loudly so that he could be heard in the whole tent. He

spoke like the farmer from the swamps of Polesia. A man of experience he contradicted their ideas.with mockery. There were different natinnalities in the tent, some received his words with disatisfaction but did not argue with him or touch him. On the contrary, he interested them and they listened to his honest opinions and found much truth in his words.

Michal was of medium height, broad-boned and sturdy, like a tree-trunk rooted in the swampy ground, used to hardship. His ruddy face always covered the paleness and sadness that stretched from nose to chin. He always spoke slowly and wisely and showed no anger.against hecklers but he did not accept them willingly. However, when he answered his adversaries it was to the point.

I was comforted by him and satisfied myself with the good that was in the man. Michal gave me another roll of cigarette and said: "Smoke under the blanket. It will be warm and you will feel better." He smiled and wanted to ease the tension that had been produced. He thought for a minute and prepared to tell something on the subject of smoking. A touching story that reminded him of simple home in the swamps of Polesia. He lowered his eyes and painfully, with a bitter smile, he began: "Brothers, I remember getting home from work after a hard days' work, cutting fodder for the farmer. My wife was standing at the door eagerly awaiting me. The children were rushing about pleased to see me. But I came into the hut tensed and angry and shouted at my wife and threw the children out. I hadn't enough bread for them. I sat at the table, rolled a cigarette and inhaled and exhaled and the sharp thick smoke filled the house and hung in the air like an autumn fog on a pasture field early in the morning. After an hour I calmed down and said good naturedly to my family: My dear, eat what I have

brought in the meantime. The farmer has not yet paid me my full wage. He must have lost at cards yesterday." Michal stopped for a moment and chuckled pleasantly. "now with the conquest of our area by the Russians, sure they have sent him to the white bears. I am telling you, brothers, let us have strength to go through these hard times. It doesn't matter how many people the Germans kill even if the Ukranians help them. As the end came to the Pani so their end will come." Michal's face expressed certainty and hope which he took from his healthy outlook on life; the result of his simple hard-working life. Pavlak Kadashov was encouraged by his words and smiled. Vasiel Gursky opened his green eyes and listened attentively. His mood quietened. Alderowitz, embittered, burst out loudly and blamed our position on all the hundreds of prisoners,on the enmity that one had for the other and the hate. Pavel Gal and Józef doubted Michal's words. They remained quiet gnashing their teeth. I was encouraged by his words but they did not comfort me.

A strong north wind was blowing outside. The poles of the tent moved back and forth like the masts of a ship in a storm. They threatened to fall down and have the tent cover us up.

Grey clouds covered the entire sky. A thin drizzle continued day and night. For days and nights my pain and irritation never stopped and again I was troubled with endless nightmares. Sometimes I did not know where I was and I was not clear about what was reality and what was dream. My body seemed to be in the jaws of a vice and I seemed to be struggling in the meshes of a net from which I would not get out; but whenever I got a crumb of bread in my mouth or smoked a cigarette my senses were sharpened, I was awakened, lifted from the depths and got a spark of hope, though still mixed with doubts. This time not

like before the damp putrifaction of the roots in the ground on the place where I lay frightened me. I bit my lips and scraped the earth with my nails and made a hole in order not to surrender to it but I could not succeed. Like a wounded animal I gave in helplessly.

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MY NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

After the uproar regarding the distribution of food there was an improvement. Once a day they brought in field kitchens and dished out soup and slices of bread. The distribution took place after organizing queues and counts that did not tally. The SS counted us and after that the SS Sergeants checked the soldiers work also with them the numbers did not tally as it should have with the "Shutz stapel" SS.

I very seldom went out to the line because due to my weakness I couldn't stand in line for two hours. I also wanted to avoid meeting Polish acquaintances.

The autumn was already well under way. It hit us hard with freezing winds from the sea; with endless rains. The people weakened, caught cold and passed out quietly in the tents. Of course the condition of the Jews got worse all the time. The group were forgotten by God and men. They also had the right to 150 gram/bread a day but the attitude of the non-Jews and the German Guards kept them from coming to the line. The prisoners spread wild rumours in the camp that the Jews were the carriers of infectious diseases. So they were thrown out of every place where they were to be found. They were regarded as untouchables. The unhygenic conditions of the camp caused difficulties for the camp authorities and as I learnt later there were rumours about the terrible conditions of the Prisoner of War Camps, causing typhus and dysentry. The towns and villages were afraid of them. Together with that the German civilian authorities understood that it was better to employ these people as a labour force doing farm work for the Reich.

We heard in the camp that the German farmers union demanded from the authorities to send workers to the farms till the mobilised workers and farmers would come back to their farms. These people had been mobilised for the Polish Campaign. They were sure that after the quick victory, the man would be demobilised and sent back to their farms. This was not so. It appeared that the political situation in Germany had become complicated. The battles were over in Poland but the war was just beginning in Europe. The few that were released were the elderly, the reserves, and the wounded. In the meantime they began to take out thousands of prisoners for the seasonal work on the farms in the whole of Eastern Prussia. The prisoners saw themselves being saved from disease by this. Also, as being saved from other camp horrors as people going mad with hunger and attacking and canibilizing others, and from death in other ways. Some Jews managed to infiltrate among the Poles but they were discovered by informers and removed from the lorries midway on the way to the farms. Even after a year Jews were still being discovered on the farms. Every discovery was the work of an informer and handed over by the farmer into the hands of the SS and was returned to the camp where his fate was decided.

My friends also decided to leave the camp and were prepared to do any kind of hard work, only that they should have their piece of bread. They said to me: "Theophile, come with us. Even if you live on potatoes you will get stronger. Your sores and irritation will get better. But if you refuse only your dust will remain. Do it for yourself. The war will not last as long as the first World War. You may even live through the war and remain alive." I was silent. I did not answer. My friend Alderowitz spoke to me: "Let us take the difficult, dangerous and daring step. Let us go out with them even though the Ukranians and the Volksdeutch are looking for Jews. I am

sure that quite a few Jews will infiltrate among the Poles until the end of the war. Like them they will live and work among the Germans". I was silent. I didn't have the strength and daring to leave the camp as a non-Jew. Three problems worried me a t the time. It disturbed my peace. My friends did not think of this (and I am sure some of them had suspicions that I was Jewish.)

(a) I was weak and felt I couldn't do even the lightest work.

(b) I would have to have a medical examination and my circumcision would be discovered (The Germans warned expressly that those who hide a Jew endanger themselves, and pay with their lives.)

(c) My presence in the Jewish Camp tied my fate to the hungered, those of the bent backs, those half-naked those so very thin that only the ribs and backbone covered with skin remained. I was drawn to the Chalutzim who had been on the verge of Aliyah when they were called to the reserves. I was drawn to my friends who kept praying and believing that G-d would not desert them. All these had fought unfalteringly and fearlessly against the German fascism. My presence among them tied me to them with a thousand strings. The idea of leaving them gave me a feeling of guilt as if with my own hands I was handing over my family to the enemy. Leaving them meant I was saving my own life. It meant living under an assumed name in the midst of the enemy and for the rest of my life the cries of the unfortunate would follow me.

This hesitation weighed me down and left me not knowing what to do. I had no confidence and could not decide. I was in a state of inner conflict that shook me and an inner voice spoke to me. It was my Jewish conscience that was fighting with all its might: "Naphtali, you are leaving your weakened people who are sinking into the mud. You are being hacked out of your environment which gave you shape. From their cries you hear the cries of your own family." My heartstrings were taut and made me shake.

Nevertheless I felt that among the haters of the Jews I would find tolerant friends. This feeling had come to me from the early years of my childhood when I grew up amongst Christian children. Though they called me Jew as an expression of contempt and it hurt me, I nevertheless found good friends among them. Not everyone saw me as something strange and out of the ordinary. These memories brought me to these sentiments and I was upheld by them. My friends insisted that I join them. Pavluk the weak one whose flaxen hair fell over his pale face with the rough beard stubble covering his cheeks, bent over me and said: "Man, save yourself. Even during the war one can be surprised." (It was possible that my friends could expect it. They hated the Germans but theydid not expect the destruction that I did). He spoke like an old man with great experience. Józef from my area, the elder, interrupted. "Look, there is war and it won't finish soon. I am older than you. I remember the First World War and I see clearly what is happening. The war has just begun, but I am telling you as a friend, if we stay in the camp nothing will remain of us. Those mad with hunger will attack us and gnaw our bones." I did not answer him. I thought to myself in m y condition of health I didn't se e myself working in the village or on a farm. There was no place for me. Again my inner voice called: "Go back to the helpless, the weak

and the doomed. To the descendants of your fathers who many years ago were crushed and broken on the torture wheel by the servants of the Saviour who maintained in all innocence that it was for the love of G-d. These bearers of the cross threw out your grandfather. He had the church behind him. So were their great grandchildren thrown out a month before." I put my face in my hands but heard even more loudly: "Return to your people. To the smashed and the broken. To the humiliated that were brought low. With the feelings of brotherhood, to the persecuted. Join with them arm in arm, cling to them and with the cry of "Schma Yisrael" (Like the ten royal murdered) close your eyes in belief and comfort, you will be shot, your heart will be shot and together with your people sharing in their fate you will be thrown into the dung and from there perhaps you will reach the world of shining justice - the Belief will lighten your sufferings. "

My thoughts deepened and widened and fluttered between my faithfulness to my people and the saving of myself. The conflict raging in all its strength. It is good for a man to grasp the last straw while he is fighting for his life and he goes to a world in which all is good. Or even seven times better to quieten down and shout to earth and high heaven: Man's heart is bad, man is a killer. He is the master and the gods serve him and receive his judgment submissively." In bitter sorrow and with the gurgle he goes down forever to the world of ice and cold. A line held me to my source and would not let me escape. For a full day I was within myself. The fact that I could not decide gnawed at me.

My friends decided that come what may they must get out of that hell. Two days passed and the hour of decision came and came quickly. This is what happened:

Michal and Pavel and Józef the strongest of us looked for food the whole day near the field kitchens. They stood in line for hours to get a small piece of bread. This time, after being away for half a day, they suddenly burst into the tent and called us, "Fellows, get up quickly. This is an opportunity! The Germans are taking people on lorries out to the fields to work. Lets get out of here." They looked at me for a full second without saying a word. My friend Alderowitz gestured, "Get up! Let us try." Kudashov came to me and said: "Come along!" he helped me up and supported me. Yes, I went after them. From now onwards my way was on a narrow path which had uncountable dangers, obstacles, suspicions. For years I feared that people wanted to jump on me, catch me unawares and hand me over to the Gestapo. The way was long, torturous and tiring.

Before we got on to the lorry the Wachman looked at me and at Kudashov and asked: "Could these two do hard work? They look as if they would pass out on the way." But Michal our broadshouldered friend promised the Wachman that we were farmers from home and they knew the work and the moment they got some food they would gain strength and be as right as rain. At the station we were loaded onto cattle trucks, this time less crowded than before.

For an hour the train rushed from North East Prussia southwards. We got away from the terrible cold and the sea winds. Now the train slowed down and the locomotive pulled the train for many hours. We stopped from time to time in fields and at stations and struggled with cold and hunger and were silent. The hope that in the end we would get to potatoes and hot soup quietened us. I sat on the floor with a feeling of being cut off from the Jews who had remained in the prison camp of "Stalag". The monotomous rattle of the train lulled me into a confused slumber. As a baby I had felt the

rocking of the cradle. It seems that in this way I had also absorbed the sound of fear when Mother sang touching folk songs which later bound me firmly to the people of my parents. I awoke from my slumber when the trucks jerked and bumped against one another. The speed of the train slackened and it finally stopped. Pavluk helped me to get up and supported me when getting out. We were at one of the central stations in East Prussia.- Allenstein. This station was an important junction with many lines. It joined Eastern Prussia with West Germany and now also with conquered Poland

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THE SISTERS OF MERCY AND THE NUNS

We stood in one of the corners of the huge station, crushed and pushed together, shaking with the cold. We were surrounded by armed SS guards. The building hummed like a beehive. Army personell and German civilians kept entering and leaving. Every third one smoked a thick cigar. Drivers of carriages who were waiting for their masters, estate owners, held whips and smoked pipes. All the men wore high boots or gaiters. Encouraged and happy about the victory over Poland their faces shone. From time to time they raised their arms in greeting saying: "Heil Hitler". Heil .... was the greeting of the driver of the estate owner of the merchant and the soldier.

The Germans spoke abruptly and mumblingly to one another when there were cigars or pipes in their mouths.

With cutting shrieking whistles the trains arrived one after the other. They let off passengers and took on passengers and then disappeared into the distance, swallowed up by the darkness. From time to time Germans filled the station and then left it. More came again, they saluted, clicked their heels and again greeted Heil, Heil, Heil. Weak, I leaned against the wall. My eyes closed. The salutes and the heils reverberated. Wheels again clattered, the blowing and whistling of locomotives came to me in a blur. The shouts of the guards drew me out of the mists of slumber and I dragged myself after the other prisoners through the town of Allenstein. I was in a state of semi-druggedness which had not lifted from the time I began this exploit We came to a church or monastry in a very ancient fortress. I can't be sure. I t was dark in the yards and the corridors and between the dark walls was placed a red cross. Half naked

we stood for a long time in the cold. Then we got the order to undress completely. We did this and waited. These were fateful minutes for me.

Here the thing I feared was about to happen. My efforts to run from my origens had come to an end. My circumcision was to betray me as it had done thousands of my faith. This identification successfully served the enemies of the Jewish people. Really I envied all the prisoners including my friends who were free of this worry.

For the first time I felt that my circumcision was not to my advantage and prevented me from ever getting away from the murderers. This circumcision which is considered to be one of the ancient customs of an ancient nation was liable to bring me to the end of my life.

But this was not the time and there was nohiding the fact what was cut from mans' body was not to be returned. In a few minutes it will be proved that I am one of the trouble makers of the world who wanted to defeat the super nation and the innocents of Germany and before the medical committee came to me I remembered the stories of my parents about me, the wonder-child. How when I was circumcised and blood spurted forth and I whimpered; the local Rabbi in all his glory and honour had come to the house for the brith. He was my father's friend and he held me in his arms rocking me gently and I fell asleep quickly (This was to show that I was patient and strong and from then on much was expected of me.) From then on I had difficulties and obstacles. Goyim pointed at me in mockery. Amongst the adults the circumcision was the subject of jokes and laughter, to them it was a form of idolatry but while writing these lines I remembered a Jewish prisoner I had become friendly with in the first days when we worked in the sanitation pits and were chased

together under the rain of blows. So lying on the straw he swore on oath between grinding teeth: "Here I will not stay, I will run away." He came from one of the places south of the River Bug, a son of aChassidik family. With his fair hair he looked much more like a Pole than a Jew. He knew Polish, Ukranian, and even German. I did not take his seriously even though I had heard of cases that had succeeded. That same night he vanished from the place. The next dayhe was brought back by the Ukranians under SS guard. His tunic covered the top part of his body. The trousers dragged against the legs tied by chains. "See here see", the prisoners ran before him shouting jokingly: "This circumcised one tried to hide amongst honest Christians." The prisoner hung his head. His face had been beaten up. Blood had encrusted in his eyes. I pitied him and was sorry that he had not succeeded in his infiltration. "And this is my covenant with you forever." His parents probably answered "amen" to the Mohel. You are a'Chatan of blood' is said with joy but there is nothing to be glad about. "Yes", I thought,soon I will return to you all, "Everyone hold his penis in his hand," The male nurse commanded. My friends tensely obeyed the commands of the nurse. He cut the hair of the body and powdered it. Vasiel Gursky and Kudashov smiled at me. I sighed. The cold hand shrunk the members and in this way prevented the Germans from discovering my circumcision. The circumcision that was against the Aryan Race.

A number of prisoners including Pavluk, Kadashov and myself suffered from skin diseases and the cleansing group hesitated and wanted to send us back to the camp. The Head of the Farmers' Organization said: "The prisoners will not mix with the German population. They will work in the fields in separate groups and will sleep in closed huts outside of the area where the Germans live. If there is sickness amongst the prisoners interrupted an officer "Wir holen hon weg." In spite of the fact that I had learnt German, I didn't

understand the meaning of the last sentence and I was worried. One of the officers also a landowner added: "These are the agricultural workers from the primitive farms of Poland. Because of malnutrition in Poland they suffer from different diseases. I stand by Hitler. He will sort them out when he gets some free time from the war. In the meantime they will work on German farms and will not eat bread which they haven't worked for."

Nuns dressed in black with white veils on their heads and crosses on their chests wrote down particulars regarding each prisoner and kept it in a card index. They spoke about us as if we were not there and they spoke ceaselessly. They moved from place to place. Their starched cloaks rustled and they chattered like gease. They didn't stop blaming the Jews for killing their Saviour. Some of the prisoners, Volksdeutche and German speaking Mazurim, joined in their conversation agreeing with their statements.

The other sisters, Sisters of Mercy, wearing white starched clothes, gave injections against typhus and against arousing of sexual urge. After every injection they gave the prisoners a page, printed in German, Polish and Ukranian in which there was a stern warning about not touching German women;like the nuns they spoke loudly while dealing with us and expressed the accepted political ideas full of hatred towards us. I noticed that they could speak well and had excellent memories. They quoted long pasaages spoken by their leaders which they listened to all day and at night, and whose speeches they read in the paper the next day. One would correct the other if a word or sentence was missing from the quotation of Goebels or Hitler. So we also listened to their commentaries of hints or half hints from the same speeches, those related to the future of Europe and of the Jews. The

word "Jude" never left their mouths. The nuns and nurses were clean and fresh. Their hair was flaxen, their eyes blue, I looked at them a long time. Their outward appearance seemed to be the very opposite of their ugly spirits which they covered with their black cloaks and starched white clothes. They carried stinging poison in their hearts. I watched and could not understand, how the wave of hatred overpowered them. What was the meaning of their hatred for the thousands of Jews in Poland who were fighting and struggling in no easy way for their daily piece of bread? They were living bitter lives in antagonistic surroundings in constant fear, and lacked confidence andpeace. The hypocritical modesty was nothing to the modesty of the hardworking Jews. I watched and listened in order to find the reason for the enmity that gripped them. They disgusted and revolted me. My friends kept looking at them, their faces stern and tense. They listened to the word Jude which they kept repeating. Some looked at me affectionately and comfortingly. Vasiel whispered to me: "These are black ravens and satans in white." The warmth of my friends cheered me up. I felt that the Christians were ashamed of them and that I was among people who were the only ones among thousands who had the same feelings of revulsion at their heartlessness as I had.

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THE SINKING FOREST

Again we were put on cattle trucks and the train left the station with a long whistle taking us with into the darkness. It travelled in the same direction from which it had come, to Allenstein. I was waiting for the moment we would come to the village to field work, and manage to sleep in the hay rick, to dig oneself into the hay and be warmed by it.

Then a few hundred prisoners were taken off the train at a small station in the vicinity of Bishopsburg behind a small station. We stood in two lines in the darkness. Along the lines inspecting the people were the Gestapo and farmers, landowners, accompanied by armed guards. They went slowly along the lines, each one held a flashlight which they held up to the face of each prisoner for a few moments. They looked at his hands and at the breadth of his back. In this way the prisoners' strength was determined and he was added to the group of land workers. From our group they took Michal, the most honest of men. I did not see him again.

Only a few remained of the hundreds of prisoners. We were returned to the trucks and the train continued on its way slowly as if looking for a place to stop. At midnight we stopped in the middle of a field. About 40 of us got out of the trucks. A wild wind whistled and cut through our thin clothes. My body kept shivering and shaking. For a long time we huddled together seeking warmth from each other. We were like a flock of sheep in the fold whose eyes are screwed up in the darkness shaking in fear, in case ferocious animals attacked. The guards kept strong lights on around us. On the right we could see the dark outline of a wood. In front of us and behind us were groups of fields, everything hidden in

the darkness. We stood like this a long time without knowing what, why and for whom we were waiting.

Suddenly out of the darkness a long black carriage appeared and stopped at the place. In front were two big torches flashing light. Two big heavy horses were harnessed to this carriage. Two men in civilian clothes with guns on their shoulders stood on each step of the carriage. They jumped off and stood at attention on both sides. A man dressed in brown got out. He had a big swastika on his sleeve and a pistol at his side. After him came a hunting dog. The man raised his hand and shouted. Heil Hitler. All the guards in shorus answered, Heil (One of the prisoners also joined in but we was silenced with a blow from the butt of a gun. By this we were given to understand that the salute was for the faithful, the Germans, only.) He approached us with confident steps as his dog was sniffing along behind and the two civilians with guns accompanied him. He asked, and one of the guards translated into Polish: "From which nationality are you? Lets hear the answers, Ukranians, Poles, Bylo Russians" He continued: "Not important, you will all work in the forest. The one who refuses or runs away will be sentenced to death." He moved to one side, spoke briefly to one of the guards, officers gave orders, shouted Heil, jumped on the carriage. The dog jumped up after him and the two armedmen got on the steps on either side of the carriage. The driver whistled, the horses pulled away.

Later we dragged ourselves to the hut that stood in the dark rustling forest. This hut was green and built on poles. We were about 40 prisoners from the different Polish nationalities. A layer of straw on the ground were our mattresses. Our rations were 200 grams of bread a day with margarine. It was the middle of Autumn. Most of the trees were bare,yellow leaves covered the ground, in the low lying places stood ponds in which faded green water plants grew and under them frogs

croaked all the time. A smell of putrifaction and decay came from the swampy area. In the swamp, fallen logs lay criss-cross. Some trees were broken in half. When they were pulled apart they caught on to evergreen branches and they held them. In the higher places the forest was thinned out, having been cut off for many years. There young trees grew, instead of broken ones; lower down the guards hurried us along reminding us "Ja, once this forest belonged to Jewish merchants. They took away the trees, destoyed Nature here and left it deserted and destroyed. Trees sank in the swampy ground of the area. Hitler threw out the Jews, separated them from the population, imprisoned them in camps and nationalised the forest." Our job was to uproot the trees hanging on to the stronger cyprus trees, pull out all those that had sunken into the swamps, saw them into suitable sizes, peel off the bark, smear them with pitch and get them ready to be used in the mines or asblocks under the railway lines. Then we arranged them in high piles. We would go out at dawn and return to the hut late in the evening. We worked under a heavy guard of "Wachmanner". A guard for every four persons. These days were bitter, cursed days for me. The axe weighed more than I did. My palms were blistered, and they burned like coals of fire. The Germans' eyes were on us all the time. I was of course very tense and over-excited. The suards would kick us and hit out at us for everything that was not to their liking. In the course of time, like all the others, I grew indifferent. It seemed to me that dogs had gotten hold of me and were shaking me, barking and hurting and I was making an effort between the kicks and curses to throw them off. To be able to breathe more freely and to live. It is not a pleasant feeling for a person when he feels that eyes are watching his every move in the course of 12 hours of the day. He feels that the eyes are looking into his very heart, reading his innermost thoughts and discovering what is hidden there. It touches the weakest, most

sensitive places. His suspicions keep growing and he is held in continual fear. His judgement becomes distorted and he loses his mental balance and he is not responsible for his deeds. Perhaps he would lift the axe against the one who is responsible for him. No, perhaps he is betraying himself by his own thoughts and the same guard knows everything about him and he has fallen into and been trapped in his net. One way or another perhaps he should attack the guard so that he can be left alone. After that he would bash his brains out against a tree and put an end to himself and he is nothing but one of the millions of tortured sufferers.

The rain poured day and night and wet one to the very marrow of ones bones. The guards also got wet. Their raincoats and their high boots did not protect them. The rain pestered them and embittered their lives. In spite of the instructions they got "not to let the Poles out of their sight", they did not press on us so much as time went on. They got double rations of UNO cigarettes. They smoked incessantly, spat and said "Chotta-Chotta" (Platdeutch for G-d). Gradually the pressure lessened on us in the forest and the hut. It seemed as if both the prisoners and the guards suffered from the same depression, and both were held in/a/secret firm brutal grip. This secret fist was the forester - who would appear in his brown clothes and his carriage, put the fear of the devil into everyone and go back where he came from. The guards cursed him all the time, cursed the officers, the Polaks and of course, the Jew who was the prime cause of all the troubles. When the guards and the reserves got colds they were sent on leave or to the barracks. Their substitutes were the

younger "followers" of the Hitler youth. Once their wishes had been fulfilled and they had taken part in the war against Poland, those that were wounded were sent to the forest "to get well" and they were choleric and waspish. They kept hitting us over the heads at the slightest provocation. Prisoners who were wounded from their beatings and from work accidents were sent to the camp or "who knows where."

In the end even they, the nationalists and fanatics, got tired of the job. Their patience came to an end because of all of this war was against their indoctrination and brainwashing, which said that once the war ceased they would return to their homes. Here in the forest they saw no end to this army life. Some of the Hitler youth had volunteered for the SS and they were promised privileges over and above that of army or civilian life. "Ekne Durch Kraft." good pay and special trips to the conquered lands and plenty of women of all types and temperaments (This they spoke about often). These young SS guards also smoked a lot of UNO cigarettes and cursed the lonely echoing forest,the Poles and specially the Jews, the prime reason for all their troubles; unlike the previous guards however, they did not curse the forester nor the officers - a little of their indoctrination still remained. They also attacked the prisoners less fiercely. Their energy abated and they became apathetic.

One of the evenings under cover of rain and darkness, and the forest, two Ukranian prisoners ran away. They were sure that they could easily cross all the frontiers unchallenged and reach their families. However, after a few days, one of the mutilated bodies of the escaped prisoners was brought back. The second was apparently not found. We got a collective punishment; three days without bread rations, and work in the swamps as usual - dragging out the trees from the water. On those nights we would come back to the hut

hungry and depressed. When we lay on the straw Pavel Gal would tell us how the Egyptians exploited the Ancient Hebrews giving them hard labour with bricks and mortar. The Hebrew males prostrated and cast down from lack of strength and the women broken by having to throw their sons into the water as food for the crocodiles. Pavel was a first class story-teller, rich in imagination and with a wonderful descriptive ability. He could adapt the story of the Bible to our bitter reality and he would talk endlessly about the cruelties of the Pharoahs.

My father had tried to tell me about the experiences of the Jews in Egypt from the age of four or five.

It was particularly on the nights of the Seder and we had to imagine that we were the slaves in Egypt exploited and humiliated. Had I come down to that in reality? Had those traditional rich Seder nights turned into superficial custom? Had we never really understood them?

After every tale of Pavels the prisoners would be lost in thought identifying with the Ancient Hebrews of two thousand years ago. They quietened and fell asleep. I had also listened eagerly. A small flame burned within my breast and excitement beset me, I could not go to sleep. I continued thinking of the stories of the "Tanach". A history sodden with blood, a long chaim of iniquitous blood libels and pogroms and inquisitions executed by violent blood-thirsty men. In the end I came to what awaited my father's house and my family. Fear clutched me, I fought my fight with the mysterious lord of history with the feeling of justice of the small weak man. I tore off the mask of the distorted accepted justice and showed it up for what it was.

Tired without sleeping for a second bewildered and

confused, I lay tensed and plagued. I turned from side to side. Both I and the straw beneath me suffered until the command "aufstehn" came. Sleepy and with a headache I got up with the rest. Again I put on the wet clothes I had worn the day before. I dragged myself to the dark swampy place, a distance of 3 kilometers.

In this season the storms continued. The wild winds shook the tree tops and slipped down penetrating the forest and whirling like wild dervishes. The autumn leaves were scooped up and lifted and were changed into whirling columns which vanished and came again. They bumped into trees, were shattered into thousands of little dancing devils, whirling about fiercely and wildly. The whole forest shook from side to side. I felt as if I were on a raft in the midst of high waves. The tree tops were bent downwards in a wide arc by the fierce wind. They pushed back upwards straightened and again bent down towards the ground, and so the trees creaked back and forth. They shook the strong cypruses well and with them the weak trees leaning on the cypruses. The wind whistled and howled like a pack of raving wolves. Round about was lightning. It made a cross in the sky and lashed whip-like to the left and to the right. The forest seemed to become transparent. Single trees stood out on a shining grey-blue background. Lightning flashed in broken lines zig-zagging in opposite directions, appearing for a moment and then disappearing. It kept blinding us and the whole sky seemed to be lit up as if from the glow of a comet. The horizon seemed to close in on us and on the trees. Together with the lightning the thunder came rolling above our heads. The tops of the cypruses were broken off and fell into the swamps. Branches were blown off and thrown long distances.

The guards feared for their lives, retreating to the other side of the swamp. From there they fired shots into

the air to frighten the prisoners and prevent them from trying to run away. In the glare of the lightning, people looked pale and frightened. They stood aghast close to the place. They seemed stunned, not knowing what to do.

Vasiel and Pavel who were standing next to me crossed themselves. Suddenly the lightning hit a straight tall tree and split it open, tore through the bark, revealing the white pith. When it fell it pulled down the weaker tree leaning on it.as well, they both rolled down together. On the way they broke branches and young trees were uprooted along the entire length of their fall, from where they were standing to where they fell in the swamp. With the fall and roll there was a tremendous reverberation in the forest and they sank slowly into the swamp. One of the prisoners standing near the place was hit on his head by a branch and ran away with a piercing scream"Saint Helios, Save me". He ran to the German guards and was shot. When they saw what had happened, the prisoners were shocked and stood trembling in their places. My friends kept crossing themselves and I let out a dumb and startled cry: "Ho! G-d of the Winds, wake up and sweep and cleanse the earth of the murderers. Gather them up and throw them into the depth of the swamp. Ho! Lightning flash and blind and with a burning hand write the words from Daniel ...Mene Mene,,,, Ho! sovereign of the conscience of all generations. Stop the destruction of the Jewish communities which have existed for hundres of years. Arise and destroy the forces of darkness. Let them crawl on their bellies and roll in the dust. Let them ingratiate themselves before their tortured victims. Let those who are sitting in their warm houses at the moment and who are gorging themselves on their victims food, suffer the qualms of conscience for generations to come."

The lightning, thunder and wind reached their climax. The sky was covered with a black, heavy, metalic laquer. Suddenly the storm began to abate. The lightning lessened the thunder still kept reverberating until there was a cloudburst. The guards rushed over to us and went to seek cover in their huts but the rain forced them out of there. Then we heard them shout: "Zur Barukhe" (to the hut). We ran kilometers in the pouring rain and they spurred us on with their bayonets till we were completely breathless.

I came back wet and with torn clothes. Most of the prisoners had army coats and broken tattered boots, except my Jewish friend and I. We went without coats and with wooden shoes which rubbed and blistered our feet.

On the rainy days we got 200 grams of bread with margarine and soup. We got the food late in the evening when we returned from work and it was given out by one of the prisoners who knew how to keep order and put people in their places. As in the Stalag Camp there were those who wanted to push their way in and get more food at the expense of their comrades. They unloaded the food from the wagon, they guarded it and they were also the distributors. So at the end there were rations missing for some and the ration was cut down to half.

In our camp there were six of us who formed a united group. Because of the "wonderful" distribution the prisoners lots patience. By popular consent we got the task of distributing the food. One night I had to give out the margarine, the bread and tea. With the aid of a knotted string that I used for measuring, I dished out the food before the eyes of 40 hungry and embittered men. While my friends guarded the food scrupulously, I cut the bread equally in thickness. I did my best to give everyone an equal portion, to the very last crumb. The same with the margarine and

the tea. After this distribution the scrapping and fighting lessened and stopped. Everybody was satisfied with the distribution except myself: in the end I only had crumbs and no ration. I got very thin in those days, but I had moral satisfaction. In a group like that swallowed up in hatred, every goodness is destroyed and if one could get a slight understanding and a lessening of tension because the slice of bread was equal and justly distributed, it was a great thing. This feeling added comfort and satisfaction to our group, even if it was only a passing thing.

Józef, who saw how thin I was getting, pointed to me and said: "Theophile,already looks like a saint. If he keeps on giving out bread to the others alone he will have all the prospects of reaching Paradise quickly." Kudashov added humorously "Only Jesus knew how to distrubute/5 loaves to 5 thousand people" My friends decided to relieve me of the task for my own good.

From my early childhood and in my youth I associated with different Christian groups. One could say most of our Christian acquaintances regarded my family with honesty and understanding, but even so we felt unconsciously muddied water flow/ing beneath. Mixed with this feeling there was superstition and hatred. Particularly now in time of war I learnt that man, no matter to what national group he belongs to,who sees the only truth in his own religion, finds that his principles become distorted. The followers worship and adore. They concentrate on ceremonies and customs until they do the opposite of the old saying: "They eat the outer peel and discard the content" instead of the opposite. They say: "Our religion guards us and we protect it with all the means in our power". In addition when the followers of the religion think that their

religion and language are the choicest and the best of all, the results are the opposite. It shows weakness in the people and lack of human values generally. Physical strength is the deciding factor and leads to hard heartedness between him and his fellow man. It leads to a lack of tolerance and a lack of understanding between man and his fellow man. Injustice which seemed to be caught by invisible forces is brought about. In the end the solution is the attacking of others. Deeds which in the course of generations have become the deeds of knights are things to be proud of. The character of the people in whose society I lived differed according to the conditions of the camp and their general conditions.

However, I must write and give another side of the picture in order not to be one-sided. The Ukranians from Galicia for example were extreme fanatics. They regarded their religion their nation, their language, their honeland and their fertile earth as having no equal. They gained the enmity of those who were not of their group. They were nationalist fanatics, impulsive, unbalanced and aggressive, particularly towards the stranger among them, but also among themselves. However, it would be a mistake to judge them completely negatively. I will still speak about the friends that I had among the Ukranians. There were men of spirit and understanding who helped me and related to me as an equal, though I was not considered one of them. True, there were few of those, but during a poisonous chauvenistic period they can be remembered. German fascism poisoned everything and tempted everyone with vain promises. Even so there were those who were able to have a humane relationship with others.

The Bylo Russians were more understanding and less aggressive and got on easier with others. Most of them

admired the Soviets politically and today they are under Soviet rule. The Poles of Congress Poland and Eastern Poland were in a state of depression and hurt at the loss of their independance. Their hatred towards the Jews was less then than before the war.

Now for something about my friends: Pavel Gal was tall to midling. He had broad well defined features, a strong chin, above it a broad mouth and black thoughful eyes. He was able to speak all the slavic languages and knew all his people well, and knew how to gain their friendship. He had an influential charismatic personality. In the evenings he would tell stories which he had once read in Polish, in Russian or Ukranian literature. In his telling he would switch from one language to another and so gain everyones heart even if it was for a short time only. The prisoners particularly liked his jokes and his sayings with which he spiced his language. He would cause laughter and relieve the tension. For a short time people would return to the ordered lives they led before the war.

Józef although he suffered from hunger and depression, had a wonderful voice. At times he would sing Bylo Russian folk songs in his clear pleasant voice. It was like a fountain falling from a height, a resplendant voice that echoed among rocks and trees. It splashed and refreshed, it repulsed depression and caught at peoples hearts. His strong voice confounded and held everyone tremblingly unable to move from his place. The people thought back with longing to their homes and family in fields of blooming flowers or at times like the end of the harvest. When Józef sang, he drowned out the howling wind and the moaning of the forest and stilled the biting hunger within us. The guards stopped their shooting. Everyone in the hut listened with a wave of goodwill and was in another world for a short time. Vasiel

Gursky, when he was in a good mood, declaimed Russian and Bylo-Russian peetry. Told about the way of life in his village, about forbidden loves and betrayals and in most of the stories saw himself as the hero. He described some unusual and comical characters from his village. He was sensitive and would tell about the pathos and about situations which would bring tears to his eyes.

Kudashov, the weak one, believed and hoped for a better future and would tell about the way of life in his poverty stricken villages. He would sing songs of longing for home; songs of wanderers in Russia and Bylorussia his homeland. He would sing about the folk heroes of the past who wandered along the forests and the secret ways robbed the rich merchants and landowners, and take and divide the gold amongst the widows and orphans and the poor.

Alderowitz, the Jew, had a handsome face and an athletic body, was honest and openhearted; At times more than necessary. More than once he would endanger himself and my friends and I had to hold him back. He would lecture people, tell them to improve their ways. He used a lot of words and sayings. Latin was a language that the Bulorussians and Ukranians hated, however the Poles who knew the sound of the words from the Catholic prayers liked them very much.

Many a time I was amazed and wondered at the soul of man that was made up of good and bad. The conflicting urges and imbalances on the one hand,the feelings of repentance on the other, and the recognition that "we are sinners and submission to the fate that is." On the other hand there were dangerous outbursts both cruel and selfish. I am the most important being there is and there is no other like me; the grabbing of the last piece of bread from the weak and the hungry because the I is so important, and must exploit. On the other hand society demands that moral values must be observed. The demand to act

according to ones conscience, understanding and thankfulness and to be able to pray in silence, cleaving to the principle of the son of G-d to love your neighbour as yourself and in the personal struggle not being able to fulfil this. On the other hand the struggle for existence; the importance of the shirt on my back. "To the devil with everybody" I must be satisfied and have enough for myself; then my people and co-religionists.

When our group lay down to sleep wet as usual and shivering with cold, we crowded together in the darkened soot-covered hut. Pavluk the innocent signed as a continuation of his thoughts: "Tell me, druch, why they are hard hearted when they could be good. We all have a common enemy, German fascism." This question plagued us both and would not give us rest.

After a time the command came, that every Sunday would be a day of rest. It meant washing of underclothes and fixing clothes. At that time we cleaned our bodies to prevent lice and all types of insects that could find their way to the skin and hair of the body. They would suck the blood in the body. The Germans were afraid of us getting typhus and spreading it among the German population. The guards brought tins of kerosene and cleaned out the corners. After that I also got a clean tunic. The former that had taken up all the blood and pus from my back I threw away. The blisters on my hands hardened, my feet that were rubbed raw by the wooden shoes were still covered with sores. Because of the sores on my feet my muscles were sore to the waist. I limped for many months.

In the evening hours when the soot covered kerosine lamp would throw a dark shadow like a crawling spider on the wall, I would sit and mend my torn trousers and jacket.

I covered them with patches until the original cloth could not be seen. The guards patrolled around the hut, shooting in the air to frighten us or to overcome their own fear of us. The Germans were sensitive to the slightest noise and had itchy trigger fingers. They would shoot at the slightest disturbance when a prisoner had to go out for a necessary purpose two armed guards would accompany him with their fingers on the triggers of their guns and with the stern warning : "If you dare to run, know that you won't get very far. Our bullets will stop you in your tracks." Only after they had returned the prisoners to the hut and had closed and bolted the door, did they breathe more freely and light their pipes.

In time the guards got tired of the dark evenings filled with tension after the one attempt of escape. An incident like that did not happen again. In the meantime the younger guards were changed and older men took their place. At the beginning even the older men were strict and beat and kicked us. However, after a few days, absorbing the putrefaction and stink of the forest and the stink of the swamps, after feeling the lashing rain and the wind, they were easier on us, got used to us and the prisoners also got used to the guards. Discipline relaxed and the Germans looked for someone to pour out the troubles of his bitter head to. The prisoner was more trustworthy than another German whom they were afraid to open their mouths to. The guard would give the prisoner a little tobacco or a cigarette and begin a conversation with him, would speak to him alone in the broken Polish at his command, and tell him what was worrying him; the suffering of his family due to his absence from home. He cursed the Herren in the cities who did not know what was war like, spoke about shoes and clothes that were no longer to be found in the shops and one could buy them without ration cards on the black market under the counter at inflated prices. They cursed the large landowners

and the big farmers who exploited the farm workers and treated them as if they were their personal property, slaves who had been sold to them forever. "Only Hitler - the Germans would stress - was not like that - de demands the good of the worker and the good of the whole country. Hitler is an idealist - he does not need property. He is not like the Kaiser, or the rulers of the Weimar Republic. Hitler is modest, he doesn't smoke or drink alcohol. He doesn't even build a family for himself. He is busy day and night with the interests of the German people and with international problems. (Most people had these opinions as I heard from them and will still come back to them.) Only the Herren, and the estate owners are the ones that are deceiving him.

It is interesting to note that if one has an openhearted conversation between the German guard and the prisoner in the early evening, the next morning that same guard will shut up and behave like a distant stranger. I often wondered about the character of the German soldier and I couldn't understand it. From where does he get the blind discipline, the non-compromising behaviour? The moment his commander gives an order, his face shows anger and becomes as red as a beet. He is prepared to hit out till he is tired and even shoot on the spot. Is it fear of those appointed to command him; is it flattery or arrogance, the desire to be like the commander - or is it the desire and not only for the moment - to be the absolute ruler of the helpless prisoner, for the moment to be the "little Fuhrer" like the one whose voice he always hears; when he is sleeping or awake he hears the hysterical cries of the rulers who carry the burden of his country, robbed by the capitalists and the Jews. Influenced by these speeches the guard relieves his bitter heart, that he was sent to the stinking forest to fight the plague of lice and fleas - the Polacks, by hitting out. In the final analysis the most of the guardsmen - as much as I knew them, were hardworking

people who had many personal problems. The inner bitterness that was hidden in the German, the feeling of superiority over the stranger, that was encouraged over many generations and the habit of submitting to the Herr blunted their ability to struggle and created a frightened dangerous personality. He always saw in the grey day to day life the Herr from the city or the master of the Estate as people who laid down the law and were worthy of the highest honour. Therefore they tended to believe every demagogue in the German sphere. They quickly got his support simply by giving him a pat on the back, and the embittered exploited got this pat of encouragement as a right and favour, a present from G-d. He soon forgets and forgives the master everything. He shrugs and crumples up like a faithful dog after being kicked by his master and comes running back.

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E. HERR FÖRSTER (THE FORESTER)

It was hard to live through the day the chief forrester was to arrive. At dawn we were told of his impending visit. The guards were nervous and anxious and they were hard on the prisoners. They shouted at us and hurried us on, using the butts of their guns. In the end the under foresters appeared in their government uniforms, their guns slung over their shoulders and canes in their hands. Most of them were elderly and healthy and strong. Who was the Chief Manager of the forest? It was the same man who came to examine us at the station at midnight about a month previously. He had been in the carriage sitting on the high seat with his dog and two armed forresters standing on the steps. That was the "Herr Förster."

He rode a shining dark brown horse and often visited us. He would suddenly appear with his dogs running before and behind. He would stop near us and shout: "Heil!". The officers of the unit, the soldiers and the forest guards who were near would answer, "Heil Hitler".

He had the rank of colonel and was dressed in a brown uniform. He wore a huge swastika badge on his arm. He would alight from his horse with a jump, light a cigarette and shout that the work was too slow and that the production was low. Everyone listened tensely except the prisoners with bowed backs who were wading in the swamp. They were apathetic. But the officer of the unit ordered everyone to come closer and to listen. Then the "Herr Forster" said : "Lazy Poles, if you are not more productive I will send you all back to Stablack (At Stablack was Stalag that was known to us. The name Stablack frightened us all.)

At one of the regular visits of the chief forester,

after his accepted speech, one of the prisoners straightened up, came up to him and said to him in Polish: "Herr Forster, I am a Pole and did not fight for the 'Lachi '. I am a Ukranian and wish to return to my farm in the Ukraine. There I wish to contribute to the War effort." After the words of the prisoner had been translated to him he took out his revolver with his left hand. With his right hand he lashed the prisoner on the back twice and ordered him at once to Stablack. The man never returned to us.

After he had given orders to the officer of the unit he shouted to the guards, called out "Heil", jumped on his horse, spurred it, turned in knightly fashion and rode off as fast as he could. His dogs following with long fast jumps and short barks.

In the months of Autumn it rained ceaselessly. The forest was wrapped in a continual mist. The trees shook off yellow blackening autumn leaves which rotted on the ground. Together with them the peoples' spirits also disintegrated; only in the few hours of sleep was the shivering body able to calm down and rest. In the hut the wind blew into the cracks in awful whistles, it thundered under the zinc roof and deafened the snores of the people. A spark of life fluttered within me not letting me sleep. I got up, stepped over the people in the direction of the door inorder to go out to relieve myself of the depression. The guard opened the door and accompanied me outside. A cutting cold wind refreshed me. The forest did not rest nor quieten and was enveloped in rustling stormy anger. I remembered the days and nights of marching on the roads in forests and near rivers of the Mazur country, of the fighting in the Polish army against the Germans. Franz, the guard, about 45, with a stomach and a round face in which stuck a pipe emitting smoke was a small farmer, he looked peaceful and easier to get on with, lost in thought and perhaps sad, at any rate

he was different, not like in the day time when he walked heavily among the prisoners with a thin switch in his hands, shouting the whole day from the depth of his stomach while his face swelled like that of a turkey gobbler. He stood in front of the door of the hut and stopped the opening. I stood near the threshold of the open door. The German looked at me for a long time. He did not disturb my thoughts and did not order me to return. In the end he asked: "From where are you?"

"From Polish Bylorussia."

"What do your parents do?"

"They are small farmers", I answered.

After that he just looked into the darkness and added: "Ja, nicht gut in fremden land" (It's not good to be in a stranger land). "I am also far from my family in Konigsberg. My farm is now suffering because there is no-one to do the work. I have a lot of money in addition to my income. Hitler pays me ten marks for every child I have but everything is expensive and scarce". "When the war is over and everything will return to its former condition with more money," I said. "Oh no", the guard interrupted me, "really the war is still going on and won't finish so quickly. However, relations between Germany and Russia are improving. Ribbentrop and Molotov understand each other well." The guard spoke slowly, his face turned to the forest. Now he turned to me and he shrewdly hesitated: "Stalin is len gut kamerad. The Russian believes in the German but I don't think his belief will last a long time," he spoke slowly as if to himself. "The Fuhrer won't always be satisfied with Stalin, the Fuhrer will want to go farther." His last words put fear into me, and there in Eastern Poland were villages filled with Jews. The German stopped talking and his face grew dark and embittered. I thought: "I have no place to run to: Ho, if only I could fly eastwards to the Jews and warn them and give the alarm and tell them about everything, about everything ...."

The guard still wanted to talk,to prophesy in the spirit of conquest that everything is possible. I shut my ears in order not to hear and to get away from him. "Ja, ja", I answered, "Gute Nacht."

When I went back to sleep I had nightmares, Germans wearing steel helmets with the death's head symbol with the grinning teeth were attacking my family, hitting and lashing them, while they were crying out. I wanted to cry out with them, but my throat was dry. I was not able to utter a sound. The usual cry of "aufstehen!" always frightened me as if I was hearing it for the first time. The shout released me from the agitation of my dream. Stupified I opened my eyes in the dark. I did not understand at once why my friends were hurrying. I did not need to get dressed. I got up with the same wet clothes. The morning light had not yet arrived. The hut and the forest was still wrapped in darkness. Then the sooty torch was extinguished.

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AGAIN HUNGER TROUBLES US

A few weeks passed and the autumn weather continued. The rain fell at intervals, the winds blew violently, the forest moaned and stormed and gave off sharp smelling odours and the people continued to trample in the putrefaction. Because of the lack of food the smells caused me dizziness, nausea and weakness in the heart. Hunger pressed on me without ceasing; wherever I went I looked for wild berries but because of the autumn weather most of them were half decayed. In spite of that I picked and chewed. My friends, village people, knew the berries of the forest well. They taught me which to suck and I knew how to differentiate between the different plants, the sweet and the bitter. I chewed them during work hours, and they gave me vitality. I felt that I needed something in my body without which I could not work properly. When we returned to the hut the rations that I got were nowhere near satisfying the hunger gnawing at my vitals. It was as if a mouse were continually gnawing at a piece of wood. Like a baby sucking at the breast of a mother who had no milk. It was like a shrinking of the chest. The hunger interfered with my thinking and judgment. I became a little animal that was continually smelling out something to eat. Hunger did away with the problems that I had of being a Jew. This worry was blunted and left me alone for a time. All the prisoners suffered from this hunger and it was not the time to express fanatical nationalistic opinions. At every opportunity the prisoners would steal each others slice of bread or his ragged garment. I saw that there was no way out and decided to let the body learn to function with the little food it could get. My job was to strangle the feeling of hunger that I had and overcome the dizziness that caused a feeling of faintness.

My friends and I would pass the place where the Germans ate their food and we would gnaw at the crusts they threw away or lick the empty tins of fish. We licked them clean without anger and with enjoyment. In this condition I dragged the trees from the swamp. I got very thin. I was just bone without any flesh. In addition, I was troubled with a maddening itch. More than once I nearly passed out while carrying a tree trunk on my shoulders. At that moment my friends stronger than me would hurry to my aid. In the day, hunger tormented me and at night I had strange and terribly frightening dreams. They brought me back to my distant past and revealed distant and unpleasant memories. These were complicated dreams which would bring in their wake feelings of guilt and repentance regarding my friends and family. I could not get free of them. I would have terrible nightmares in which ugly monsters would drag me to a wide space covered with dry bones. Skulls stuck out among the bones and from the eyeholes they would look out with terrible murderous glances. Thousands of eyes stared at me and hurt me by doing so. There were the fairies - women with wings who had snakes waving on their heads - I could not understand what they wanted, why they were tormenting me. I am not Orestes and I did not kill either father or mother. What crime had I committed? They wanted to choke me. I got a feeling of nausea.

I got up tired and with a bitter taste in my mouth and my tongue feeling as dry and hard as the sole of an old shoe. Before me was a day of hard labour in which there would be not the slightest pleasure or even relief; no ray of comfort or of mercy. All this I had to suffer in silence and avoid the stumbling blocks in my way. The more I thought of it, the more helpless I felt. We dragged ourselves, my friends and I, and we cursed the difficult day that was before us. We leaned against each other, treading in the damp foggy forest. Our legs were tramping on piles of dry leaves and I remembered

the words of Virgil: "You have to get used to the stink. March forward bravely so that you can see everything in the stinking rift."

In the course of time cracks appeared in the pact of unity among the six of us. It was enough that one of us got a slice of bread for a tattered garment and our friendship already hung in the balance. It seemed as if he was deserting us, running away to the others. This throwing off brotherhood in time of sorrow was sad. As a result I found myself alone. It was a time when all the people in the camp were at a loss and values were being re-examined. I feared being alone, I was afraid I being ground out among them. The dissolution of our group was clearly seen but it was not complete. Everyone knew that each had the opportunity of finding a better arrangement for himself. However, we soon got to know that it was an illusion and not a solution. Because of my weakness I could not get my ration or fight for it if it was taken by someone else. Our group realised that hunger was destroying everything good that there was among us. Our people began to think of how to overcome this deviation. Pavluk encouraged and comforted me when he saw my depression. He also suffered from the breakup of our group and we decided to do everything we could to re-unite the group as before. After a time there was also a change in me. Physically and mentally I became stronger and more balanced. My stomach got used to the minute ration and I suffered less from hunger and therefore mentally I was able to cope with this difficulty. How was it that the hunger disappeared? I always had an empty space where my stomach should be, hunger simply became a part of me. It was with me all the time. It was like some material thing living and existing. My senses were awakened through it and I was able to think of my fate. But I became much more closed and introverted. I stopped talking so much. It was when I lay

down at night exhausted from the cold. The blisters of my hands burned and I looked for a means to relieve the tension of my nerves and I remembered images from the past that had been good to me, from my family and friends. All who once had wished me well, all who once had smiled on me. Then I remembered a wonderful early fresh summer morning. The birds sang at my window, and gave me a feeling of joy and hope. With all my senses I embraced the splendour of the universe. Full of happiness and joy I became one with it. One of the images touched my shoulder with a soft hand, carressed my head and whispered in my ear: "Carry the burden - you have to - the tyrants will not gain anything from it. Their light will be extinguished from it and they will sink into the darkness." My family's image spoke to me with love: "We also think of you." I was comforted. These things lightened the darkness of the bitter reality and I was like a six months old baby who laughs in his sleep. I could fall asleep and come to the Eden of belief with a light heart. Her light warmed me and I slept till the dawn of another day. In the new day , because of the images I had called up in the night, I was able to bear the hardships better. I was like a sleepwalker at work. I remembered the words of comfort and enveloped myself in them. I did not take notice of the shouts of the tormentors who hurried and pushed me. So I lived through the months of the worst cold of the year. The prisoners who were hurt by the cold were returned to Stablack. In their places others were brought to the forest. From those I got to know that areas like Poznan, Tchechanov and Schlezia were annexed to Germany. They took away the citizenship of the people from those areas, and they remained defenceless. I also got to know that the Jews in the camp were returned to the areas under German domination and there they were put in the care of the destroyed Jewish communities. They also told me that according to the agreement between the Germans and the Russians, that the Jews who were crippled and frost-bitten were returned to the soviet

areas where they had come from. It was hard to know what really happened.

Later in 1941 an innkeeper, a member of the Nazi party, said that no Jewish P.O.W.'s or civilians remained from Poland. They had all been dragged to camps in Prussia.

From newspaper reports that I found on scraps of paper beside the road I could read between the lines, about things that were not written. When the guards were in a good mood and wanted to give voice to their opinions and boast about the strength of the German army and the bravery of the soldiers who even in the time when there were no battles were preparing themselves for some future activity ..... and each time one of their leaders gave a speech, and there were many of them, and often they would repeat what they said and often quote them. "Hitler warned, and if he warms one can be sure that it will come about." "Goebels threatens world Jewry and the Plutocrats." "Goering threatens that the Luftwaffe will leave the lands of the enemy completely burnt." These quotes raised the morale of the guards and gave fresh courage to the whole of the German nation. The promises of their leaders would leave them with great confidence. Hitler made a laughing stock of Chamberlain - calling him a clown and the newspapers said he was "backward and senile and unable to function" who dared to take on "the genius mind that appeared only once in a thousand years." Poets wrote satirical poems about the British Premier, and the nation of millions got pleasure and cheered from the youngest to the oldest.

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THE PRISONERS FIND THEMSELVES AT ONE WITH THE WORDS OF THE PREACHER, THE SON OF DAVID

Slowly our friendship returned to its former unity again, we divided every crumb of bread amongst each other and every pinch of tobacco. Life had taught me that hunger need not cause a man frenzy and the loss of his spark of humanity. Sometimes it unites him with his trouble and his individual moral values and also unites him and his friends. Oneevening when the cold and the damp in the hut was making everyone despondent, something happened. Pavel Gal was deeply saddened by the defeat of the Polish nation. With distorted screwed up green eyes, he looked into space. Because of the inner pain his lips screwed up more and more. Beads of sweat covered the wrinkles on his forehead and in the corners of his eyes drops appeared. After the friction had ceased regarding the distribution of the rations and the arguments on where to sleep, he took a tattered book from one of the prisoners and began to read the Old Testament in Ukranian: "So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed and they had no comfortor; and on the side of the oppressors there was power, and they had no comfortors." Here Pavluk stopped him and said enthusiastically "So Stalin spoke to the poor." When the name of Stalin was heard the people in the Ukranian corner became quiet and one of them asked: "Who wrote and who said those words." Pavel answered, "the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, son of David in Jerusalem." One protested at Pavel's words: "But it was not Stalin" "And also not a Jew!" interrupted another. Now there was an altercation among them. They refused to believe that Stalin, who was so hated by them could say things like that. Or that one of the unbelieving Jews could express so wonderful an idea. Pavel continued reading:

(2) Wherefore I praised the dead which are already

dead more than the living which are yet alive.

(3) Yea better is he than both they which hath not yet been, who have seen the evil work which is done under the sun.

(4) Again I considered all the travail and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of the spirit.

In the corner some were still fighting about a place to lie. Some of the Poles called out: "Translate into Polish. We don't understand the language of the "Chochli". " Pavel translated and continued to read. In the hut there was complete silence. He read a few chapters. The people followed his every word. In the end he crossed himself and lay down to sleep. The others were amazed and also went to sleep quietly. Vasiel Gursky said softly: "Look how Ecclesiastes fits into our condition. Also thousands of years ago people cursed their conditions. They suffered from Kings and tyrants." "As the end came to those oppressors so the end will come to this, Lucifer," Józef said quietly. Pavluk could not control himself, he bent over us as if telling a secret and said: "There were exploited also in the time of Ecclesiastes but I tell you Fascism is the worst in its cruelty. I am sure it will not continue for long. This winter the "Great moustache" with the steel fist will smash it. Then the exploited even among the Germans will be freed from the slavery of Fascism." Rumours were afloat about our fate in the near future. The Germans said that the war was over. The mobilised would go home to their farms and we would be returned to our homelands. They explained that Poland was conquered forever. She was divided amongst the minorities and torn into pieces. The countries who once promised her aid did not keep their promises and her friends of yesterday had accepted her being

conquered. Our camp in the forest would be closed and we would be returned to Stalag Al. The first version was not accepted. On the other hand the execution of the second version could be expected every day and every hour. I did not pay attention to these rumours, as I saw blackness in every one of them. These days and nights were clear and cold. The air became good to breathe. It got rid of the unhealthy damp. As the autumn worried and distressed, so the winter began to threaten with its cold. My problem was to try and get a winter coat. Some people in the hut had two coats and a blanket(They said among themselves, they took it from those killed in the camp and even from live Jews, the last they boasted about.) My friends tried to get me one, but in vain. I remained without cover. Actually in the delicate condition I was in, there were people who tried to help people like me - a son of the "cursed among nations." and were ready to endanger themselves,this brought me a ray of comfort that spurred me on to overcome all dangers. The one who does not cease to wonder at the goodness of the soul of man cannot judge him without bias. He who has not tried to live among this society and has not gone into studying human values that is hidden in it, will never know man in his extreme visicitudes and vagaries of fate that sometimes surprises us.

E C C L E S S I A S T E S

We walks in our world with closed ears. He is mistaken and he makes others take the wrong way. He is a trouble maker. He will not be immune to racist theories.

My decision was calculated. As long as I lived and breathed I would guard my friendships. I will look for the way to the heart of man but I must also overcome the hatred that exists among the prisoners. I must help myself with tolerance against the spread of poison of nationalism. Never

Never submit and stand up to the future with all my physical and mental capacity. Not be servile and not provoke the god of Olympus. I will not be helped even if I called on the lineage of my family tree three times a day. I am not among the gods and I haven't come from the company of angels. People better than I have not succeeded. I am a grain of sand without value which has been pushed aside and been cut off from the sea sands which are washed in and dragged down to the depths. It is for me to live among these people at present, there is no other way out. My origin is obnoxious to them. They would kill me if they knew the truth and I have a justified hatred for them. Nevertheless we have something in common that joins what is torn apart and no false theories can obliterate. That which joins us is helplessness - which will bring us to reconcilliation.

More than once it seemed to me after hearing the "Djid" (Jew) that the Jew was responsible for their suffering, the damp, the cold, the rain, hunger and lice. The "Djid" had no belief or moral value and his ruling hand caused them trouble. This was not meant for me but I had to listen to it all the same. When I lay on my straw bed I would fight with myself. I would fall asleep and wake with a choked cry. Vasiel woké with a shuddering sigh, he said to me: "You must have had a bad dream."

He guessed correctly. The fearful furies had chased me and involved me in their net of horror. I tried to evade their claws but in the end they caught me. They had malicious intent towards me. The whole camp accused me - by witchcraft and with leprosy of infiltrating among them. They all pointed to me. I was the one who was the cause of all their troubles. They decided to throw me into the cold swamp. My friends in the group were silent. They were ashamed of me. True they did not condemn me like the others but they did not protect me.

They stood with bowed heads not looking at me "So you have uncovered yourself, you ungrateful wretch," they murmered. I also lowered my eyes before my comrades. I was ashamed as if I was caught red-handed and I admitted my guilt. "Yes, so I paid you wrong for good." I was sad that I had disappointed my friends. I woke with my body shaking with cold. "Theophiliek" said Vasiel Gursky, "I did not close an eye this night. Do you remember the guard Franz, son of a dog, who hit me with the butt of his rifle? I dreamt he was piercing my chest with a bayonet. What is the meaning of such a nightmare? At home I had a book explaining dreams. A pity I don't have it with me. Now I feel better, I was saved and I am alive. Listen! My heart tells me! We will overcome them. The guards will die one by one. This whole country will not evade justice. This is the end they deserve."

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WINTER 1939 - 1940

Winter was at its full strength. The cold reached -39°C. The roads in the fields disappeared from view. Heaps of snow piled up on the roads and stopped the traffic. Snow storms covered the forest, oak trees and pines, from the low bushes to the highest trees were covered in white lacery. The branches bent over and could hardly hold the snow covering it. The swamp froze. The prisoners had to remove the tree logs from their frozen beds. The people sank into the depth of the snow and struggled to get the trunks out of the ice. It was really hard labour sawing them when the teeth of the saw kept jumping and did not go into the frozen wood. Work did not progress and production was very low. The Germans covered their heads and faces in balaclavas, only the noses and eyes were uncovered. They wore high boots and had long, army coats. Gloves covered their hands which held the guns. They clapped their feet together and jumped from place to place. The cold distressed and worried them and they had less time to beat the prisoners. Occassionally they would hurry me up with a slight shove of the butt of the gun. More than once the guards and the prisoners asked where my long coat was and this caused me unpleasantness. There were two others without coats but those had sold their coats for a loaf of bread and they had about three blankets each. Only Alderowitz and myself were without anything. I was like a thin stalk. The snow did not manage to cover me and I remained uncovered to the angry biting wind.

Communication between the villages and towns were cut off. Snow piled up for many kilometers and created barriers. Sleighs and motors could not break through to the roads to the towns; to the wheat, mills or to the railway stations.

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It was impossible to bring the milk-cans to the railway stations. Another problem the Germans could not go to Church on Sundays. The storm swept over everything. The fields, sky and villages became one white dense mass. On the grey horizons one could only see whirls of snow being carried upwards by the wind.

In these days hundreds of prisoners were mobilised to clear away the snow from morning to night. For me this was a continuous struggle with the cold. I was in the grip of a steel snake from head to foot. It was a burning frost that one could not get away from. From time to time I jumped, clapped my feet together. I would hit my body with my arms across my breast in order to get warm and often I wished to bury myself forever in the white piles. It was easier when I was told to clear the snow away from the trees or buildings because these protected me from the winds. I was among those who were sent to the house of the Forster to remove the snow. The poplars and the estate seemed to be crumbled under a mountain of snow like an igloo of the eskimoes. After a few days of work the avenue was cleaned and one could see the beautiful poplar trees. Near the entrance to the yard lay great big hunting dogs, tied by chains. They were tense and irritated, growling most of the time. The house was built of red-brick surrounded by verandas which were covered with creepers which reached up to the red-tiled roof. Now the leaves had fallen and everything was left bare. The paths in the garden were covered with pebbles. The fruit trees stood bare and the wife of the Forster would come out into the yard and would remark on the work which had not been done the way she wanted it. She was the one who directed the work of the prisoners and gave the orders to the guards, and these last would stand erect and say "Jawohl".

The children of about twelve to fourteen were dressed in brown shirts, with swastikas on the sleeves and were among the coming generation of the party. They were well brought up and disciplined. They greeted every German who came into the yard with "Heil". They were serious like the mother who gave orders, but took no notice of the prisoners. They also told the guards to watch us.

When they saw me they laughed and mocked: "What kind of army? Their fear of the Germans was so great that they threw away their coats and ran." The fact that I was working in that cold without a coat caught everyone's attention and they tried to guess the reason why. The stares of strangers fell on me alone. Their guesses endangered me and caused me more worry and suffering than the storm. Sometimes I wrapped myself in a ragged blanket to cover my lack of clothing. I waited eagerly for the night, to lie on the straw on the ground to eat my ration of bread and thin soup, which warmed and revived a little, I would be down like a hedgehog and sink into a world of make believe, delusion. My friends still sat for some time in the half dark and remembered things from their homes. Spoke about food from home and remembered their families with longing. This gave them a little relief from their sufferings. I was quiet. I never spoke about myself, not aloud, nor in whispers, even to my best friends. My relationship to the outside world seemed apathetic and was locked by twenty locks. My friends watched me and left me to lie peacefully. My depression affected them. They whispered among themselves. They did not talk to me in order not to causeme unhappiness as if they were ashamed of the actions of their comrades-in-arms, it not being important whom it was, the Poles, the Bylorussians, or the Ukranian. Being without a coat in that weather nearly drove me to madness. I felt as if I was losing my mental balance,

which I had guarded all the while I suspected that everyone was spying on me. When a German looked at me and asked why I was wrapped in rags I would lose by equinamity and become aggressive. My answer was terse and short and without patience: "Understand I am suffering from the cold very much and you ask me questions." Nevertheless I was careful of an outburst. I watched my tongue.

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THE FOREST IN MARCH 1940

The severe winter started coming to its end. The snow started falling less frequently and the snow that did fall, fell in unidentified lumps, wet pieces that melted the moment they reached the ground. Faint rays of sunshine appeared behind the trees. Here and there stretches of blue sky appeared but it again got cloudy and darkness again came. The snow on the branches was shaken off and lay at the foot of the trees in dirty heaps. Water flowed under the snow and with every step that I took with the wooden shoes they filled up again with it. On the higher levels stood puddles of water shining palely. In the lower part of the forest a great big shining grey lake was formed.

Dark days came. For days there was a thin drizzle with a wind. It lashed and penetrated the clothing to the very skin. The rotten leaves of the black area with the roots of fallen and broken trees was uncovered after the disappearance of the snow and a stink arose from the ground, and the water standing in the forest. The smell of putrefaction oppressed me, squeezed my stomach and caused me nausea and continual dizziness. Relief came when the rain stopped when the cold came again, and snow again began to fall and everything was again covered with fresh clean snow. The next day bright sun burst forth and warmed pleasantly. The snow again began to melt and the sky darkened and in the forest the darkening sky is far worse than anywhere else. It became dark around the middle of the day. A storm shook the branches and trees in all directions. After the wind, snow and rain fell and lashed us without mercy. Everyone sank into water up to their knees. It gave the feeling of a flood that fell on both

innocents and sinners. The people walked between the logs and got caught in the branches and the thick mud. Axes and other worktools were lost in the water. The people walked with bent backs, wrapped in blankets. At night I would put my jacket and pants under me to dry them but the heat of my body was unable to accomplish this. The next day I was on my legs again. I didn't give in, I was like a dried out stalk during all my years as P.O.W. The wind kept blowing it from side to side but did not uproot it. Again rain and wind blew and from time to time the sun burst through thick clouds, moved down, passed over, they chased one another in order to bump into one another. At that time the prisoners suffered an epidemic of colds. We were given no medical treatment. Prisoners who could not go out to work were sent back to the camp. I had fever and I did my best to overcome it. I did not want to act sick and be returned to the camp.

So the hard winter passed with rain falling from time to time and in my heart I expected the birth of spring, the rebirth of the universe. Perhaps it would bring me something new and good. Hope and spring walked arm in arm, coming closer and tempting life. I wanted to live;with that I knew hope can be the mother of disappointment. It could cause frustration and trouble especially to me in the complicated situation which I was in.

For half a year Germany was happy with the Third Reich. The leaders and generals planned, and the army prepared for the next mission. The guards spoke openly. They boasted confidently. With the melting of the snow ..... "Geht das los...." First they would go to the lowlands, after that to France and England. The prisoners waited impatiently for the moment the campaign was to begin. They thought that the moment Germany would reach France she would

break her neck as it happened in the First World War. Hitler prepared the nation for what was to come. He went to the big cities of the land and gave enthusiastic and rousing speeches before thousands. At the stations of the villages and towns where he stopped on his campaign he was received with flowers by blue eyed children with flaxen hair. The "Fuhrer" was deeply touched. He stroked their heads and smiled at them with a fatherly smile. He embraced them and kissed them. "The Fuhrer loves children. He is so busy that he cannot find time to build a family and have a child", the nation said sadly.

At that time I was with a group of prisoners at the station where we were loading railway blocks on trucks and on the platform of the open carriage I could identify him from his black moustache and the way the hair hung down on his forehead. From the corner of his mouth one could see his white teeth. Lots of mothers and children surrounded him. A little girl gave him flowers. Apparently she greeted him saying a few words of praise. One could see that he was touched by the words because his upright, tense position changed. Suddenly he burst out laughing, with a "Mephisto" laugh and for a moment he was a comrade of the crowd that gathered round him and cheered him with the accepted salute. Quickly he raised his hand for silence and his face became expressionless. He began to speak in broken barking shouts that gave the impression of threats; his eyes and hair gave the impression of glowing in anger. As the Germans said, he clutched his fists, he shouted threats, to the Western nations. It was as if he slung them down. And so it happened that the dearest wishes of the farmers and their workers, the artisans, the salesmen and businessmen came true. Enthusiastically and in unison, they all shouted, "Heil!" with a serious face and with a raised arm,

he separated from his followers and with a swift sharp turn he jumped into the carriage and the train with a long low whistle, moved along on its way to Konigsberg. The crowd, men and women and children went back to their work satisfied and happy. A wish had been fulfilled and they resolved to contribute even more to the war effort. Years later they still spoke about the incident, about the fact that they had been able to see him face to face.

It was an interval of peace between wars. The soldiers had leave to go and get married. They hurried to have a child. They took into consideration the fact that they would get paid 10 marks per month and get a ration book for the child. In addition, they would surely be able to get loot from where they would be fighting. Every soldier also got his pay which he could save up till the end of the war. In the conquered countries, he would be given a grant of land. He would be independant and not have to work for the Bauer any more and not for the "Arbeitsampt". He would be a landowner and the slavic peoples would workfor him.

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THE SNOW MELTS AND THE WAR BEGINS IN THE WEST

One bright morning when the snow began to melt in the West, the great commander opened his campagn as promised. Already at the beginning of April, 1940, the army was on the soil of Denmark. The King and his ministers capitulated. Only in Norway - as we understood from what the Germans said - were there battles for a few months in the forests and between the lakes, until they completely overcame them. The King ran away. Wherever the Germans went they left destruction behind. This was the first shock and disappointment for us and particularly for me; but hope did not vanish. My amazement was great when I read about Knut Hamsun in a scrap of paper I managed to pick up. Knut Hamsun, a Nobel prize winner justified the fascist deeds. Later the German newspaper printed his opinions. The German radio also broadcast it. In this he identified with the National Socialist idealogy and accused the Jews of causing the war to flare up. This amazed me. Could Knut Hamsun have said that? The writer who had suffered and wandered about in his life. In his books he described poverty and lonliness and fought those who robbed him. How depressed I was when I read his books so long ago, and I asked myself could there be hunger like that. I knew Jewish families in Poland who suffered from malnutrition, even terrible hunger. I knew Christian farmers whose parcel of land could not suffice them or supply them with sufficient food and they lived on potatoes alone; but hunger that was able to distort mans soul the way he described?? Now, in my life as a P.O.W. I was convinced. I experienced it on my own body. No, it was not his imagination, but reality.

But was the sensitive and humane writer also caught in the web of racism? Does he see the Jew as a subhuman? It was unbelievable, my world had fallen about me. My friend Vasiel was also shocked. He immediately came to a conclusion, saying: "An old man is like a child, he is silly and senile." For the Ukranian P.O.W.'s the news was proof that they were justified in their support of Nazi opinions (I am sure that they had never read Hamsun's books, let alone heard of him.) At any rate most of the prisoners were hurt about it. The case of Hamsun caused repercussions for many years. Usually when physical powers are on the ascent, the moral forces decline. They submit and are dragged down by the stupid shouting crowds. Pavluk Kudashov added: "Many writers will still express their opinions and will be dragged after satan and burn insence to the impotent moustache until his theories crumble with his intellectuals and they will all become one heap of muck."

The snow vanished and the rain slowed down, water was absorbed into the earth and the rest flowed out of the forest. Puddles became smaller. Here and there a green plant appeared. The trees began to be covered with green. More and more young pine cones appeared on the branches. Birds began to sing again. In cases like this ones heart is filled with the magic of years past, thoughts of one's home, one's childhood, of the spring and the twittering of birds.that excites the memories. I asked myself in bitterness: "To what have I come? What judge on high gave himself the right to judge and condemn me and determine that I am subhuman, or that I was inciting others to war according to what values do they estimate that I and my people are parasites and traitors? In which way am I worse than other nations, than the Ukranians, the Bylorussians, or the Poles? Why should I be hiding under a false name, whom did I deceive, exploit, rob? From whose mouth did I take the piece of bread, in which way was their

god better than mine? Where was the G-d who had commanded that I should be humiliated, that my coat and jacket be taken from my body and that I be left with my shirt alone? Let the master of the world appear, the all high conscience and prove that I am worth nothing as a man and prove that I have no right to breathe and prove that sadness and pain don't hurt my body and my soul. Doesn't the frost freeze my blood and doesn't malnutrition and hunger squeeze at myheart like at all other peoples and races?

Don't the rays of sun brighten and freshen my soul? Am I so hardened; is my heart shut to beauty and goodness? Will they forever brainwash millions of people and convince them that I and my race are a people of worms, maggots and poisonous snakes? .....

The song of larks filled the spring air and the heart was not quiet. It hesitated and asked questions to which there was no answer. I protested and banged on the high gates of the heavens but they remained closed and impenetrable without feeling or sensitivity to distortion of justice and loud protest.

The earth was at the beginning of its fruitfulness. The wonders of the hues and shades of green that catch at man with amazement and allure. On every hill and on every tree sprouted the green freshness. It made me even more sad and gloomy. The greenness made be look into the far future. The great big trees lay swollen in the waters of the swamp waiting for someone to pull them out.

Spring was at its height, everything bloomed. The forest was covered with branches and leaves in a mass of hues of light and shade, mystery and splendour.

The prisoners used the spring air in their free time

on Sundays for washing and for looking for lice in the seams of their clothes. In this same beautiful spring Hitler's forces were marching on the fields and plains of the Netherlands. They were bombing and blasting. They were burning and destroying and striking fear into the hearts of every living soul. The Poles were a little comforted by the proverb. "The sorrow of many gives half a comfort."" The Belgians also did not fight any longer than we did - three weeks - in the end.the King surrendered and the members of Parliament ran away to London. Every time there was another victory, Germany increased in worth and in the estimation in the eyes of the people around. It was impossible to imagine how Hitler was praised. Again the proverb, Justice is with might, indeed verified itself. Göebels department continued to pour ridicule and derision on Chamberlain and his umbrella Poets poured mockery and derision on the vanquished. Composers composed marches and the German soldiers marched to their rythm and the whole nation cheered and sang and took pleasure and saw a bright and rosy future for themselves.

The second disappointment for the Polish prisoners was not long in coming. France was the last card in hand regarding the resistance to the Nazi forces. Would they remain faithful to the Poles, was the idea in the minds of the Polish prisoners. Doubts began to permeate ... regarding the strength and ability of the French army, but no, the French would not surrender, would not accept the rule of the dictator alien to the tradition of the French Revolution. The French Nation emblazoned the slogan of Liberty Equality and Fraternity on their flag and because of that their fathers fought on the barricades. They were the people who defeated the aggressive Germans in the First World War. The spirit of the French was different from the spirit of

the Prussians, the polishers of swords who desired only to battle and spread their might and power. They acted like senseless obtuse disciplined robots. The French were the people who had won the Polish hearts. The days from April to June were days of tension for us. We expected good news that was to bring the great change that was to be the blow that was to bring Hitler to his end and bring freedom for us all. The tension was so great that I did not even notice the blossoming of the trees, and the scent of the pines that was filling the forest. True the rain and wind had already passed away long ago, but I wore the same tattered and patched clothes. They only gave us clean shirts every month and increased the rations of bread and margarine and tea. All this was not important. The news that the Germans were beaten this time was what I was waiting for. It did not happen. The Germans were in a good mood but we never really knew whether they were winning easily and if everything was running smoothly for them. Most of the news we got from the Polish and Ukranians news. This news was even worse than the German news. Most of it was incitement against the Jews and even the moderate Ukranians were sick of it. At any rate the truth was bitter and disappointing for us. For me this period was doubly miserable. Every surrender of a Western Nation to the Germans meant extra suffering for the Jews. They were thrown out of their homes, mothers and children crying. The shooting of young and old on the highways and roads. These pictures did not vanish before my eyes. The kosh upheld to strike and the symbol of the death's head on the helmet. I wanted to shake off the memories and loose myself in the hard work, or in conversation with my friends. To laugh like others, but this I seldom managed because here the guard would say: "The Dorniers are bombing the last packets of resistance of the enemy. The panzers and the infantry are striking at the retreating

French army and the Jews are running away." The Poles went along downcast and depressed and I was stunned and shocked. I could not find any quiet in my tense and bitter soul but with all that I kept control of my feelings. In the evening after we had eaten we would talk about current events and politics. A prisoner from Western Galicia when arguing with a Polish prisoner, said: "Hitler is not a boaster, like the Poles and the Jews say. His prospects of victory are clear to him from the start like on a chess board. When he starts an attack he doesn't stop until the last move. He doesn't hurry into war. He first warned Norway, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, "surrender", he told them. In the end he warned the French. They did not want to hear. After six weeks of real war France pulled out of the game. So what can be said of your Poland? In one breath her soldiers and arms were blasted to the four winds". (As it was said the speaker had been active in the Ukranian underground.)

There were often fights amongst the different people because of different opinions.

That same night there was a wave of depression. After it became known to him (Pavel) that the Germans conquered France he opened his Bible in Ukranian:

"Isia the prophet said ....."

The Poles said: Translate for us, we don't understand Ukranian. One of the Ukranians wanted to know among which nation Isiah had been a prophet. "Israel", answered Pavel Gal. An argument began whether Bnei Israel and "Djid" were both descendants from Judas the traitor, and Pavel continued. "For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty and upon everyone that is lifted up and he shall be brought low and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up and upon all the oaks of Bashan."

"Do you know what the meaning is?" Kudashov asked in a loud voice. "It is intended for Stalin." Another prisoner on the other side of the hut interrupted him: "Also against your friend ....." and Pavel Gal continued to read: "and upon all the high mountains and upon all the hills that are lifted up and upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish and upon all the pleasant pictures and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of man shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted on that day."

The argument between the Poles and the Ukranians continued even after the reading. The Bylorussians were divided in their opinions and the handful of Ukranians preferred to keep quiet and not to interfere in the conversation on the lack of knowledge of their people. As usual the argument was about German politics and her victories and went over to the subject of G-d and mortality. On the subject of G-d and Religion there were discussions during the entire time that we were prisoners. In all cases and conditions of life the subject of the Jews finished all the discussions. Even this time they were not satisfied. They simply did not wish to accept the fact that the prophets had been Jews. After that they began to talk about the main motivations of human society for example, G-d, ones feelings, ones conscience. They maintained that it was G-d who determined the wars, the fate of nations and countries and the fate of Man. Others explained that in early times Man tried to take his fate into his own hands but he did not succeed. After misfortune and murder had gone beyond control, Moses put control on them and gave them laws of steel. Made them suffer and punished them for every little tresspass, until he stopped sodomy and licentiousness. Then came Jesus who was the revelation of G-d and took out the bitter sting from the commandments and the stern and strict laws

and adjusted it to the sensitiveness of man. He brought them to the path of tolerance, forgiveness and mercy. As against that the fanatical Christians maintain that tolerance and mercy is only for those who are believers and not for those who do not believe, like the Jews. Moreover, one should treat them as the Bishops did, in the Middle Ages or like the "Hetman of Zaparoge". Here some Catholics I did not know interfered and among them was Pavel Gal, also a religious Catholic "Know that the Inquisitor Bishop Fernando Martines and Torquemado stained not only Catholocism but the whole of Christianity because they allowed torture against the command of forgiveness and mercy (This opinion I had heard from other Catholics and will still quote from it.) The Pope before the outbreak of war received the officers of the Wehrmacht and the SS at an interview and gave them his blessing. The results were known to us. They shot Polish priests before the eyes of the believers. They put them in concentration camps. I, myself, don't believe in curses and blessings. I am a Catholic but without that. The rule is that all the leaders who want to bring in their ideas of torture, their blood is on their heads; The same law holds for the fanatics of Zaparoge..." Here a storm broke loose against Pavel and those who were for him, and they began to fight. Pavel, in spite of being wounded was physically very strong, got up and warned: "WHoever touches me, his blood will be on his head. I won't play with forgiveness and tolerance between Catholicism and between Zaparoge....."

The rattling of the keys of the guards at the door made them lower their voices. With that the fanatic Ukranians maintained that one had to get rid of the "Judas sons" (Jews), the traitors and those without mercy.and forgiveness, the murderers of G-d. There were a mixture

of opinions and religious commentaries that did not fit the principles of Christianity. They called Hitler the Messenger of G-d, who punished the descendants of "Judas Ishkrayot."

At the same time there were rumours that Jews had infiltrated among the prisoners and the Germans wanted them discovered - naked - the informer hinted at one or the other and looked for characteristics that could typify them. They whispered about me behind my back. The Ukranians were pleased to find something to the disadvantage of others! There was no better entertainment than seeing Jews without trousers like in the camp, and discover their circumcision. In the camp there were people who had suffered from sex illnesses who were afraid of these rumours and they would give up the entire idea just so that the doctor would not discover their illness. (Those suffering from sex illnesses were sent to hospital). I knew a few of them. For me and them these were days of worry and depression. Each was afraid for the reasons of his own - but the end would be the same for all. My friends understood what was worrying me and comforted me and said: "Don't pay any attention - there have been many rumours and none were substanciated," but I knew that this old new trouble was my trouble. In any case they were honest and only people of deep feeling were able to comfort me.

So not many days passed and we were ordered to clean the floors of the hut and the weeds surrounding it on the outside. We were all disinfected, our bodies and our clothes. All this because a medical delegation was to come and visit us. After a few days the Förster, the SS Medical officer and other medical staff all came riding on horseback. There was absolute quiet. The knights jumped from their horses and shouted "Heil".... They went round the hut but did not come in (It was said that in spite of the cleanliness

they were afraid of infectious diseases.) The Forster, the colonel, the medical officer, exchanged remarks, gave the officer orders. The officer spoke to the sergeant, the sergeant to the guards. These said Jawohl with expressionless faces. The Forster, the medical officer and others jumped on their horses, straightened their backs, shouted "Heil", and their horses jumped forward. The horsemen vanished from the forest in a cloud of dust.

We all breathed more freely. The guard gave a controlled smile. The prisoners lost their fears, particularly those who had sexual diseases and the fear also left me.

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S L E E P L E S S N E SS AND N I G H T F E A R S

At times I came to the conclusion that the hatred of the slavs for the Jews was greater than the patred of the Germans for the Jews. I felt the Abys that separated the slavs from the Jews. At night I would think a great deal. What was the source of this hatred. From where did it come and why does it never stop. In the years of my youth I learnt the reason for anti-semitism. The historians and researchers gave differend explanations, but their conclusions were ruled by the reality of the wild hatred without control that I experienced in my reality. It was the hatred of narrow mindedness, stupidity and impulsiveness and I could never find tht logical reason for it. I do mt say that we Jews were the best of all nations. If there was such an idea it was the result of narrow mindedness, and chauvinistic ideas. I was in the camp among Jews and there I came across weaknesses in the society. They were not all good, but nevertheless the majority were more understanding and knew how to think more deeply. I am not talking of crooks and rogues. Even the most fanatic Jews had in them a feeling of mercy for a strange nation among whom they lived for two thousand years. History cannot accuse us in any way of torturing or hurting Christians because of their religion or that Jews ever organised pogroms or murders against Christian neighbours. Sure they were not worse than the slavs and this tells me a great deal. I had arguments with my friends on this question. I explained the part of the Jews and they agreed with most of my opinions. They also had reasons why there was hatred for the Jews. At any rate there were people who had knowledge and could think for themselves and not be influenced by the propaganda and the brainwashing of Goebels. I was convinced that hatred of the Jews was not mystical and not necessary. So my slavic

friends maintained. They understood me and protected me. True these were singular cases, even out of the ordinary. I shudder when I think of my past and write about it. It seemed that for nights I went without sleep. Apathetic and bleary eyed I went about my work in the day and dragged my legs without energy. When the guard beat me with the butt of his rifle my face did not distort with pain. At night I slept in a state of wakefulness, sleep that was not sleep, a sort of light mist. The slightest rustle would wake me. I was in a maze of thoughts, half real, half illusion, to which there was no beginning and no end. The golden rays of the early June sun came through the trees. The fresh dew-covered leaves and moss gave a fresh scent to the air. One could hear the birds singing among the trees. I was overcome by a deep sadness. I knew that I was dreaming dreams that would never return to me, but during the day of hard labour they gave me moments of happiness.

I waited for the night; but the moment I fell asleep I began to have dreams of delusion. They were similar but with slight differences and they spoke to me in symbols. In the course of time I got to know what was troubling me. Feelings of guilt troubled me because I had separated myself from the rest of the Jews who remained in the Stablack Camp.

I had complaints against myself. Why had I left with my Christian friends. Why had I joined them: If I had remained with them in camp I would have been with all the other depperate Jews among the "Oleh lamim" victims (The innocent burnt offerings that were given in the temple.) In the flame that arose high in the deep blue skies I would have been trapped in the big camp with the innocents and the tortured. We would have shaken the foundations of the world on which was founded murder and crying, injustice and wrong, for which there was no pardon. I lay on the straw, my friends

were deep in their sleep. From the side of the hut came the sound of friendly conversation and laughter. It was the story of a Jewish peddler who had come into the yard of the speaker - a farmer - and he had freed his dog fromtthe chain. The dog bit into the behind of the Jew and had thrown him over. The Jew shouted "Gewald" and ran the whole length of the village with his behind bare. The teller added "The Jew never put his foot in my yard again. The people of the village remembered this for a long time. The Jew with his trousers in his hands and his bottom bare." The laughter still echoed when shouts burst out from two people of the same group, one blaming the other for taking his slice from under his pillow.

I turned from side to side, my head dizzy and heavy. I couldn't open my eyes. I lay on a handful of straw crushed together, and thin. I opened my eyes and again they closed. Here I was in a frightening reality. I was thrown down on a planet or on the North or South Poles and here were enormous ice bergs floating slowly along. One bumped into the other and smashed it to pieces. The black sky was always reflected into the white ice. On this planet the ten commandments did not exist, nor feeling, nor soul. The creatures without feeling were seen on the horizon as shadows. There was no echo to their cry becauee the sound of the crashing of the icebergs deadened the howling of the lost creatures. It seemed as if I had succeeded in communicating with some creatures. Some walked upright, others on all fours, but they had the heads of men. One could see sadness in their faces. From the movement of their lips one could see that they were on an exiled planet, they were eating each other and finally taking mouthfuls of ice. When I asked if they were satisfied they answered: "It does not matter to us. We have already gotten used to this sort of life and also to the planet that causes our bodies to shiver.

There are no better stars!' He stopped talking and fell into a crack in the ice and vanished as if he had never existed. One did not hear a sound on this planet. No notes or twitter of a bird. No spirit of G-d or soul of man swirled in the sky. The ice, the frost and the lonliness were all pervading there. The sole masters, the creatures who were there, were as nothing against the huge glaciers which were threatening to cover everything. Their cries were so faint that neither groan or moan could arouse any reaction even if it reached the top from the bottom of the abyss or to the neighbouring stars scattered thinly about the heavens. They flickered faintly like dim lights on a misty night. The cry of pain was not absorbed nor heard and was not answered by the Almighty of the world because he was not to be found there. No one paid attention to conscience. There was not and had never been any. Only the huge heaps of snow avalanched down from the tops without restraint or limit and a wind blew fiercely, rose and fell and swallowed up any wailing that there might be .....

The effort of crawling and running away from the ravine of the valley of death (it appears that it was I who fell into the cleft of the glacier). The climbing up a slippery wall, digging nails into the ice in the effort not to fall back into the black abyss exhausted me and when I succeeded in remaining on the glacier, no matter how, I lay there washed out for a long time. I was overcome by a terrible lonliness, a feeling of utter solitariness. I put my hands before my face and an inner force arose within me to pour out my prayers before some Fatherlike or Motherlike being, who was not there and from me came the words of the poet:

(i) Put me under your wings/ and be my mother or sister/
and your lap will be a place to lay my head/
it will be a nest for my rejected prayers/

(ii) At the time of mercy in the dusk/
I will tell you the secret of my sufferings/
One says there is youth in the world/
Where is my youth.

(iii) The stars have deceived me/
There was a dream - but that too passed/
Now I have nothing in the world
Not any thing/

(Free translation from Bialik)

I poured out my prayers in Hebrew words and those came back to me from the not so distant past. Therefore I had nothing and in spite of everything it was good for me to be on the wilderness of ice even for those few seconds. There, no human who could create strange forms and extraordinary situations could interfere with me. The place helped me to suppress my difficulties for a moment and to free myself from oppression. For a short time the lonliness and solitariness became bearable.

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POLISH AND FRENCH P.O.W.'s IN GERMANY

From the beginning of the spring of 1940 the Germans had stupendous victories in Europe. Victory followed victory. One country's defeat caused others to fall like a chain reaction. The conditions forced the Germans to greater mobilization of forces in the conquered territories where they had enforced the already draconic laws. There was a lot of work for the S.D. (Security Forces) the Gestapo (Secret Police) and later the Work Organization T.O.T. was established, which brought hundreds of people close to the frontlines and to the far rear. These people wore dark orange uniforms. They carried small arms and koshes. They were mostly German. They organized road building and fixing of roads, building bridges and making bunkers. Among the T.O.T. people there were Volksdeutchen, Poles, Mazurim from areas that were annexed to the Reich. There were youth who cruelly oppressed the conquered peoples, particularly the Jews among the workers. There were also SS and SA among them who were known for their slander and who were busy with "ordnung" between wars. They also looted in the conquered territories. From time to time there were other small mobilizations in Germany. The shortage of manpower was felt in every branch of the German economy in agriculture, workshops, factories and mines. With the conquest of Poland, the Germans got agricultural workers. In the first year also Polish civilians were brought over to Germany and their status was like that of a P.O.W. In 1939 after the battles about two weeks after the outbreak of war, the Germans also brought over Jewish civilians to Germany. They were from Shedlitz and the surrounding villages. They brought them to the camps of East Prussia. They

did not occupy them with productive work, they only tortured them. Most of them were liquidated in Stalag. A very few were later returned to Poland to their homes and to their destroyed communities. The older Polish population who had also been brought tothe camps were returned to their homeland. The Germans starved the P.O.W.'s in the Stalag camp so that they became beasts. They would unite in groups and at nightfall attack the tents and rob the people of their very last crumb of bread. In a short time the prisoners preferred to work under the hardest conditions, only to get a place to sleep in peace and enough food, the quality was not important. The main thing was to fill the stomach. After they had distributed the prisoners to all the branches of farm work in Prussia the prisoners would remember the camps as a horror and fear to go back. They were now working in agriculture and doing their work without resistance like good oxen. When they had more or less satisfied their hunger they became free of past horrors and their spirits improved. They still complained about the poor food, but continued in the same way from morning till night.

After France was defeated the prisoners said: "The game is not yet over. Other countries will be destroyed. Other governments will surrender and in the end the two big powers will clash. Each will try to behead the other and then the hour of Poland's independance will come". Many saw in the historical aspect Poland going over from cnnquest to conquest exploited and suffering. This was the mystical Catholic vision. According to it, Poland had to suffer in order to be saved. She would be purified and saved and then become independant.

After some time the prisoners accepted the fall of France and the frustration passed. Józef would say sarcastically: "We, the Poles, are in good company together with Belgium, Norway and our friend, France."

Usually when a soldier becomes a P.O.W. he throws away his arms and the failure hurts him deeply. He is disappointed, feels as if he has been deceived and lays the blame on the leaders and generals; but after a few months his mood changes and he sees his life as if he had gained it and he accepts his fate. His eyes are opened. He curses the war. It does not matter to him. If he once had extreme nationalist ideas, they have blunted. His outlook on life changes a great deal. His philosophy of life becomes more serious and deeper. He looks soberly at the events that happened and says: "I did my share, now let others fight." He finishes with the Polish saying: "The main thing is not to take things to heart, to eat well and not to wear tight shoes," and he adds, "We will overcome the Schwabe and the Muscol both and deliverance will come." The simple people among the Polish P.O.W.'s accepted their conditions quite easily. But against that the Polish intelligensia did not adjust easily to the P.O.W. conditions and to exile. They were always sad and hoped that their deliverance would come from that place. The Polish P.O.W. was isolated and left to one side during the time of his capture. At any rate neither I nor my friends ever saw a representative of the International Red Cross from Switzerland during the entire time of my captivity. Once a so-called representative from one of the conquered territories appeared. Those people were hand in glove with the Germans and with the "order making" policy of the SS, and these representatives did not help us with food or a shirt to our backs. The Polish P.O.W. was kept outside the law of International Red Cross. With us was the law of Hitler's and his associates from the German Red Cross. However, one can say that without the knowledge of the rulers many of the employers gave the P.O.W. fair treatment and even more if he showed that he was worthy of it. If he worked well and was

physically strong and able to do the work. According to this he got his food and his cigarette or half cigarettes as the case may be. Also in these cases it was up to the employer. There were indeed those who fed their people well and in that case deviated from the Nazi law. The general opinion among the Germans was: Work was an obligation for all from the youth to the aged and especially in time of crises. Every German citizen was obliged to work and the prisoner, the stranger, had to work doubly hard in all places and under all conditions. Sick prisoners and lazy people are eaters of free bread. In this respect the Polish P.O.W. was ideal, he was a workman in the towns and the villages, in factories and mines, and under difficult conditions with simple work tools. He came from a backward economy as compared to the German one. He worked hard with his hands and was not spoilt. True, he was arrogant and boastful but he also knew how to do what was demanded of him. He lowered his head and kept quiet continuing to obey the German shouts and commands.

Every six months headquarters would bring all the P.O.W.'s together in one of the big villages or in a town close by and hold an assembly. Everyone had to sign a form which forbade them having relations with German women. The one who broke this law would die. This was always the first rule that my friends and I had to sign. We did this many times. The guarding of the women whose husbands were mobilized or young unmarried women, was an iron rule among them. It would be one of the worst crimes to taint the German race. In fact, the first punishment for the breaking of any rule was returning the prisoner to the camp.

This was not the relation they had towards the French prisoner, his fate was a far better one. There were a million and a half taken as prisoners of war and for a start they were

kept in camps set up from South to North Germany beyond Konigsberg.

The defeated General Petain was promised that his prisoners would be treated according to international ruling and that they would live in reasonable conditions. The International Red Cross was activated (I don't know if there were French or German representatives of the Red Cross or if they were those from Switzerland.) They began to look after them. In the beginning they indulged them a little. They got letters and parcels from their families and from social and Christian Institutions. The food in the camp was not so very bad. Their families sent them parcels in which there were chocolates, coffee and cigarettes. Every chocolate bar was about a finger thick. This amazed the Germans. They had never seen chocolat like that. Till then they thought that the French economy was collapsing. The Jew Blum and others had caused the French economy to be bankcrupt. After about six months the parcels came in lesser quantities and less frequently and those that came were not in order. The biscuits and the cakes which the families and social institutions had packed so carefully, reached their destination crumbled and squashed where they had been opened and parts taken by the censors and Post Office workers. The French complained in letters to their relatives in France that the Germans did not keep their promises to the Vichy Govt. The Germans stated that the families of the prisoners put notes inside the food hinting and telling about the political situation they were in. The Germans punished the recipients of the letters and treated them badly. If a German clutched or touched a Frenchman, the latter would dust off the place as if he had been dirtied. At times they refused to carry out the orders of the guards but the Germans soon reacted to this. If they were slow and did not do as they were told, the Germans would simply raise their koshes and bring them down on their heads. The Germans

regarded their refined manners as "Cowardly and frightened" and tried to humiliate and break them physically. The French were in special groups and did not become friendly with the Poles at the start but when the German treatment grew worse and when kicks and rudeness became everyday matters, all the humiliated prisoners were drawn closer to each other. The French farmers were sent to the big estates. They did not hurry at their work, they weren't influenced by or grateful for the cigarette of the Bauer and rejected his "graciousness" particularly those who got cigarettes from France. When they began to work in agriculture the Germans prevented contact between them and the Poles, but in the course of time when the war spread to the whole of Europe, and the problem of keeping the Reich in order was more important, the supervision of the prisoners became less strict and part of the prisoners came under the supervision of the Police and on the farms the French and the Poles worked together shoulder to shoulder. Their relationship was not always ideal but their enmity towards the Germans drew them closer together. The Germans saw the enemy in both of them. In time most of the Stalag camps did not have prisoners. These were distributed among the big estates, among the small Bauers and in the workshops. In winter they were warmly dressed: Army coats, sweaters, scarves and warm underpants, strong leather shoes and even leather gloves. They got this from the Vichy Gout or from charitable institutions. The Frenchmen went their desired way without caring too much. The farmer got used to the Frenchman although he did not get too much satisfaction from him. In time the Frenchman adjusted to the work life and life of slavery. He managed to cope with the long day of hard labour, and was encouraged when he got a parcel from his family or friends. He was satisfied that the war had finished for him in this way.

In his words the fact that he had remained alive and the fact of being alive was more important to him than the fulfilling of his duty to his country which forced him to lie in the frost and heat and damp in the trenches and bunkers and be killed the way it had been in the First World War. Soon they began to absorb Goebels propaganda, "We don't want to fight for the Jews:" anti-semitism began more and more to infiltrate among them and a good many of them really got caught in the web of Nazi propaganda. They published a French Newspaper in which P.O.W. officers, reactionaries of the past, played their part. In their paper the German orderliness was praised and the hope was expressed that this would also be introduced in France. They praised the German youth, the "Hitler Jugend" who was being educated.to fords a definite mission. They also praised the mission and purpose of the German people. In comparison to Germany there was anarchy in France, differences of opinion, many parties, and a rotten democracy ruled over everything. In spite of all the praise of the Nazis that was printed in the paper, the French knew how to think independantly and did not believe everything in the paper. Basically the French would not accept dictatorship or blind Prussian discipline. In fact when talking to them one did not find extreme nationalists. If there had been any of them their ideas on life had changed radically. As they explained to me once: "At the front we fought freely. " Their hatred of Fascism was born with them. They were unhappy when they surrendered. They were ashamed of it. But in time they accepted their fate, after they had undergone'treatment', with fists, koshes and slaps in the face, mainly at the beginning of their stay in the camps. The French could think about the war more slowly and clearly, also about the people in it and saw no purpose or hope. However he was pleased that he had remained alive, that his senses were there and he would say that he was breathing,

not rotting in the earth. That he was not buried like the unknown soldier with his face in the earth under the bushes. One can say of every prisoner that he loves life more after he has become a prisoner, he values his life like a pearl that was scooped up from the and he had to guard it like the apple of his eye. Only now he learned to what extent the pearl was variegated, multi-coloured, fascinating and beautiful. He was ready to take on the yoke like an ox only to go through the cursed war.

There was a difference in their attitude towards religion. Among them were those who had become religious. Their lives had been saved when before their eyes bombs and mortars had been exploding, buildings were crumbling and the bodies of their comrades were shattered. They saw in it a right for which they were worthy. So and not otherwise: G-d had guarded them and had spread out steel wings to save them. Had granted them their lives afresh and when told that it was egoistical to justify the preservation of life in this way, they would answer that G-d's ways were inscrutable and not to be examined. They were above our understanding and logic. If we have remained alive with all our senses we will bless God and not go into it. In any case we will never uncover the secret. The doubters of these beliefs maintained that it was not likely that those alive and those who had died had been chosen by any particular ethical criterion. In killing in the war the incident is clear, the reason complicated. On this point both Frenchmen and Poles, when they examined the point, were not able to find the definite reason. He always spoke of his comrade as being a man of better character than he was. They felt that there was something unfair in human life. The sorrow that was caused by war was so shocking that one could not forgive G-d if he really was involved in the affair. The moral to be learnt from this war was to remember what one had learnt in the many tortuous ways and watch what was happening. Not to believe in the ~~leaders~~.

of the people and the generals. To cherish life with greater and more widsom and value than before. The third type of peisoner was the one who was completely in dispair of all moral values or ways of religion. They said that if they came out of captivity they would follow their desires and take what they wanted no matter what means they used, even force. They would enjoy what life had to offer and compensate themselves for the time they had lost. The results of the war were deception and emptiness.

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IDEAS OF BEAUTY AND PLEASURE

The summer came to the forest in all its beauty and splendour. The surroundings/environment were changed completely. The winter with its storms and frosts had gone a long time ago, also the spring/came with its diametrical golden rays shining through the leaves. Its freshness that gave new life and new beginning. The summer took its place. Theygrey black colours were gone. The trees were no longer naked and/left bare & unprotected to the winds and the storms. The autumn leaves had left no trace of themselves. In their place patches of green moss had spread under the trees carpeting the ground; the forest was completely decorated and hung in green. The trees had grown/tall and straightened/out the thick branches spreading shade all around. The trunks stood firm only the tops and the leaves swayed slowly back and forth, like a boat that was anchored in a bay on quiet waters. At times flocks of birds came down on the treetops but the echoes of the saws and axes frightened them and with a cry they dashed up again into the blue heaven where they circled high, high up. They seemed like a black shiny mass and again they came down. The mass grew longer, disintegrated and bits fluttered about. Suddenly the birds regrouping, made a sharp turn, became one long line, and landed on a quiet side of the forest. The saws ate into the body of the wood. The axes let the chips fly and cut/more deeply into the body of the wood. For a moment the tree stood up straight held by nothing, and then with a groan and whistle of wind it came crashing down. The alarmed bird group took off upwards, into the sky, and did not come back until the blazing sun was on its way downwards and the sun and the trees were reaching out towards one another. Sky, forest and swamp were blending into in one mass. Then one heard the loud rustle. Birds preparing their nests for the on-

coming night. A wind rustled between the trees, as the golden rays dipped into the sea of greenery and as night sell, shed a glorious light on the forest.

SAdness and beauty, when they appear, they are bound together for as long as they exist, be it long or short. Can there be beauty without sadness? As I see it, No. In the evening hours sadness is felt. It sounds like the single plucked string on the violin and tends to move Eastwards with the shadow of the trees. The golden light of the setting sun slowly disappears and the sadness touches the solitary heart. One wonders how the bittersweet beauty diminishes and disappears and the lonely dark of night sets in.

Vasiel Gursky and I were slowly dragging branches. We were walking shoulder to shoulder. We were deep in thought and did not speak. Often we stopped. An old German guard signed to us .... "Langsam; but do not stop." We felt that the guards were strange to this work. The prisoners were exhausted, dragging their legs. The Germans were tired and bored from doing nothing, and among those who were still a little humane would hurry us on when we stopped, with the remark "Die offizier kommt."

Vasiel completely within himself, expressed gloom and sadness and felt the pain of the memory. "Do you know, at home I have a plot of land exactly like that over there -" he pointed with his finger"and it bordered on a wood." In summer I would get up at five in the morning. At ten I would have a rest in the fields and eat, lie in the shade of a tree, and the pleasant smell of clover would be wafting all around. I loved it. I would close my eyes and the light breeze would refresh me. I would lie on my side with my head propped up by my forearm and plan the work of the farm, think of my children and still think of the argument I had with my wife the day before. I would turn over on my stomach with my forehead placed on my two fists. Then I saw the figure

of the woman, in the fourth house from mine. She was a healthy buxom figure. There were times I used to meet her, behind the haystack - and so I gave my thoughts free reign and my head became clear." After a short time he asked me with a bitter laugh; "Do you think I sinned and because of those sins came here?" "I don't think that you were punished because of that", I answered. He looked at the horizon from time to time. There the forest ended and the fields began. His face expressed sadness and despair. "Listen Theophile, druch, if my fate decrees that I must die a prisoner, and this can happen suddenly like it happened to others, for all kinds of reasons, every guard is a "Fuhrer" - I would like to be buried there between the field and the forest, and round my grave there will be the scent of pine-needles and the smell of hay, the song of birds and the rays of the sun, and I will lie steeped in the memories of home" ..... "and in autumn and winter", I stopped him, "the forest doesn't let flowers grow, the fields are grey clods of earth and the trees of the forest stand alone and have the lashing rain pouring down, and the grave is a mass of water." He answered : "In winter the trees will be in a state of mourning and they will shake with cold. They will stand quietly above my grave. Many rain tears will drop from their branches. Understand, someone must cry over a good Christian like myself who takes punishment after death for his sins," he smiled, "but believe me, I haven't come from the flotsam and jetsum. I loved G-d's creatures and the sorrow of my fellow man was my sorrow. Perhaps I sometimes desired a strange woman but I did not cause her harm. It was by mutual consent. Perhaps I drank the extra glass of wine when black clouds covered the village and a heaviness pressed on the heart that was full of longing for the woman neighbour. After a drink the heart opens to ones friend. I would take another drink and another and

then he would understand me and I him." So we had our sad-humourous conversation.

In the last days of summer the croaking of the frogs re-echoed in the swamps from all sides. They spread out and came from the distance to the hut and also the opposite. They would go away and their croaking would die down. Before going to sleep I would remember far away things. In my village on clear nights with the stars flickering, falling and disappearing, the moon sailing quietly in the sky and watching the creatures down below innocently going their way. Some happily, others in tears. There were those filled with desire and others walking bent over, worn out, before the end of their days. I thought of the great variety of people there were. Each one stood out vividly before me, even the less attractive ones. I liked them all. Before I slept I sent them my blessing: "Be blessed all of you." Cold winds began to blow from the forest. From time to time rain fell with thunder and lightning accompanying it. The sky did not clear quickly. The air remained damp. Daily Prussia began to have a darker aspect. I knew that the camp would not continue for another winter.

During the summer we tried to keep our bodies clean. We washed in dirty water, we rubbed our bodies with kerosene to kill the lice. The sores on my back returned and I was worried by it because just at that time there was a rumour going round that we would be sent out to the farms. The guards said there was no reason to keep on uprooting the trees in their country. They had conquered countries in which there were plenty of forests. It was a hint that soon the work there would be finished.

If they returned me to the terror of Stalag I would be finished. I would not be able to avoid them. They would not

take me for agricultural work. I don't know how to plough and sow and thresh and I have never worked with horses. In addition one needs physical strength and I was weakened and just now I have sores on my body. Each movement of the body caused the clothes to rub against the sores. It was as if hot burning coals were touching me. This fact was enough to send me to hospital. The truth was I was prepared to accept all the bad conditions only to stay in that place in spite of the enmity amongst the people.

Our common fate did blunt the excess nationalism that typified some of the priesners. They were less aggressive, less antagonistic and they didn't ask me questions, as to why I had no clothes. They accepted it. They saw that I had come through the winter and the storms, and they respected me.

One Stiopa, an elderly intelligent Ukranian once taught me: "Don't ever be too polite, be one of them. Listen and smile. Be happy with them in little silly things as well as big things. Be honest and open with them whether you are in the company of priests or thieves, be like them. If they touch you, use your fists. Even if you are weak and get struck, show them your fists and they will respect you."

I learnt a lot from his words. I didn't always think of these things on my own. I did not always succeed in changing the character I was born with and taking on new characteristics. First I had to gain qualities for myself that I did not recognize and blend them with those that I had. Indeed I began to act according to my friend's advice. If anyone touched me, I did not offer the other cheek. I did not bow my head, I answered back at once, perhaps not so loudly but I showed them who I was and my honour dispersed their doubts regarding my national origin (It was understood that my friends would come to my aid if there were any fisticuffs, as indeed I would stand by them.) I remembered the time I was eight years old and I fought with my friends in stupid childishness. We were on a raft in the

FROM THE CLOSED FOREST TO THE OPEN FIELDS.

One day the guards went among the prisoners and noted down their previous occupations. We understood at once that there would be a change. My friends said that they had been farm workers or owners at home. I did not know how to get out of the dilemma. After my friend had discussed the matter Józef said to me quietly: "Write yourself down as a farm worker," and added, "in our group there are two farmers, the rest are city workers. If we get soup and bread and potatoes with the farmer it will be enough and we will overcome our weakness. I will tell you the truth, your place is with us, keep away from stupidity and animosity as you would find among those from Galicia and there are many of them." He spoke briefly and openly. His words embarrassed me. I was not used to being spoken to in a straight open manner. In their behaviour they never gave a hint that they knew of my origin. Now I knew that I had been a little too confident. I now knew that my position would always be serious. I understood from his words that they were afraid for me and I realised how much I was at their mercy and dependant on their goodwill. I was afraid that they might separate me from my friends. It was hard to look into the future and see in whose company I would be living in the future. Of course, I wished myself to be among them in the future as well. In the late hours of the evening they told everyone to go out to assembly with his rucksack. After a long wait the Forster again appeared, the forest guards and all the other foresters and with them farmers wearing furs. It was a cool dark September night with no stars or a moon. A cold wind blew in frmm the sea. The prisoners stood bent, wrapped in coats and blankets, waiting for the second distribution. Again the same picture. A long line of farmers and SS officers passed slowly among the prisoners and lit up our faces with kerosene torches and flashlights. The prisoners stood upright

straightened their backs and gave the impression of strength so that they would not be deleted from agricultural work. We got on to lorries. After about an hours journey on a smooth tarred road we turned on to a dirt road. We stopped in front of every farm that was about two kilometers away from each other and small groups and single people got off. Again the lorry moved and swayed and pushed us from side to side. Again it turned on to a sandy road, climbed up to a farm and stopped there.. TherGerman soldier touched me with his stick and said: "Du, runter", I had hardly been able to say goodbye to my friends when I was standing in the yard alone.

It was in the autumn days of 1940. Dark nights. The buildings of the farm looked black and seemed to be close to the ground. To the left of the yard/was a low lying building, completely wrapped in darkness. From the windows flickered dim lamplight. There the families of the servants lived. On the right stood a high broad building surrounded by thick chestnut trees. In the darkness of the yard, light was thrown out from the kitchen windows of the big house and showed a well with a pump in the middle of the yard. Mud and puddles surrounded the pump. Strong winds from the fields blew between the buildings. I felt strange, lonely and without confidence. I leaned against the fence and looked for protection against the wind. From the side of the veranda of the house, a short strong individual approached me, he had a full pale but tired face, not too young, wearing a long wide Polish army coat buttoned up to the chin. A Polish army cap was closely pulled over his ears to protect them from the wind. He came to me, greeted me in Ukranian "Zvetky?" (From where are you, which meant, from which area of Poland are you). Then he went over to Polish mixed with words of Ukranian. This accent I managed to understand. I answered him in Bylorussian and Polish. I saw this man for the first time;according to him they had brought him there an hour before from the P.O.W. camp. He

looked at me half suspicious, half curious and in the end asked whether I was Catholic, Provoslav or Greek Catholic. Then he asked if I knew farm work.

From one of the dark corners of the yard a crippled man came out. He was completely bent, moving from side to side; not looking he came to us. He stopped in front of us, lifted his eyes and looked at us in wonder. From the farmhouse the soldiers who had accompanied us came out. I knew him from the forest. He explained that the estate owner would receive me. He, the guard, would visit us every day and for whatever we needed we were to apply to him only. In the end he said, with a stern face, it would be for our own good if we were in order and if not, he warned, that he would know what to do. He said good-night and went. After that, a very tall German came out of the house, he was very old but quick and steady on his legs. He wore clogs, a jacket and worn workpants. He was grey, was well shaven and combed and smoked a cigar. He spoke a German that I could not understand. Later I learned that it was Platdeutch (An accent current in North Germany). When he saw that we did not understand he called an old woman - grey haired - the mistress of the house, an aggressive woman. She asked in "Hochdeutch" (the accepted accent), whether we understood German. I answered "I understand a few words","from where do you know it?" "I once learnt it." The two elderly people were satisfied.

The second prisoner was amazed at this. How could a Bylorussian understand German and also be learned? He had never heard of such a thing except if if were a Jew or perhaps a Volksdeutcher, a co-operator. He treated me politely and carefully. We ate a slice of bread, beetroot soup and potatoes in thekitchen. For more than a year I had not eaten food like that. We were excited and soon satisfied. The "Herrin" began to ask me questions of which most I did not understand and I also did not want to enter into conversation with her

After the meal the master of the farm took us along a few hundred morgen of land - to the stables and gave us a small room where previously a young knecht had slept before he had been mobilized. From that time the room was deserted. Spider webs hung from every corner of the room. In the centre of the web were spiders and trapped flies. The walls of the building were made of grey black planks. One one of the walls were big hooks, on them the rein of the harnesses of the horses hung and there were also two beds. Thin grey dust covered the bedding. A rough table stood bwtween the two beds. It was used for various repairs and cobbeling or working with the harness. So the top of the table was not smooth but had cuts in it as a result of the work. On it stood a dim sooty lamp. Dampness and grime covered the walls.

We lay down to sleep. In my eyes the dirty bed and the room full of spiders webs was like a palace for kings. My new mate, Ivan, began for some reason to tell me how the Germans attacked the Jews in the camps. He was sorry for them and sighed "Bodge, Bodge" (G-d, G-d) and began to ask me questions suspiciously. I answered very few of his questions. The wind whistled angrily through the crevises. The horses rustled in their chains, neighed and stamped with their hoofs and Ivan continued asking and talking.

The sharp choking smell of harness reins and sweat of the horses irritated my eyes and throat and worked like a sleeping draught. I fell into a slumber full of terrifying dreams.

The first day of work in September, a cloudy misty day. The farmer called all the wives of the mobilized soldiers together all the elderly who were not mobilized , the girls and boys who were freed from school, to help with the farm work and with them, we two prisoners, formed a long line. We spread out on a huge beet field. The leaves of the beet had

had dew on them from the night. The dew wet me completely. Ivan who had had experience from working on his farm, was weak this time and behind the others in work. I was the slowest of all. I made every effort to catch up, but was not successful. A long time passed before I was their equal in work. The Germans helped me in the two rows of beets that had been my share of the work, until they straightened the rows. The guards patrolled the fields for many kilometers and they came to examine the prisoners at their work in the tens of farms scattered about the village.. The Germans were only allowed to talk to us about matters concerning work. The picking of the beets lasted many days. After that we loaded it on carts. Then we threw it into big holes and covered it with straw. After that we covered the straw with soil. Then after this hard work of the day we had to feed the horses in the evening hours and put straw under their feet. My mate managed the work more easily than I did. I was completely exhausted after a day's work and at times I was on the verge of collapse. My bones seemed to be broken and I walked bent over. My body could simply not make the effort. I feared the farmer would return me to the camp because of my low physical capacity. Or he would get to know of my origin. I would be so exhausted that I fell on the bed without eating any supper. We got up at five in the morning in order to groom and clean the horses. My workmate would clean them with a brush and comb them with an iron comb for about an hour. At the beginning I didn't know about this kind of work. Some of the horses were young and not tamed enough. They had not yet been harnessed or saddled. They would bite and kick, sensitive to every touch on their skins. When one brushes them, one begins from the back of their necks, their backs, the stomach, until one reached the hoofs. For me it was a danger. The problem was not the horses but the weakness of my body which had not yet improved sufficiently. The brushing movement caused the

clothes to rub on my back which had sores and this made me lose my balance. Above all I was not to uncover myself in front of the Germans. I had to listen to all their remarks on "Juden", control myself and not react. Whenever they spoke about Jews on the radio, the people were incited and the word Jew never left their lips the whole day. Also at that time the newspapers printed lists of the fallen..This upset them and they saw the Jew as being responsible for this. With all that it was quite possible that the younger people had never seen a Jew in their lives. It seemed as if their knowledge of Jews was based on caricatures from the newspapers that were always printed very jeeringly and derisively. After a time I began to feel as if they knew of my origin and all their talk was aimed at hurting me. Sure, they would soon let me know their intentions. They would attack me and stab me with sharp knives. I began to believe that we were responsible for the outbreak of the war and because of us their sons were being killed. (According to them, Rothchild was one of the great initiators of the war.) At times I looked out into the distance to see if the Gestapo were not coming for me. But in spite of all my suspicions I gave the impression of a harmless, inoffensive, as if I did not understand their language (true the Platdeutch I did not understand) and their words had nothing to do with me. I only spoke about what was concerned with work. Both of us decided to keep our bodies clean and to clean the room in which we lived. In the late hours of the night we cleaned the walls of the room and washed them. We did the same with the table and the floor. Every three days I washed my shirt. I cut off my hair to the skin. We got soap and every morning I washed in cold water, stripped to the waist. I hardened my body against colds and 'flu so that I should not have to go to a hospital. However, no matter how clean I was, the sores on my back continued, they even got worse. After a few weeks of work it became clear to the Germans that I was able to do the tiring and demanding work of the

season.

They began to worry me with their questions: "Where is your long coat? Why has Ivan a coat and two blankets and you have nothing?" I could not avoid their questioning but I did not tell them the truth. I doubt if they believed my answers. From my answers Ivan began to understand that I was a Jew but not the "Knecht" nor the masters ever saw me broken in spirit. I walked upright. The workmate from the Lechini (Galicia) learnt from me how a man alone and weak knows how to stand up to an overload of work. I never let him hear a sigh or a groan which he wanted to hear because through that he could have found a way to rule over me. My behaviour amazed him and he began to doubt his former suspicions that I was Jewish. He respected the strong stand I took and respected me. He was older than me and had been mobilized at the outbreak of hostilities. As a farmer of a small farm he cultivated a piece of the fertile black earth in Ukraine in Western Poland. He was a born farmer, an honest man, and could do any kind of farm work! He was not fanatic in his nationalism. He desired the independance of Ukraine. With that he had doubts about the promises of the Germans in case in the end they would deceive his people and take away his good piece of land. He was religious and called himself a "Greek Catholic". In his opinion the Jews were similar to the Gypsies: "He gives in to everybody" the way of life of the Jews is different and strange, not the way of life of the nations of the world. He had many prejudices about the Jews and was afraid to be among them. They cause trouble in an ununderstandable and mysterious way. He had had Jewish friends who had come to his farm to buy and sell and he sometimes mentioned them. After all, they were people and we should not attack them. If they have the

curse of the generations upon them as the Priest at "Tzerkive" maintained, let G-d punish them. Let him be punished through a satan that he chooses, but not through a faithful Greek Catholic. He thought of his origin as Ukranian as something special; that they were considered better than others. In the eyes of the Germans they were the cream of the milk. Later he began to see that his better standing made no impression at all on the everyday German. Only Hitler had used it in his external policy to get support for his plans.

As he would tell me, he was the sole ruler of his house. He determined all the work that was to be done and everyone agreed to what he wanted.

Ivan was impulsive but in spite of his many outbursts towards me, he knew how to retreat and return to his place. (He never dared open his mouth to a German. He would submissively accept every instruction.) He would try to raise a fork against me and in cases like that I would also grab hold of a worktool in the storehouse and follow his movements. I decided to give him blow for blow with all my strength. He perceived it and little by little he left me alone. I warned him to be careful what he said to the Germans that he should know that they were not his friends. He tried to pacify me that he was bitter about the years that he had lost as a prisoner when he had to work without payment. In the end I overlooked his stupid animosity. I let it go, I did not want to react too fiercely because this could complicate matters for me and I accepted the fact that my friends would not know about his behaviour. The German families did not talk to me very much but kept asking again and again about my lack of clothing. They never heard a sigh or complaint from me and this amazed them. Once the guard said to the farmer while watching me work: "How this thin Pollack manages this hard work I don't know. I wouldn't be capable of it." Apparently the condition of my clothing was known to the

farmer and the guard; as a result the farmer gave me clogs and my footwear improved a bit. After a short time the guard brought me and my workmate underwear which came from the defeated French army and into the bargain gave me a French army coat just my size. The guard was old. He had been a prisoner during the First World War in Russia and remembered a few Russian words. Every time he came to visit he would assess me from top to toe, curse the war and blame the English for our condition. (The English were then in the news - everyone would speak of them.) It could not be said that the guard did not like me. The fact that he brought me a coat exactly my size showed the character of the man. Although I had a few "good" guards in the end they bitterly disappointed me but this one could really be called "good". However, they soon changed him. The business of the army coat puzzled Ivan. Again he did not have an inkling of my origin. If a German managed to find a coat for me exactly my size, perhaps I could be a Volksdeutcher. This made him jealous of me even though he hadlots of clothes. He hinted in a roundabout and nasty way. I clearly read his mind, but kept quiet. After the incident of the great coat, he stopped attacking me. Sometimes when Ivan was driving four horses, transporting something or when ploughing or harrowing with a pair of horses, the horses would suddenly revolt, kick and jump and throw out the bit from between their teeth. The harness would loosen from the buckles, slip under the stomach and out of fear, the horses would get entangled in the chains and the reins. Ivan would curse the Belgian horses, their masters and the war. The Germans did not understand Ukranian but they told him to calm down and control himself. They did not like his wildness and felt he was lacking in restraint. They did not like the way a Polack living among them acted towards their work animals, cursing and shouting. I got the impression that the Germans who were used to discipline were taken aback and

suspicious of wold urges among their own people, let alone among strangers. They themselves would sometimes have outbursts and be attacked by a type of hysteria but it only reached a certain limit. Because the German himself was afraid to break discipline, they would not take it from a stranger. After they told him off, Ivan at once understood the hint. He was a prisoner and he remained a Pollack in the eyes of the Germans. He was not only nervous and excitable during his hours of work, he was also prone to suspicion and he was cowardly. He was a flatterer and would make up to the people on the farm as a means of protection so that he would not be sent back to the camp.

The prisoners were one day called to a regional meeting. The meeting that was organised by the guards took a long time. They counted left to right and right to left. The numbers did not tally. Unusual quiet prevailed but the moment the parade was opened it was handed over to the SS. The atmosphere was electrified and a feeling of terrible anxiety prevailed. The p risoners were told what was forbidden them and at the end of each paragraph the warning of death. They particularly stressed the rule about forbidding all contact with German women. Everyone signed and pledged his life. In spite of that one could feel a certain forbearance and patience prevailing regarding the prisoners as against the way they were treated in the camps. The Germans well knew that they were dependant on the work of the prisoners. They were the sowers and ploughers and they produced bread for them. They understood that they had to let up on the tension a great deal. There was another reason too; the gathering took place in the presence of Germans and it would not be wise to show them what violent behaviour was like. During the time of the meeting I tried not to meet anyone known to me from the army. My job was not to be conspicuous and to evade people who were on the lookout for Jews, and there were many of them. I was very pleased to meet my friends again. I had not seen them for

some time. They embraced me as a brother suffering the same fate as they were. It was now clear to us that we were dispersed in an area of about 5 kilometers apart. We decided that we would each find an opportunity to meet on Sundays.

Germany achieved amazing victories in Europe till the summer after she had defeated France. She began her air attack on England. The "zender" (radio) reported the proceedings the whole day. They sent hundreds of bombers accompanied by hundreds of fighters over London. Goebels department reported in the morning that in a few days time the German forces would cross the channel, they would bring order to England and they would catch the incitors of the war, the Jews. Every day the "zender" reported the fantastic victories but they did not say a word about their losses. The man who listened to the radio and the reports more than anyone else was the "Knecht" Feller. He would always praise the Wehrmacht and would add explanations of his own. It was from him that the farmer who was a bit deaf would hear all the news. The farmer had neither the time nor patience to listen to the radio. He was entirely taken up with the business of the farm (I will still talk about the master and mistress of the farm.)

It was one of those periods when everyone in the village was happy. In fact, the whole of Germany was happy. Because of all the victories the morale was high. Goebels propaganda gave them plenty of opportunity for optimism. The heads of the families and the sons who were mobilized would often come home to their families and would say: "We are trading back and forth with Soviet Russia in the best possible way. Loaded carriages with food are coming from Russia to Germany and carriages with the necessary goods for the Russians are being sent back to them." With that they added quietly to themselves: "The Wehrmacht is spreading out along the Russo-

German frontier." The radio did not let them have any idea of what was in the minds of the Germans. It only broadcast about what was happening in England at that time. There were so many planes in the sky at one time that they covered the light of the sun. They shouted that London was burning, that they would soon be there. The prestige of the Luftwaffe was prodigious.

They all sang the current song, from the youngest to the eldest. The German women lulled their children to sleep on taunting songs about Chamberlain and England, even Kuba the goodse-minder on the farm who had a broken back and walked permanently bent over, lashed at the geese and sang optimistically.

Gib mir deire hand -
Deire weise hand
Leb wohl mein shatz leb wohl
Din wir fahren dein wir fahren
Din wir fahren gegen England .....

In November of that year Molotov met Ribbentrop in Berlin. The picture of the meeting appeared in all the papers in Germany. They also showed me the pictures and added:- "Stalin is a good man." Among themselves they laughed about this meeting. They really laughed at the innocence and stupidity of the Russians. The prisoners heard this and understood much more than the Germans supposed. They were afraid for their families who were beyond the frontier (The River Bug). The command was only to be given and the Russian border would be crossed. It was not even a secret but the Germans did not want to make it cnnspicuous in the papers. The radio reported that the Russians had marched into Latvia and Estonia. In November the Red Army attacked Finland. The Germans were uneasy and suspicious. Something was happening but they comforted themselves: "It doesn't matter, the Russian

Bear is not so terrible. He is putting food in his stomach. He hardly sees anything and slumbers in his lair. With one eye he is watching what is going on. But the German is awake and watching with both eyes. He will not sleep.

In the meantime the trains filled with the necessary materials are running from East to West.

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THE WORLD OF THE SLAVE

The Autumn passed, snow fell a few times and each time thinly covered the surrounding hills, making everything fresh with a glorious whiteness. It however vanished very quickly as if it had never been. After the snow melted the rough clodded field was clearly to be seen. Suddenly another field of beets used for animal feed was seen gnawing on the land Again we hurried in order to save those which had not been spoilt by the snow. We pulled them out, loaded them on carts and brought them to the cow shed.

It was a week already that the people on the farm were telling each other in pleasant anticipation that the "Herrin" would be baking cake in celebration of the last of the corn threshing of the year. This was the custom of the farmers and all the servants looked forward to the day of the "kucken" and the threshing.

The cold days came, the yard dried up. There were no more weeds or damp. There was great preparation for the threshing. All the people of the place including women and children were drawn into the great job. The machine threshed the last of the wheat of the previous year and began threshing the corn of the present year. For days we were deafened by the humming of the threshing machine. The sound of the humming rose and fell, stopped for a second as if choking and again went back into its full rythm, swallowing the stalks without pausing and throwing out crushed straw. A cloud of dust rose from the threshing floow and the yard. Every few minutes the bags were filled with corn and those were put on our backs, mine and Ivan's. We carried it to the store-house along the entire length of the yard, and from there 12 steps up to the store-

house floor. This was the first time in my life that I dragged bags weighing 70 kilos each. When the bag was on my back it covered me completely. It was a feeling of hard labour in the fullest sense of the word. Twice I fell before I reached the steps. The corn was spilled. My prayer was to return me as soon as possible to Stablack; I would throw off the heavy bags that were choking me, not letting me breathe. There was no place for me in this cursed world. Let them shoot me there and let me go down to the silence of death.

The farmer asked the guard to change me for someone else from the camp. The mistress particularly asked for this: "Look how Ivan tries, only this one is weak and does not make the effort." But the guard knew that most of the prisoners could not do this hard labour. So he was sure he could not find another to do the work and rejected their complaint against me. In the end they had to accept this and they had to know they would not get the stream of workers they wished to do the work they were demanding of me. (Ivan wanted to put me at a disadvantage, because he carried many bags, but he soon stopped it as well.) The weight of the sack was lessened by a few kilograms. Even though they lessened the weight it was still so heavy that it stopped the breath. My heart began to beat so heavily that I was afraid I would again collapse. I always had to make a final effort to get to the last step. My breath nearly stopped. (The local "knechten" told me secretly, according to the law the bag was not to be heavier than 50 kilograms. The workers refused to carry bags heavier than the law allowed.) Into the bargain, the sores on my back had not yet healed. Under the weight of the bags they burst open and smeared my back with pus. My back was like a flame of fire but I told no-one on the farm. I had no salve. I threw away my uddershirt and found a clean cloth in the attic in which I wrapped myself.

The cold in the stables was unbearable. In the middle of

the night Ivan and I went to sleep in the cow shed. In one of the corners we found a place on the straw and the heat of the cows also warmed us. In a second corner of the cow shed on a bed covered with eiderdowns was the slave worker, Kuba. He smoked cigarette butts in a pipe bowl which the boss would give him. It was for many years already that he suffered from insomnia. He never had peace at night. He woke up often and got out of the eiderdowns, went to see if the cows were in order. Perhaps a cow was about to give birth. He would run as fast as he could to the big house to call the farmer. To thank him he would get a thick cigar and a special portion of cake on Sunday. During the week he would be praised by everyone who came into the yard. This gave him pleasure. He would speak about the birth of the calf to everyone he met. He would do his best to please his master. But he was not really so absolutely satisfied as he gave out to be. The slave worker did not forget the wrongs done to him even after tens of years. They were not forgotten and remained somewhere within him albeit not very clearly. The disatisfaction worked very slowly and burst out in a cry. So Kuba did not sleep at night. He would look out onto the terrible frosty cold night. and slam the door that was covered with frost and snow. He had no patience for the long night and the dusty featherbed. His eyes did not close, he was waiting for the milkers and the light of day. We would return to bed cursing the geese and the pigs. He particularly did not like the "Herrin" on whom he showered juicy curses in "Platdeutch". He would burst out into anger at the wrongs done to him and were still being done to him. Lack of warm clothing, lack of a warm room. For this he would not forgive her. Again he clawed under the covers but was not quietened, apparently thinking of some other wrong, would get out of bed, open the door of the cow shed and a stream of cold air would come in and roll on the floor of the shed. He raised his fists towards

curse them roundly, he remembered the cake he had been promised and did not get, and in the end he cursed the horses, the pigs, the geese and the cold. He did not curse the cows. Slowly his anger would wane, and he walked between the cows, dragged his feet toward us and stopped. He spoke quietly, offered us tobacco and began to tell his life story. He had been born in Poland many years ago. He didn't remember the place or his family. He turned to me and said : "For many years I carried the bags from the threshing machine to the store-house until the "puckel" (Back), was broken" He won't drag any more bags. No, no, he won't drag any more bags. He also said that the farmer and the "Herrin" would travel to town every Sunday to church. The church was beautiful and everyone knelt and prayed. He only goes there a few times a year. Once for confession and once on Christmas Eve." On Sundays I must stay at home, I must look after the geese. The ganders worry the geese, they jump on them, he chuckled. The ganders don't let them lay eggs and I must protect them. I separate the geese from the ganders. That is why the ganders bite my trousers with their beaks and tear my clothes. I lash at them, the cretins, the Jews." He became serious for a moment and looked across at me: "You haven't a blanket, you are cold. Yes, the priest once said that when Jesus was a child he lay in a cow shed on straw alone." He stopped talking, he did not want to disturb another person. He had Prussian manners and upbringing. But most important he was afraid of prisoners. He was careful not to talk too much. He was told that the Polacks shot at the Germans during the war. He was afraid whenever he remembered that. He went back to his bed crawled between the covers, burst out laughing and was quiet. This was the figure of the stranger in Germany. Be obedient, work hard, find favour with the masters and will laugh to himself about his experiences in the past and when the trauma arises within him, he would shout in the darkness of the night

and would curse the cold and frost, the wind and the storm and the big house.

Ivan promised me that I also awaited the fate of Kuba and perhaps even worse. If the Ukranians are not released, then he will have the same fate. The smell of the manure burnt my eyes and my eyelids closed.

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THE BIRTH OF A CALF

So Kuba belonged to the Polish nation, a slave bound to his master and who did not remember his father and mother. He was brought from the Mazur region to Prussian and sold to look after and feed the geese of the master of the farm. From his childhood he only knew the heat of the cowshed, the smell of the sweat of the cows and the sweet sour smell of the milk. It seemed as if he was proud of where he lived. It was enough that the Chief, the master, took him to church once or twice a year, especially on Christmas Eve. This night was enough for him and he remembered it for the whole year. He would come back from the Church after midnight on a night of frost and storm. His bed of straw and feather comfortor was in the shed next to the cows. He did not go deeply into his religion but in his soul he greatly admired the son of G-d who was born in a manger in poverty. He had a Halo and lay on the straw. Kuba's feeling was that the saviour looked after those who slept in stables after a hard days work and who also looked after every animal that was born. Every calf gave him special pleasure. So he faithfully looked after the cows. Once when the time came for one of the cows to give birth Kuba as usual ran to the farmer's house to let him know that the cow was about to give birth and that one already saw the hooves of the legs of the calf. For a day the cow had been suffering birth pangs. The Chief and the "Herrin" and with them the family of the knecht were afraid for the life of the calf. The master called all the men, ourselves included. The cow was not quiet and groaned and breathed heavily, lowed softly. Her skin was wet with sweat from the effort she was making. Six hands were holding the rod that was bound to the legs of the calf that was protruding from the womb. Every time the cow exhaled and

pressed backwards we pulled the calf with all our strength. Women and children stood around and they pitied her and felt for her when she was making every effort to give birth. The "midwife" was the chief "knecht", the milkman Feller. He put his big hand into her womb and guided the calf to the opening. After hours of hard work and the fear and tension of everyone for the calf, it slipped out, covered with the birth membrane and still attached by the umbilical cord, and the calf lay alone. All the people breathed a sign of relief. A stone had rolled off the heart. The tension and fear vanished and there was an outburst of joy from all those present. All the faces expressed joy. All the people got to know the news very quickly, even the people on the neighbouring farm. Is it possible not to feel fear for a living creature that is in difficulty and cannot come out easily into the light of the world? Can't one feel pity for a dumb animal which is continually moaning in pain?

The truth is that even I, who had seen so much, was touched by the ~~difficulty and~~ suffering of the creature giving birth.

Now the cow lay very quietly without any strength. Beside her on the straw lay the weak calf. I looked at the wonder, the creature that had been born a few minutes ago and had been hidden for months in the dark warmth of the womb. Now it was pushed out into the light of day to the grazing ground, to joy and pleasure. Even this calf in time would produce milk and after not so many years be killed and used for food for man. After a few minutes the body of the calf began to shake. It began to move its legs and tried to raise its head. The cow felt because of this creature she had suffered. It had come from her body and it was part of her. She raised her head and looked at it. She then brought it closer to herself with gentle head movements and began licking it thoroughly with her broad tongue while her eyes

blazed with anger and fear of those standing round. She did not want anyone to touch and hurt it. When she had finished licking it, the soft thin wavy hair of the calf seemed like silk and was shining brown and white. The weak little calf tried to get up on its forelegs but fell down; again it tried this time on its hind legs, and again fell over. In the end it managed to stand for a minute on its shaking legs and again fell over, and then with appetite it began to suck at its mother's teat while the cow fondly continued licking it.

The devoted love and care the Germans gave to the two animals made me think very deeply. I was deeply depressed and jealous and compared the treatment of the calf to the treatment accorded the countless Jewish babies who did not manage to get pleasure of being suckled, the closeness of their mothers' breasts and the first feeling of living, the basic human one, of softness and pleasure. This night was taken from them by both the farmers and their servants. Those that took pity on calves and foals, on cows with large teats and fine looking mares - but not on pregannt Jewish mothers. These same merciful people would shoot at them and their feotuses and lift their babies on bayonets without any inner hesitation, without the slightest prick of conscience and without remorse before or after the murder. These bestial actions performed by those who from their childhood had learned from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a son of the Jewish people, who told his disciples from the sermon on the Mount: "Listen to what has been said to those who have gone before ' You may not kill, and the one who does it must be responsible before the judges ' " (Matthew 5 verse 21).

But this commandment they changed and took on the morals and commandments of the Teutonic gods and delivered to "Moloch"- Hitler a present: The lives of Jewish children.

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WINTER 1940 - 41

This winter was less severe than the previous one but in any case the wet cold penetrated to the bones and it was a heavy burden, hard to bear. As usual there were storms and all the roads were covered with snow and the farmers sent their prisoners to clear away the snow from the roads. This time I wore my long army coat and hat which covered the ears. Again I was afraid of being known by prisoners who had been in the army with me, but I met my friends and we were happy together. I got encouragement from them and hope and the desire to live. Being together with them I forgot the everlasing pressure and depression I was living through. After the meeting we found opportunities to visit each other. At first with the accompaniment of a guard, after that with a local German. When they got to know that prisoners do not run away they gave them a chance to visit each other. On these occasions we exchanged news that each had gotten from different sources. So it was known to me that the Wehrmacht was massing forces along the entire length of the border with Russia. This news worried me. I was afraid of the fate that awaited the rest of the Jews of Poland and of what could await my family. I was very worried and disturbed. My friends too were worried about what might happen to their families. With that they maintained that they did not believe that the Germans would succeed in crossing the border. They believed that there was a hidden force in Russia and said: "The Soviets are playing an innocent game of politics with the Germans, but Stalin knows everything. Nothing is hidden from him." This is the way they comforted themselves. The winter was quiet in spite of the war.. I would call it the Golden Age of the Third Reich. Economically they had all the produce they wanted in the store-houses and barns. Cuts of meat in the pantry and where they smoked the meat. Whenever one turned on the farm, there was plenty. The crop of the previous year was sold and got rid of as usual a few months after the new crop had been gathered. The agriculture

from the conquered territories fed the great German army with fat meat and bread and all types of preserves. Hitler had delivered defeated Europe on a silver platter to his people (as yet without Russia). Europe crawled and licked the nailed Prussian boots. As far as the Jews were concerned there was nothing to say. They were excluded from the family of nations. They were rotting in the ghettoes, the work camps and were dying of malnutrition, from hunger and cold and were being shot at from every direction. Their greatest success was in the crushing of the Polish Jews. So the sons of the "knechten" and the sons of the farmers wrote. Also the town boys had their say; they wrote in their letters to their families: "The Poles are helping us in catching the Jews, whom they also hate." When they came home they would tell what they had done to the Jews and also about the backward methods of agriculture in the lands they had conquered. They also spoke about the superficiality of the women. For a bar of chocolate, or a glass of schapps or for a loaf of bread they could get the prettiest girls in every place, in Warsaw, Brussels, or Paris - and spend a wonderful night - only the SS, the chosen of the nation - did not talk in front of strangers. They would not tell a thing that would stain them or defile them. They particularly were the rapers and the murderers, they, the descendants of the Teutons and the Huns, would only say "Juden Kaputt" in front of strangers. Among their families and friends they would boast of their masculine deeds, their acts of rape and murder.

I will still tell about the deeds of the SS which I heard from them. So this was a restful period for the Germans. Just as the Prussians had planned it, Germany was flooded with prisoners and the farmers succeeded in cultivating their land even better than before the war. The land gave plentiful crops - and money flowed into the pockets of the farmers and their "knechten". The farmer threshed his grain, overfed his already plump horses to show others how well his farm was doing. His

cows produced more than enough milk. They slaughtered pigs, rode out to hunt, and cut down trees from their foredts. Thus the winter passed. They ate and drank to their fill in their warm houses. On Sundays and holidays the farmer wore fur and rode to church and confessed to the Priest. He bledsed his G-d and the son of G-d and his Apostle on earth - the Fuhrer. He would drink a schnapps with his friends and return to his warm home.

In February '41, the cold became more severe and the storms danced on the fields, the hills and in the valleys. The snow would settle on a group of outbuildings. The wind would burst through the openings between the buildings and cover them with piles of snow. The wind would blow into the cracks in the houses, round the openings and even there snow was heaped on the stables, the cow sheds and the farms.

The sparrows came into the barns and picked at the grain that was there. They came into the cow sheds and stables and ate the gain together with the horses and cows at the manger. Outside the snow covered all the paths and ways to the entrances of the houses of the servants. Even the doors and windows of the big house was coverdd with snow.

At dawn the storm stopped and everything was quiet. There was a healthy dryness in the air. The horizon appeared to widen. A pale moon, the last sign of the night, shone in the sky, and down below millions of snow flakes glistened in a mysterious light.

We were up early on this morning. We fed the horses. Got sleighs ready. We got ourselves chains, saws and axes. We were to fetch wood to heat the big house and the servants cottages. We were ready to go out with three pairs of horses and three big sleighs and waited in front of the big house. The farmer came out wearing the long fur coat which he used

for long journeys, going to the city, and to Government offices, to farmers' meetings and to the forest. In the forest he would take off the long coat and remain in his short jacket. The "Herrin" with a broad smile on her round face, accompanied the farmer to the sleigh, looked at the servants, and the war prisoners, at the horses and sleighs that were ready to go.

The peace of the morning. It was terribly cold in the clear morning air. Smoke rose quietly from the chimneys, twisting and turning, grey before it disappeared. White cloudy mist came from the noses and mouths of the people and animals. Two people sat in every sleigh. At the head sat the farmer with his old servant Fehler. In the second sleigh was Ivan and Josef, the 14 year old servant. In the last sleigh sat I and the guard, holding the gun between his legs. The horses were well fed and rested and began a lively chase. The wood sleighs moved from right to left and cut through the snow that had fallen the night before. The horses bumped into one another while running. Lifting their hind legs they threw back lumps of snow which had collected on their hoofs. It was a 12 kilometer ride. The guard began to speak slowly. "We Germans, look after the animals that work for us. We feed them well and don't lash them without need. It is enough only to wave the whip so that the animal sees it. One draws the reigns a little tightly and there you are! The Polish farmer has no mercy for his work animals. He exploits it until only thin skin and bone remain. They don't have a feeling against cruelty to animals." He stopped talking and laughed at his successful explanation (He himself was a farmer from Westphalia). In conversation our sleigh fell behind the others by two kilometers. I hurried the horses, I lashed at them, I added a few juicy Polish curses and the horses lifted their legs and rushed until they caught up with the others. The guard was surprised at my rough handling of the horses in

spite of his previous lecture and said: "Yes, you Poles are like the Jews, they have no mercy for a living animal."

The trees stood up clean and white wrapped in a lace of ice. They did not move. It was less cold in the forest but still freezing. I did not have woollen gloves. I sewed myself gloves of double cloth which warmed by hands a little. Ivan and I sawed at the snow covered trees. They fell with a great crash. We worked until the late afternoon hours and loaded the trees onto the sleigh rafts. Wet snow stuck to our clothes and our faces, penetrating to the body. The horses dragged and sweated, they did not jump or kick. Towards evening it got colder. I thought I would be frozen. I got down from the sleigh from time to time, holding onto the reigns and ran after the sleigh to get warm, cursing the world. The gloves became useless rags. When I again sat on the pile of trees I felt that I was going to sleep and had no strength to throw it off. I fell into a dream. I was with my friends. From time to time I woke and fought against the sleep. The guard did not sit next to me on the ride back. Suddenly I was gripped by a terrible cold and terrible visions tortured me. I was wrapped in a terrible heat and I was already lying in a warm bed and my friends cared for me lovingly with devotion. They laid me in a nest of cushions, and eiderdowns. I suddenly got a slap and I felt myself rolling from a height into the deep snow. (I am not really sure whether I dreamed it a moment before. I fell into the snow or during the slumber before that). The horses began to gallop away from me. The sleighs in front stopped them. Again I got onto a pile of wood with the reigns in my hands and again I fell into pleasant dreams. The shaking sleigh woke me from time to time. I would open and close my eyes at intervals. I fought off the slumber with all my might till the last point of dispair. My toes lost their feeling. I got down from the sleigh

holding the reins and ran with the horses. Both I and the horses got warm. We jumped over heaps of snow. The horses were steaming and the snow melted at once. We got to the farm in the evening hours. I was shivering and covered with sweat. I did not have any dry clothes to change the wet ones. I was burning with fever and I worked suffering with a high temperature for a number of days only not to get near a doctor. I worked when I was ill, no matter what the season. It is a terrible feeling for a sick person with a temperature who has to work. Even now I shudder to think of the conditions I had to work in. One day I was told that a policeman and a soldier came to see the farmer. The soldier wore the swastika symbol on his arm. They said that they spoke about the two P.O.W.'s. It appeared that they wanted to send us back to the camp. Ivan looked for clothes, and began to collect pieces of bread. I did not collect. That was not my main worry. For me going back to camp meant the danger of discovering my origin and I saw no value in collecting food or clothes. I waited for the day they would call me to the camp. Days passed, and the man wearing a swastika did not appear. The district policeman came and wanted to know my details. After every official visit I would feel uneasy and suspicious. It darkened my life. All details about myself were fictional. In time I got to know that the prisoners not only belonged to the army, but also to the regional authorities which meant the police.

At threshing time the farmers would help each other. Of course, by means of the prisoners. I was sent to a farmer named Zeth, where Vasiel Gursky and Pavluk Kudashov were. It was customary that the prisoner who was loaned out would get the hardest work, carrying the bags. This I had to do very often. Zeth's family were the usual people. The farmer, Zeth, was about 50, an easy young man who liked to talk to every P.O.W. He would give them a cigarette and even a glass of shnapps, of course, with the approval of the guard. In this

way he knew how to get the most work out of them. He had four children, the two eldest being 13 and 15 respectively. They were similar to their father in character. The eldest was at high school as was usual for the sons of farmers. (As far as I know the children of the servants didn't go to high school. They would reach the fifth class in the primary school, in order to know how to read and write and then went to work just as their fathers, the servants.) Hans, the eldest was attached to the two prisoners who were with them. Whenever they had free time from their studies they would assist with the chores on the farm. They started a conversation with me and treated me like every prisoner who had come to their farm. They were fair but a little curious. They belonged to the Hitler jugend and would often go out on trips organised by the school. Every time they returned they would know more of the Nazi theories the way their teachers taught them. They both looked down on other armies and other peoples. They would boast about the Wehrmacht, and their beautiful country. Hans was especially enthusiastic. He was dreaming of travelling from place to place in different countries, among different nations. The two boys decided to be mobilized into the SS when they were old enough and even declared at school that their place was with the vanguard army. There, there was a chance to see a lot and do a lot for ones country, and the party. Their hatred for the Jews was already rooted in them, from home and continued more thoroughly in the first classes at school. The word Jew was continually on their lips.

There was continual movement from morning to night on Zeth's farm. He would stand in the middle of the yard and send out instructions to all the corners. He had a big stomach and he was always smoking a big cigar. He was particularly strict with the wives of the mobilized soldiers. Most of them had large families of up to six children. He would not give them a chance to look after their children properly,

particularly on days of threshing, harvesting, picking potatoes or beets. What they had to do, he demanded in full; even if they were ill or their children were ill. As against that he did not press the P.O.W.s more than needed, though he knew how to get the maximum out of them too. He would quieten and flatter them with the right words. He was a man of opposites in character. Impulsive yet temperate. He would shout at his wife and her sister, an old maid (because of the law forbidding the division of land his wife's sister could not get married and she was obliged to work under Prussian discipline like all the people in the house. This phenomena of old maids one found amongst most of the farms.)

"Oupa" also lived on the same farm. He would wonder into every corner of the yard and even out on to the fields. He would curse at every step and in every corner, "Jude, Jude". He also gave instructions and shouted but no-one paid attention to him. Zeth asked me about our living conditions, mine and Ivan's. He seemed to know that we slept in the stables. Once he told me/that would be corrected. In spite of the fact that he was a small farmer, as against others who had large parcels of land, he had a lot of influence. After a time there were rumours going round in the village of Komminen that there were Jews among the French and Polish prisoners. It was a rumour that came from two Volksdeutch civilians from Poland who had been dragged out to work in Prussia and had been spreading rumours and digging up all kinds of information from the prisoners - I was very interested in forming a friendship with the farmer, Zeth, who himself did not believe the rumours. After a few days we were brought to live in one of the attics of the big house. A room belonging to a servant who had been mobilized. The room had place for 4 beds. Ivan took the bed next to the window. My bed was at the other end of the room. The "Herrin" commanded us to see that the room was kept clean, also the beds and the bedclothes. There were reasons for this move.

ONE - the farmer, Zeth, told the farmer Raiman to give us a room in which we could rest.

TWO - they said that Raiman wanted to keep us close so that he could call us even in the middle of the night. The correct and logical reason was the third. The mistress was afraid that the hygenic conditions of the stables were bad and we could bring in lice to everyone on the farm. From what I heard, there had been cases like that in the village and in neighbouring villages. At any rate, it saved me. When I came to live in the new place and began to sleep in the bed I saw that above my head in a modest frame was a picture of Jesus with a blond beard; In his heart there was an arrow and the wound bled. His face was peaceful. It was not like the other ikons on which he had a distorted face. Ivan sarcastically remarked "you managed to get more than me - let Jesus with the blond beard protect you in your sleeping and in your waking."

For three years the picture remained above my head. Sometimes it caused me to think about the problems of Judaism and Christianity, and the neverending hatred against the Jews.

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GORGE YOURSELF, YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED, MARCH '41

Fields, valleys and hills were covered with snow. The winds whistled round, sweeping up heaps next to every dried up bush. Heaps of snow collected next to the fences and formed walls. The hares did not find food in the bare frosty fields. At times I found them dead from hunger. Therefore they were drawn to the buildings. There they ate the animal feed that was scattered about.

On days like this of snowstorms, all the farm workers went out to the open fields with bunches of animal feed to scatter near the bushes and near the posts of the fences that stood out. We covered the feed with a little snow so that it should not blow away. In this way the hares were saved from death. When they grew and got fat they were meant to be hunted by the farmers. About a week after the distribution of the feed Ivan and I had to set out long tables in the front room of the big house. The long room was decorated by pictures typical of a German farmhouse. Knights galloping on horses hunting in forests. The midday rest young ladies near the entrance of the house and young men on horses near them. A cat and a dog resting quietly. On the wall opposite were stuffed anomals. The heads of a deer and a wolf. Next to them a double barrelled hunting gun, a hunting bag and a cane. In the kitchen there was unusual preparation of food and drink for guests. There was terrible cold outside and at the same time it was quiet. The cold pinched the face, the nose and the ears and the snow creaked under the clogs. The air seemed to be transparent. The horizons far and wide and everything was wrapped in a silvery (white) light. Sleighs pulled up one after the other in the yard. They were well padded, their sides rounded out and the horses were in perfect condition. On the driver's seat in

every sleigh sat a prisoner. The bells on the horses necks rang at their every movement. Farmers with hunting guns emerged from every sleigh. They were dressed in short coats. Everyone had big stomachs and smoked cigars. In society the Bauer was equal in rank to colonel in the army.

He was tense and had a stern expression on his face. He gave the greeting "Heil" and for a moment relaxed. Their servants were Polish and French prisoners. They were wry and thin and their faces were wrinkled. They were shivering with cold. They all had noise-makers which were to be used to frighten the hares.out of their holes. There were about ten hunters and the same number of P.O.W.'s. They also had big hunting dogs with them. Their bodies were long and thin. They were sensitive to every unusual sound.

When they came to the fields covered with snow, the farmers spread out in a wide row. Their servants began to use the noise-makers, they also hit on empty tins. The hares completely frightened, jumped out of their burrows and from their cover and from the sparse bushes, and from behind the piles of feed that they were nibbling at. They began to run in a straight line and diametrically to the hunters. The farmers began to shoot at them, smoke and the smell of gunpowder pervaded the air and it appeared that in that breadth of 200 meters there was no place for the hares to escape. They were shot in a second while running. They rolled over a few times and fell down. They twitched a little until their eyeballs froze, blood stained the white snow. (I shuddered, I remembered the time when the Jews, the prisoners and the Polish civilians were walking and at the people who had been shot and had been twitching afterwards. These associations of death and killing always arise within me. These sights that were once presented were kept within the depth of my soul. Only when the occasion arose did they come to the fore, even if it was only for a second, and it terrified me.)

Everyone stopped the dogs jumped and barked wildly, they grabbed the dead hares and dangled them in their mouths. They dug into the blood stained snow with their noses. The hunters pushed away the dogs and gave the hares to their servants to carry so that the dogs would not completely mutilate them.

The hunt of the horses lasted about two hours. I could not continue. Snow stuck on to the wooden clogs that I was wearing and I dragged my feet to the farm. The hunters had something to boast about. They were satisfied and excited. They alll had something to bring home to their kitchens.

In the meantime in the kitchen of the big house, the "Herrin" was giving orders about the baking, the frying, the roasting and the cooking. The smell of good food cooking spread over the entire yard. Five women were busy with the preparation of the entire feast. The women servants ran back and forth between their huts and the kitchen carrying the food that the mistress gave them in their aprons. They were waiting for the remains of the meat and bones of the hares, the slices of "wurst" and pork. They were happy and chattered and gossiped about the well fed "Bauern" and particularly about the stingy "Bauerin".

Kuba was in a very good mood, singing loudly. He stood up to his full height and looked into the windows from the distance, telling everybody what was going on there. He also got a big bone covered with a fair amount of meat. The dog, Rino, always chained and growling, was wagging his tail with satisfaction, licking his nostrils into which the appetising smells were rising, he also licked more and yet more bones. He dragged every bond into his kennel, there he lay on them growling, "Brrr....." He cracked and gnawed at the bones, sucking out the marrow. He licked himself from time to time and left nothing for the cats or themice. The meal was for the farmers alone and they enjoyed this cult of the hunt with great appetite. On the long table were deep dishes filled with rabbit meat. Those who ate it then

started on the pork and sausages. They ate and drank, not wisely, but too well. For desert there were cakes, puddings, and different stewed fruits. Between courses, they discussed the crops, the threshing, the birth of calves, foals, and piglets. The meal reached its height when they began to drink the real thick and strong rum. One by one they ran out and relieved themselves at the fence. They quickly returned and continued to drink the rum. Then they praised the Fuhrer loudly and laughed and jeered at the defeated nations. They mocked the French and the whole of backward Europe. In the end came the turn of the Jews. Towards them they expressed jeers and bitter mockery and vengeance, quoting phrases from the Fuhrer's speeches. Suddenly a colonel got to his feet. He was the richest among them all. He lifted his glass and toasted : "Heil Hitler." All the farmers became serious and jumped to their feet shouting "Heil!" and "Preust!" They clinked glasses. The party-goers were wrapped in the fumes of fragrant cigar smoke. They also gave the prisoners sandwiches and pieces of cake. They stood in the stables the while with whips in their hands. They gosspied about their masters in French, Polish and Bylo-russian, cursing them the while, each one had a complaint against the mistress who sliced the bread thinly. The holes in the bread were so big that one could see Berlin through them. They cursed the heavy bags of corn. They wished the Germans a bad year and hoped the Soviets would take revenge on them. They called over to the big house "Eat and eat well, your days are numbered." With overeaten flaming faces, the farmers came out hicoughing. They ran over to the fence of the yard and again relieved themselves. After this they got into their sleighs leaning back, With the crack of the whip the horses neighed and the bells tinkled. The sleighs moved out over the dry snow. Kuba clutched into the fence, straightened the looked anxiously at the receding cavalcade: "Ja, now they have gone." The Herrin and the servants repeated his words, sorry that the party was over."Ja,

ja, they have gone." Only Rino jumped out of his kennel, giving an angry bark as if he wanted to attack them. In the end he quietened because he had also enjoyed the feast. Life on the farm returned to its normal routine. The men and women servants had plenty of gossip about the overfed men.

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It was already about a year that the Polish prisoners were corresponding with their families in the German occupied territories. There was also correspondence between the prisoners and their families in the area occupied by Russia. Not everybody was pleased . From one cows were taken, and another got a cow, and more land. There was continual unrest among the prisoners. They felt disturbed and restless. They had no faith in the Soviets but they wanted to go home even if it was to Soviet rule. "It was better to die in poverty at home, rather than to live among the Germans in slavery" - was what they said. Ivan got letters from his mother and his family who were under German rule. They wrote to him that he should come home the way other Ukkanians did. They came for a visit and stayed on. On his farm in conquered Galicia they had taken most of the grain and the animals. Ivan now became aggressive towards me. He would often accuse me of doing little things badly. He began to become closer to the Germans, even though he was still a "Polack", to those on the farm. However, the Ukranians were given more rights, they let them visit their families and even let them stay there. There were, however, Ukranians who went to visit their families and returned because they saw it as a quiet place where it was worthwhile staying until after the war. There were others who came back to work more closely with the Germans. Some were acquainted with me and my friends told me to be careful of them.

At the same time there was correspondence allowed from

Bylorussia (The guards told me it was as a result of their contact with Molotov). The letters from the Russian side were not encouraging . There were no men to work and the women could not do the hard physical work demanded. Whenever a prisoner got a letter everyone knew about it and the Germans felt pleased about it. It was clear to them that he had a family background and backing as was the case with them and everyone else. He was not born alone in the wilderness or like a cursed Jew. Only I did not write. I was afraid I would get into trouble. The letters were censored. I could not write about myself. I could not tell them about the danger I was living in. The guards and the Germans innocently told me to write. They started seeing me as someone out of the ordinary. My friends told me not to write. But the pressure grew stronger and in the end I wrote on a special card for P.O.W.'s only. I wrote a few words and signed myself, Karchmer Theophile. Two weeks later I got a reply from home. The card had gone through the censorship of the Stalag Camp. My brother wrote in Russian in the name of family and friends. He and the others were delighted that I was still alive. I felt that the letter was soaked in tears. They told me that they were corresponding with my sister in the German conquered territories near the river Bug. I understood that they did not grasp the situation I was in. They did not know anything about the Jews in German occupied territory. I was very much afraid that they would complicate matters for me and bring me to my end, and that just because of my family. I did not write again, but when I got the letter my position in the eyes of the Germans strengthened. I was not regarded with that suspicion any more. Again the Ukranian P.O.W.'s began to have suspicions of my Jewish origin. How was I able to get a letter through the censors? Apparently the Jews were having a good time.under the Russian occupation. They were the rulers there and so the Ukranians from Galicia were waiting for the Germans to cross the border. Then they would bring "order" among the Jews as they had done in all the areas of Poland.

My friends told me that the Jews did not know what was happening in German occupied territory; I should not write again otherwise

I would only complicate matters for myself. I would be returned to the camp (I will still write about the latter.)

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The GRANDMOTHER WHOSE GRANDSONS WERE SS MEN

(A SEER INTO THE FUTURE)

The winter of '41 was nearing its end. The snowdrifts on the fields sank and vanished. The air was moist. Again we went to the forest for firewood for the coming spring. We took two sleighs and were under the command of Feller. The snow had nearly disappeared from the branches of the trees. There was still only a little on the ground. However, there was still frost. The old forester came to meet us. He had his gun over his shoulder and a spiked stick in his hand. He marked the trees we could chop down.with the nick of an axe. He spoke to us in a broken Polish-Mazurish and told us the news that the "zender" was broadcasting by the hour. The weather became a little warmer and it began to drizzle. It melted the snow, wet everybody and caused discomfort. Because of the wet weather and because of the farmer, Raiman was not with us, he was free to invite us to his home to warm up a bit. His house stood on a rise, open to sun and wind. Near his house was a small farm; a horse, some cows, a chicken run, and dogs lying in their kennels. It was warm and pleasant in the house.

In one corner stood ikons with a big cross at the head (A rare thing to be found among the Germans.) At the foot of the cross burnt an eternal flame and gave a holy atmosphere. My friends from the farmer Zeth were with us. They had also come to cut down trees. The wife of the old forester gave us each a glass of milk and a slice of bread. The forester spoke of his large family, "We are all Catholics," he said proudly. He spoke about his son-in-law and married sons. The whole family lived under one roof and worked among the farmers in the neighbourhood, doing daily work. They were also busy in the forest - "at the moment"he added,"they were mobilized into one of the best units of the Wehrmacht, the "Waffen SS". They are responsible

for the most dangerous and difficult tasks. When the Wehrmacht can't break through then the Waffen SS take over and do the job for them. Everyone then comes in after them.'Lose und immer lose und immer forwards! After that they rest and make 'order' among the civilian population, especially among the Jews." Here he smiled with pleasure. "I hope that at least after the war they will be compensated for their bravery so that they won't have to be servants of the farmers in the forests,"and he laughed, encouraged by his hope (So all the servants and poor people thought at the time.) After a while he added, "The conditions of the war prisoners will also improve. There won't be Jews in Poland, life will improve. If you wish you will be able to go home after the war or stay here and work. One must work in all places, 'niesh'."

Whenever a German expressed the same sentiments of the same point of view as his loaders, Hitler and Goebels, he would change into a horror in my eyes, no matter how wise and gentle in character he really was. The place where the saints and the savious have to symbolise the greatest forgiveness is changed to a place of worshipping idols. I looked curiously at the forester, at the broad shouldered man who was completely white haired. I noticed his hands hardened by work, his wrinkled face, the nape of his neck deeply dented and sunburned. His heavy way of walking showed how hard he had worked. I wanted to see signs of the stupidity of the brain and noticed the tired eyes which looked upwards to the image of the Son of G-d. His mouth had expressed incitement against innocent people and he had learnt nothing of the words and teachings of the Saviour.

Near the corner of the Holy pictures stood a wide bed on which there were lots of cushions and bedclothes. Among them, half sitting, half lying on the high cushions was an old woman. Her face was a web of wrinkles. She had no teeth, she seemed alive and awake and took in everything her son said and wanted to add praises to her grandsons in the SS. However, a fit of coughing stopped her. Our attention was drawn to her. We waited

for her coughing to stop. Her son, the forester, said: "Lie quietly, don't exert yourself." He introduced her to us. "This is my 85 year old mother. This heavy winter worries her and she is always cold." She reads her testament the whole day and says psalms. She also reads other holy books."

The old lady looked like a heap of bones but she could hear perfectly, even from a distance. Her Polish-Mazur language was clear and understandable. She interrupted her son and said: "Saint Sybil said that war will break out before the end of the first half of this century. It will be hard and cruel. The losses will be greater than those up to now and it would be the longest of ward, and go on for five years. The greatest sufferer will be the nation called "the Lamb". She will be heavily tortured. The Lamb will be deserted unrecognised, humiliated, wounded and slaughtered, but before the last quarter of the 20th century, there will again be war and the Lamb will be victorious. But this war will be fought over the whole world and bring destruction to all."

When we told the others what she had said, they said that she was talking nonsense and that the war would continue another year at the most. But her words did not pacify them. Again they asked: Who is the Lamb? They tried to guess and said, the Poles. The Poles were always being humiliated and conquered by the Germans or the Russians. The Ukranians said their nation was the one conquered and humiliated by the Russians. Pavel threw in an idea. "Perhaps they mean the Wandering Jew?" At any rate the fact that the war would last five years was not accepted. Most of the Christians had heard of St. Sybil, but did not pay much heed to her. Someone asked me if I had heard of her? I thought for a time and tried to put her with the prophets of the Tanach but did not succeed. Perhaps she was someone in the Apocryphes. Some time later I had a friend called Jatzek who had been caught in the Soviet territory by the Germans and was sent to the farm where I worked. Jatzek was a Catholic and a person who showed great understanding and widdom. Once

he said that in Poland they spoke about a queen from Africa who had once visited King Solomon in Jerusalem and she had learnt his wisdom and got his power of prophesy and she had foretold the birth of Jesus and had prophesied other things as well; among others, the present war. He said that St. Sybil's prophesies were widespread among the Poles. They were exaggerated expressing the wish of the person telling about it. They reached such a point that the Germans looked on it as "groil propaganda" and punished people who spread the fake prophesies.

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THE CHIEF "KNECHT"

The farmer planned to get food ready particularly meat supplies for his household. It was for themselves and for their son who was to arrive in two weeks time to help with the farm work. So they prepared the pantry and the smoke room and had leftovers for the servants as well as enough for any guests. They went to the chicken run and the goose flock and from there to the calf stables and determined what was for the killing, selling, the government, etc. In the end they went to the pig-sty with Kuba at their heels with a whip. He listened to their deliberations. They decided to kill a pig. These deliberations were soon known to everyone as everything connected with food and eating was. The small houses also expected something good. (According to agreement, permission for servants to keep pigs was limited. The small houses would gain particularly because of the women who were helping the Herrin to pickle the meat, salt it, grind it for sausages, smoke it and make "schwarze suppe." Certainly everyone got to know about the plans. Kuba was the source of information. He knew the weight of the pig and the width of the faterind at the neck.

One morning they went to the sty, caught one of the pigs, bound its hind legs and pulled it to the special room with a concrete floor. There the hammer and the sharp knife were ready. The pig was quiet for a minute and looked suspiciously around him. The Chief himself was responsible for the killing. He took the hammer and walked round the pig. Again the pig shrieked. The Chief had not yet found the place to hit the pig. In the end he hit twice and the pig fell down and was quiet. The Herrin came running with a deep dish to catch the blood but the beast was only stunned. At at once came to itself, opened its eyes, got to its feet and burst from the door to the yard, dragging the rope that bound its legs. Everyone surrounded it, threw a

rope at its legs and for a time did not succeed. In the end they caught it, and took it to the slaughter room. This time Feller took the hammer and hit between the ears. The animal fell on its stomach and he jumped on it and stuck the knife into its throat - steaming blood flowed into the basin. Those around jumped for joy and the mistress kept stirring so that the blood would not coagulate. From then on the master did not kill another pig, a job which was considered worthy of a landowner. Sometimes he left it to Ivan. I hoped that they would not give me the job, although even I had to kill a few pigs, something which I did in complete disgust though it was a minor detail and hardly worth comparing to some of the things I had to live through during the war. For a week the servants drank black soup which was the boiled blood of the pig, with potatoes. It was considered very tasty. The Chief servant was in the seventh heaven at being praised for his success in killing the pig. He felt like a brave fighting warrior. Then he said that when he had been a soldier he had not felt any fear. He paid no attention to wind and water. In all weathers he had kept his head next to the gun and aimed at a Frenchman and did his best to finish him off. "Ja, I managed to swear(faithfulness) fealty to three governments during my service in the army", he said. "First to the Kaiser, than to the Weimar Government and the third time and last - I hope - I swore fealty to Hitler, when I was in the reserves. Here I am 55 but I am afraid I shall yet have to leave the cows and go to war at the command of Hitler. Really I have nothing to complain about. I have seven children and I get 70 marks every month for them. I have a lot of money but I can't buy very much on the ration cards for it"and quietly whispering, added: "The farmers buy on the black market, but we servants don't."

Feller was a person who enjoyed conversation. He would have a relationship of "kameradshaft" for the man who worked with him. He had basic humane values but his horizons were

very narrow. Somewhere his humane feelings towards the workingman stopped and he remained what he was. The current political ideas closed everything to him. He had a fantastic memory. He would remember whole passages that had been said by the Weimar Ministers or by the present leaders. He read a lot of newspapers. He often expressed political opinions that was that of an obstinate chold and would not move from it. At that moment he would lose his image and change to something completely unrecognizable. I don't think that his political opinions were only the result of Nazi ideas and philosophies. I think that these ideas were the results of Prussian education held over generations. It was a lack of flexibility and tolerance particularly to the stranger. In the Weimar Government were people of vision who had good and honourable intentions for the masses, but they were few in number and cut off from them. I am sure that there were some of them among the servants and the landowrkers but the Nazis began to keep their promises to the people who did not have anything. The good ones remained alone and were swallowed up in the crowd. They left their humane ideas and were pushed along by the strong winds that were blowing. Their fate was that of young plants that hadno pootection against the wind and grew crooked. Regarding Feller, he was chief milkman and responsible for the cow shed. He would get up every morning before cockcrow. He would dragempty milkcans and his body would double up and the bones would stick out and he would choke on the cough that burst out. He had gotten it - so he said - on the French Front in the chimmy nights in the trenches filled with water, against the cursed French. Behind him followed his exhausted wife. She was without teeth, all her life she had borne soldiers for the Wehrmacht and maid-servants for the rulers; Feller was quick tempered even though a minute before he would have calmly been speaking about some subject or other. If one had done something that was not to his liking, he would get angry and complain to the master about the prisoners. Sometimes the "zender" would give some bad

news. He would have a burst of coughing and take his anger out on the cows. He would bang on their backs and curse the Polacks, the Jews and the French, but never the Herr Chief (the farmer) Here the signals of discipline acted and it never occurred to him to revolt. He stopped short of disturbing the order and discipline that had existed from time immemorial and which one never went against. During the time of the Weimar Government Feller belonged tothe Sociel Democrats, with the rise of the Nazis he went over to the National Socialists party. He was active in the village in the party cell. He would receive the representatives of the party who were sent from Königsberg to the field villages and organised meetings and would throw out anyone who dared disturb the speaker. After a few years, however, he stopped this activity. To work until dark on the farm and then go to the party offices was beyond his strength. He said that the cowa did not allow him to go but he remained faithful to the leader and believed everything that was said over the radio. Sometimes the master would ask him to be the driver on Sundays and take them to church (Ivan also got this job a few times.) I hoped that they would not ask me to take them.to church. Feller would return from town a little drunk in a good mood and easy going with everybody. He would talk a great deal with us about his family. All his seven children worked as servants on the neighbouring farms. His daughters worked as maids in the city in well to do homes and the younger ones were working on Raimans farm after school,the little girls in the kitchen. After the fifth grade of school the boys would start doing farm work beginning with looking after the geese until they learned how to brush and groom the horses. The top grade was the ability to drive a wagon loaded with sheaves of corn or to bring manure on to the fields and cross paths and furrows without turning over. Feller would speak in anger. There is no chance for the children of servants to get a better education. They have to look to themselves in order to earn a living. "I have no property, they will have to work the

way I did. From my earliest childhood I worked for my living and I was at the mercy of the employer. The rule is if the head of the family is a servant then the children will remain servants too; but to-day the landworker has his rights. There are agreements for everything and he can complain at the arbeits ampt if things are not the way they should be. I have never complained," and added with a smile, "I am sure I never would have won." In the end he would remakk sarcastically: "The Kingdom of Heaven is not for us, the workers. Even in the world to come the masters will not work. They will sit in barrels of pitch and we will be dragging the wood and coal to keep the fires going. We are sentenced in this world and the next." Really who could know the secrets of the heart of Feller, who confessed to the priest. Perhaps he found a minutes peace in his doubts about the Third Reich, perhaps he would find the means of healing the breach there and gaining peace within himself even for an hour. He never spoke about himself concerning religion. One could not uncover the struggle that was taking place there between two uneven forces, between the invisible and mysterious that spoke to his heart and the all-powerful realistic ruler, who with the wink of an eye or a turn of his moustache or the raising of his hand, sentenced the life of man or fate of a nation to death, and destruction. The common factor in both cases: the carriers of the cross, and the worshippers of the swastika, was the hatred of the Jews. Those who raised their eyes to heaven, and those who gripped reality with both hands. As I got to know later this split did not only exist in the case of Feller, but among many Germans in Germany. In the end they all went the way of the majority preferring the reality, the promises of the heaven on earth to the Kingdom of Heaven and the split soul comes out purified and whole after confession.

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In the first year of captivity the problem of smoking was one of the most acute. The master got ration cards for food and cigarettes from the ministry of Economics and Food, but these did not always reach him. So the prisoners did not get cigarettes and suffered. I often collected cigarette butts, crumbledc them and rolled cigarettes from newspapers. I often filled my pipe with tobacco. The smoke pacified me and helped me to overcome my depressed condition, my fears and suspicions. So I smoked at work and during moments of rest; in the long evenings and in the middle of the night when I would suddenly wake up stunned from the frightening dreams which seemed to have no connection with each other. I would sit on the bed, lost in thought. Then my pipe was my closest friend, I would press in tobacco and take in one inhalation after another and fill my chest with the strong dizzying tobacco. My dangerous secrets only my pipe knew. I absorbed the bitterness of my heart. Slowly I freed myself from the web of dreams and found pleasant release. Every minute I was afraid of what might happen to me, perhaps I was close to my end, but while smoking, I felt good and was calm (I had hundreds of nights like that during my captivity). When there was no more tobacco and I awake with the morning star I would sit stunned on the bed with head bent and eyes to the ground, feeling absolutely alone and strange. So it happened that because of the lack of tobacco I would agree to the request of the Knechten to help them get firewood ready for heating their homes. For this they would give me a packet of cigarettes or tobacco.

Once in the late hours of the evening I cut wood for the milkman, Feller. After the work he invited me to his home even though it was against the law for a prisoner to have contact with a German citizen. It was a two roomed house. They had brought up seven children there and most of them were born there. The house was clean, warm and pleasant. Some ikons and pot plants decorated the room. They gave me coffee. The radio broadcast

"fine words" all the time, after that Beethoven's 7th Symphony was broadcast. The host told me of the "German History" that was being madeevery day and broadcast every night. Then he told me stories of Knights, kings and rulers. He spoke about Napoleon, whom he admired and bbout the German culture that nourishes and enriches all peoples. He praised Beethoven the great composer, who loved his country and his people (He was sure that I had never heard of him), and still continued to talk but I did not pay very much attention. I listened to the symphony. I heard the sounds that simulated the sounds of Nature. Its secret and completeness. I began to think of what riddles life holds. I went back to the years of my childhood. The flowing stream, the wind between the oaks, leaves and grass. The sound of the nightingale and the cuckoo, all complete in harmony and beauty - and the pain at the string which broke and cut off my life. "Oh dear G-d! Where has everything gone to? How did I come here, a stranger?" I became lonely listening to the sounds and united with G-d, the complete. Feller noticed my interest in the music and wanted to please his guest with a surprise. He turned the knob of the radio and got on to a Bylorussian station at Minsk. "Ja, rus ist guter kamerad" and smiled. After telling about the good relationships between the local population and the Germans, the radio began to broadcast folksongs. Straight after that the sounds of a Yiddish song burst forth, a folk song I knew well: "Machetenese meine, machetenistе gelrae." I was amazed. It was a pleasant surprise, completely unexpected. (Feller did not understand the language and did not pay attention.) It meant that there were Jews living there without being persecuted. It encouraged me. I came to the conclusion that life in our area was in order. There was no persecution or racism in spite of the rumours of war that was approaching. Now I had hope that I would still return home. For months I kept this spark of hope within me.

THE WEHRMACHT PLANS SAFETY MEASURES IN THE REAR

It was April, 1941, and there was still snow in the valleys and low lying places. The hills were grey and dry. Water flowed in deep ditches at their feet and there were pools of water in the snow. In the same month a communication unit of the Wehrmacht appeared in the village and with them were little dogs with short legs. They had brought the dogs with them from Paris. The unit had a special task to become acquainted with the lay of the land. The colonels were quartered in the second wing of the big house. The sergeants and soldiers were quartered in the houses of the servants. The officers with their long coats and high boots crossed the ridges and valleys the whole day. The soldiers brought a little livliness to the grim isolated farm and particularly to the dwellings of the servants. There they spent the time with the young girls and the wives of the mobilized soldiers. The soldiers were ordered not to dirty the yard, nor to trample and break anything on the farm. I knew at once with the arrival of the unit that the master was asked about the prisoners he had. I knew it and most of the time I was in a state of insecurity. I tried not to meet them face to face. The unit was made up of Austrians and Volkdeutche and they were rough with us. The officers roamed the hills and valleys and from there looked Eastwards with their fieldglasses. They measured and marked down data on their maps. Rumour had it they were planning anti-tank trenches as second lines of defence to the city.of Konigsberg. The distance to the Lithuanian border was, if I am not mistaken, about 100 kilometers. The inhabitants of the place boasted about everything. "There is hope that in the near future the army is going to move 'Nach Ostin' ". At the time the army was on the farm a young maid was working in the farm kitchen. She had been sent by the arbeitsampt. She had been a wardress in a prison before that. She was a bad cruel character and reported us to the mas-

ters when she could. She was so unpleasant that even the inhabitants of the place could not stand her. Before the coming of the unit, she would sing SS marching songs. After the unit left it appeared that they left her pregnant. She stopped singing and became completely irritable and aggressive. She made the prisoners particularly myself, suffer very much. After a few months the officer of the "stadrad" came to see her. He noted down particulars of her pregnancy and sent her to her parents' home. They were also servants. So another period filled with threat and anxiety passed.

One day a young man appeared at the house of the farmer. He had blue eyes and fair hair. He was tall and wore army uniform. After an hour in the house he came out wearing working clothes. He went to the pigsty, the cowshed and the stables, scratched the backs of the pigs, touched the udders of the cows, that were about to give birth, stroked the carthorse, the sensitive one with the thin legs. He straightened her black mane on the chestnut neck. He put his head near her cheek. She apparently knew him. She straightened her ears, moved her head and neighed softly, clomping her feet on the ground. He went here, walked there, touched, examined, thought out and planned work for the coming spring.

"That is Bruno", the heir, the future master of the farm. The master Raiman had requested the Wehrmacht to release Bruno for the spring work, the people whispered proudly. The way he talked to people showed that he was modest and shy. He would not talk unless someone asked him something. Since his mobilization he had fought in different countries, and was amazed at their beauty, particularly Holland and France, he was interested in them and spoke a lot about them. So this was Bruno, who had been brought up in the big house of halls and passages in which the carpets covered the floors from wall to wall and country-style embroidery decorated the walls, of cellars in which one got the fresh smell of butter, sour cream and beet soup, and in

which there was a stock of bottles of rum and jams and marmalades. Bruno grew up and was brought up by the Herr and Herrin alone. His other friends were the animals on the farm; the fields and hills. He respected the two old people and stood a little in awe of them. He listened to their instructions and carried out their commands obediently and docilely. He would go out to work early before the master and would come back only when he was called. So most of the farmers were brought up. Before the war Bruno did not mix with the people of the village. He only had contact with them through the work on the farm. He did not associate with the village youth. He did not dance with the young people on Sundays and did not go with the girls. It is possible because of pride or as a result of his upbringing by the old people who influenced and shaped his character . He however, found something with which to occupy his Sundays and holidays. He would work on the motorcar that only he knew how to drive. So after looking at the animals he went to the motorcar and prepared it for the Sunday so that he could take the master and the mistress to church. The Sunday after that he changed the car for the horse carriage and harnessed a pair of chestnuts to it. He took his favourite mare and another as well. He himself was the driver of the carriage and held the reins. He let the horses go at a light, fast trot to church. The Herr and Herrin were of course very pleased and proud.

I got to know that the Herr and Herrin were not married at all. They were not the parents of Bruno. They were first cousins and were the only ones remaining after a long chain of family relationships that had continued for tens of years. They worked the land and were the last of the chain that left no heirs. So the two cousins Raiman inherited the land. Because of the closeness of their relationship they would not marry and establish a family. Bruno was one of their family to inherit the land after them. The two owners had been together since their youth and had managed the land jointly. The farmer Raiman

planned the planting and the animals and determined which lands were for sowing and which were to be left fallow or for other purposes. The Herrin was responsible for the kitchen, the chickens and the geese but her advice and opinion was heard in the sowing and ploughing as well. Her eyes were open to everything; the maid servants gossiped and said that they slept in one room and that there was only one bed in the room. This way of life had continued for tens of years and was unchangable. The Herrin preferred to be called "Fraulein" so she was registered on her identification certificate and thus she was known in society. In this way she felt herself purified of the original sin of Adam and Eve and purified like the Holy Mother.

For fifty years they had lived together without the blessing of the Church and taken up with the daily farm work. Disciplined to the Catholic commands of prayer of Sundays and holidays and confessions and in the last years they were faithful also fo the leader and his Government.

It is doubtful if the master himself admired the Fuhrer. His eyes were flued to his fields. His main concern was to have a good harvest. The Fraulein on the other hand loved and even found pleasure in the very name of Hitler. Her face lit up, her eyes glowed and a smile came to her face. The Herrin did her best to bring up their heir in this light. Somethink stuck but he still remained a stranger with controlled feelings in the big house. So the masters and their heir lived for many years. They killed many pigs, went to the church many times and swallowed many bottles of rum in the gasthaus. Hunted a bit in their lives and enjoyed the roasted and fried hares. They lived through many periods of spring and many good harvests of wheat. They also went through lean years when the wheat was poor. The three were close to the earth, they cultivated and enjoyed the fruits thereof. They kept their distance in their relations with their servants. They could be hard and demanding but also knew how to praise. The master knew how to attune themselves to the nature of things but were cold and distant in their relations towards others, especially

those that served them. The man who ploughed their fields and filled their barns was a servant to them.

In the evenings the prisoners would often visit each other. The guards allowed this, after there were no attempts of trying to run away or escape. In any case escapees could not run far; particularly now that the German army was spread out along the entire frontier of Russia. There were several lines of defence so if a prisoner penetrated one line he would have another before him until he reached the frontier. These visits from my friends encouraged me and gave me hours of happiness. We had a lot to say to each other. Each with his own special story. The past of the single man was different to that of the family man. The entertainment of the city inhabitant different to that of the villagers.

Every story was listened to with great eagerness. They returned in memory to the homeland and to the home. Even if they had lived their lives in poverty, their stories of home were pleasurable and joyful. The period that had passed with its good points and bad points would never return again. Even were he to return home it would not be to the same retreat. Even if they renewed and reestablished their families, the ugly past will have left its mark. Kudashov said: "My home stood on the edge of a lonely village. It was poor. The house was low covered with grey straw burnt by the summer sun, eaten away by the winter storms. They had three "dischantzien" of land and with that they had to maintain a family. We usually worked outside the home but there was always a lack of food at home. However, we had a warm gay life at home. We ate with wooden spoons from one steaming wooden basin, we dipped our slices of bread into the tasty satisfying goulash. It's true we were not content with that life, we expected that the morrow would give us more. Perhaps a better life would come from across the border with Russia. Now they tell me in letters

about a period with the Soviets 'That we did not expect.' No, that same peace of mind even in poverty we will not have again. The pain that is within me from the war and from captivity will not be healed."

The first subject that was discussed every evening was women. They told about stormy love affairs that they had experienced and stolen fruit that they had tasted. These experiences were not easily forgotten. We also had Ukranian visitors. In our room they also found Ivan. He had a fund of stories that interested people. The Ukranians were closer to each other and as time went on they became more secretive. My friends warned me against being too friendly with them. As it was said "We live like brothers, and calculate like Jews." In the calculation it was important to know where everyone was placed. In the course of time I became friendly with the Ukranians I was interested in the language and knew how to read and write Ukranian. I knew all the different ways of talking, beginning from Galicia till the river Don, but I did not know how to speak myself, but when I got to know any Ukranians, I could at once place him from his accent. From the time I got to know them I watched them carefully and they did the same to me.

Probably because of my Polish Bylorussian friends and because of my workmate Ivan, whom they liked, they as yet did not try to hurt me in any way (I said as yet and will come back to this point.) At every meeting they told us news which they had heard from different sources. Anyone who told any news would add his own commentary so people expressed their ideas on politics. In time one idea out of the many that was heard was the true one. When the aeroplanes heavily bombed London the cleverest and best informed were taken aback. Like in chess you can play four moves ahead and here comes a counter move that can upset all your plans. "Nothing is sure," says the Polish proverb.

When the prisoners did not manage to guess the real news, they stopped talking about it and began playing cards. As there were no cards they drew the figures on paper and so were able to play. In the course of time they got cards from the Germans as a present or for some job they had done on the farm. At the beginning I did not know how to play. Cards were not to be found in my home and in the youth movements cards were considered valueless, like gambling, and the game did not attract me. Also, I was so taken up within myself that I had no time to busy myself with cards. Sometimes I listened to the jokes and took part in the conversation out of pure politeness. I tried not to show the others how I felt. My friends told me to take part in the game like everyone else and not keep myself apart. So I began to kill time like the others and even to get enthusiastic about the game. Clouds of smoke would hang in the room for hours and I was wrapped in it like everyone else. This was the only entertainment that interested me. We had tobacco which we got from all sources and for a little money which the prisoners get for minor needs. From now on most of my evenings were spent smoking and playing cards.

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SPRING 1941, AND MY NARROW PATH AMONG THE MINE FIELDS

The storehouses and the barns were emptied. Ivan and I comforted ourselves: Perhaps it was the last threshing and the last dragging of heavy sacks; perhaps the last year in captivity.

From the low lying fields glistened small pools of water the mud in the yard was churned up by people wearing clogs and stepping through it, fixing the plough and the cutters, oiling the axels. We brought the carts loaded with grain to the mill. We went to the forest to bring firewood for the kitchen for the summer. We cut pines. The sky was dark and thick mist rolled up off the fields - one asked oneself to where they were rising and to where they vanished.

The huts stood bare without a leaf or a creeper to cover them, but washed down with rain and snow and wind as if they were straightening up after the weight of the winter. Here and there one could see a little green sticking out. I had to contend with a series of unexpected troubles and each had its own danger.

One evening in 1941, when we had started work on the fields a young Pole of about 16 was brought to the farm. His name was Bolik. He was kidnapped from his village by the Germans. He was from the Mazur area which had been annexed by the Germans. They brought him for forced labour and he was given the third bed in our room. They brought him without anything, with dirty clothes, thin and hungry. His Polish was mixed with German words. After a year and a half of conquest the German language had begun to take root in this Polish community. The youth who from his infancy was used to helping with the spring work in his

village was quickly taken in on the farm. Like him, thousands of Polish civilians were brought for forced labour and worked for their food, clothing and tobacco. Because of the War he did not manage to finish Primary school but he had enough to absorb chauvinistic sentiments and a poisonous hatred of the Jews. Like many Polish people he knew nothing of Jewish history and everything Jewish was to be mocked and jeered at. He was a Catholic and learned what the Priest had taught him. (I mentioned him to show how Polish youth was influenced by the occupation of their land.) Now the same Bolek was in the company of prisoners who had fought for Poland and suffered for her. He learnt to know the sufferings of his own people and those of other peoples but a long time passed until he became aware of this.

For me this period was a threat. I controlled myself so that our arguments were not heard by outsiders and did not come to the ears of the Germans. I controlled myself as my friends advised but only for a certain time.

At that time there were rumours going round that the Bylorussians and Ukranians would be released from captivity. They would be granted citizens rights so that they could be mobilized into the German army and it was hinted that they would fight against the Bolsheviks in the future. The Bylorussians regarded this as a good joke, "G-d help Hitler if he thinks that the prisoners can help him overcome his downfall." These rumours made me very uneasy. I analysed the situation and realised that a situation like that would bring me to disaster. I felt that I alone was to blame for the entire complication which was becoming still more complicated and from which there was no way out. What a paradox! A Jew mobilized into the Nazi army! It seemed as if life brought such unusual phenomena that seemed to go against all logic. Even in my darkest dreams I would not have imagined such a possibility. More so these changes would bring me before a commission of enquiry and oblige me to prove that I

belonged to the Bylorussian nationality, and followed their religion and then go before a medical council which would discover the sign of my Jewishness on my body. In the meantime however, these were only rumours.

The mists disappeared andthe air became freshed and clearer, a few birds burst forth, swooped around the fields together and disappeared. They turned and wheeled around from the swamps. The little ones chirped in the nests trying out their wings unsuccessfully and then settling back in their nests. A pale and tired sun rose from behind the horizon, floated behind the clouds and emerged refreshed. The farmer Raiman came out of his house and examined his fields. He stood on one of the mounds and looked into the distance. He scratched the back of his head worriedly thinking about which task to begin. The wind carried the smell of the manure which his workers had spread over the fields. The farmer, in high boots, re-cheeked from drinking rum, walked slowly and confidently. It seemed as if he did not pay much attention to the news from the front that was broadcast: About the victories in the Balkan countries. The Germans had entered Belgrade and after that Bulgaria and Greece, or about General Rommel whom one heard about in North Africa where he was fighting the British, beating them down to the fight and left, and scattering them to the winds. He was already close to the Egyptian Pyramids. Raiman apparently depended on Hitler. He would protect him. The chief thing was that they were fighting on foreign soil. He was not very interested in the Fuhrer's plans. He took up a handful of soil, determining its condition. "Ja, der Fuhrer is a world strategist. He says and does. Now he is attacking the enemy in South Europe and across the Mediterranean. The news came to the Fraulein from Feller and she is delighted with it. Ja, tomorrow at the gasthaus we will know more facts," he said very cheerfully. To celebrate the good news they prepared a good meal for the servants and gave Rino a big bone. Kuba went

around cracking his whip and chuckling and singing a part of the Horst Wessel song while the Germans clapped time to the music.

"Wenn das Judenblut von messer spritzt
Dan geht's normal so gut ..... etc."

For weeks the prisoners went around stunned. How can one explain that the Germans are beating everyone? Where is the Military Wisdom of the enlightened nations? Why don't they fight for the justice of their indppendance? Theprisoners expressed worry at their visits. The Ukranians saw a quick release from their bonds. With that their pleasure was mixed with doubts. The Germans already said : "Ukrane will be our bread basket."

I shuddered when I heard that Rommel was on the way to Egypt and Palestine. I thought that the Jewish settlements did not know what was awaiting them just as the Jews of America and Russia don't know what the conditions are. If, G-d forbed, they penetrate there they will destroy what the Chalutzim managed to create in a relatively short period of time. The same homeland, the likes of which the Jews hadn't managed to build in any other country. Some time ago the Germans said that a unit from Palestine was participating in the fight of the British Army in battles on French and Greek soil against the Germans. I didn't believe them. I thought it was their usual incitement propaganda. But now I thought there was something to it. In my heart I hid a spark of encouragement and hope. However, I still doubted. Whatever the case it was another attempt of the Germans to confuse the people, as if these Jewish units threatened Germany. In this way Goebels tried to raise the ire of the people against the Jews.

There were among the prisoners those who foresaw the Jews of Palestine as the victims of the Wehrmach and the SS and said: "Hitler will catch the Jews in their lair and exterminate them." I wrapped myself in my coat and fell into a light slumber. I was alone with myself. I united with the Jews of Israel. My pipe did not leavy my mouth. I kept smoking continuously and kept a clean head and a rein on my feelings. My eyes looked into

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the distance. I murmered words of longing for Zion. Works that I still remembered by heart and which expresed my longing and of the poetry of the Middle Ages that filled me with confidence. I had carried them in my heart from my early youth and I remembered the words of Jehuda Halevy.

Zion, you ask how your prisoner fares/
They who send you regards/
and the others of your flocks
from the sea and the East
from the North to Yemen-Shalom
from far and near Shalom - W
bring you blessings from all sides

(Free Translation)

The feeling within me was deep and strong. I was sure that Rommel would not penetrate to Eretz Yisrael. The Yishav will not be exterminated and if G-d forbed they reached it they would come up against a strong resistance of armed Jews, the Chalutzim. The driers of the swamps and the whole Yishuv would never surrender to them. I refused to believe that the SS would attach them the way they attacked the Polish Jews. No, Rommel would not manage that. My feeling of confidence was supreme. The long march of Rommel would end somewhere in Egypt.

In my depression I always remembered the proud home of the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. For me Eretz Yisrael was the only place for the Jews to go to. I was drawn to it from my childhood but did not manage to realise my dream. In my time of trouble when I tried to find the reason for the hatred against the Jews, I always came to the conclusion that the reason for the failure of the people had continued from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple: The quarrel between brothers, between fanatics and moderates at the time of the revolt, broke the unity of the nation. It was forced into exile or left their homeland willingly in the search for an easier more secure life. From the moment their feet left their firm earth they were expelled and deported from one country to the next. They were enclosed in Ghettos or they separated themselves voluntarily to keep their own values.

Without land as the basic source of their existence they began to work with money. They began to lend money at interest and this was to their disadvantage and this caused violence and pogroms. It hurt me. Why in the course of history didn't a national movement rise up whose urge and aim was to return to the land from whence they came? To embrace Mother Earth and to live from her like all the other nations, like the Germans, the Ukranians and the Poles. Instead they had the desire to come to the Holy Land to die. They did not think of the principle that a nation must live from the land that he cultivates. They had to become one with their land both in life and death. The longer the exile lasted the greater became their longing for Zion, but nothing was brought to realization. For generations they composed poetical prayers in tears and sadness. They saw mystical visions of the coming of the Messiah and as a result there came false Messiahs who misled the nation, that desired freedom and salvation. After every incident, disappointment grew, so there were those who told the nation to accept their fate and to mourn the distruction of the Second Temple till it would be rebuilt anew. From the time the Jews were expelled from their land the great sages began to study mystical works and to go into the revelations of the book of Daniel. They tried to explain words and verse that were difficult to understand, looked for signs; they used "notrikonim" and gematria as aids and everyone determined a different date for the coming of the Messiah. There were those who kept the revelation to themselves. The people of the nation who followed this belief began to grow less. Every few years this people was attacked and violated and their blood flowed. The nation was misled by mystical thinkers who maintained that the coming of salvation was in the hands of heaven alone.

Now with the approach of Rommel to Egypt I shuddered to think what would happen to the handful of Jews in Eretz Yisrael. I did not want to believe that they were in danger of exeermination.

During that time I had an inner urge to write about my fears of what would happen to the Jews.in Eretz Yisrael, on pieces of paper. Later I began to write about the people whom I was with in captivity, the prisoners of war, those friendly and unfriendly, and of typical Germans. I wrote about my inner self. I put down the bitter powerful truth on paper. The writing was like a dialogue, a necessary release.

I wrote after every incident, every event, in quiet moments when I could concentrate. After writing I could calm myself and carry the burden more easily. I wrote when I worked alone in the storehouse, where the grain was kept. I would write for five minutes on a piece of paper. Of course, I guarded myself from every unexpected interruption. I hid the pieces of paper in a brick that was cracked and covered with spider webs on which lay one of the beams of the roof. No-one could think of that as a hiding place. In this way every sentence and every description was as if engraved into my memory so that immediately after the war I was able to copy them out again and again. This I had to do time and again because during my wanderings in Europe I had to continually keep destroying papers.

The events happened so quickly that I did not have time to think of the safety of the papers when I myself was in constant danger.

The plough had already hidden the manure in the earth. The harrows crumbled the clods and straightened the furrows. The earth fermented and began to sprout plants. There were legumes and other vegetables.to be seen. The trees round the master's house began to blossom. There seemed to be a sea of white flowers and one could hear the constant humming of the bees amongst them.

A flock of geese came out of the pond, stretched out their long necks and flapped their wings, giving their typical cry as

they came down onto the farmyard. Kuba lashed his whip and cursed at the fact that they had evaded his supervision. He ran after them with the rolling rocking gait of his broken hips. From the pasture came the smell of sweat and milk. There were the cows chewing the cud; their udders filled with milk, lying spread out on the grass between their legs. Feller the chief servant, was guiding a cow that had just been taken to a bull on a neighbouring farm. She lowed and was still restless as a result. The sun went down slowly and the golden rays spread out on the poplar trees and the grass.

The workers returned tired from their work on the fields, Bruno leading them, For a second time he had been released from his unit in order to come and help with the spring work. He was in a hurry to complete the work that he had planned. He was anxious to fulfil his duty as heir of the farm. He knew that something was in the offing. Something unexpected was about to happen for the Germans. He was afraid they would be too late. Let him not miss the conquest of the Black Earth. Fate had decreed that he must participate in the further campaigns in Europe which the leaders had decreed. Like the Ancient Prussian Knights he hurried to fulfill the promises that he had made in his oath of fealty. He would burst into the enemy camp and there cut off their heads and continue with the others towards the unexpected. (Till where he was to proceed would be seen in the future.)

At the end of the day the prisoner with the painted crosses on their backs, the patch with the P on their pockets were cursing. The servants with bent backs were quiet. In the end they looked at their pocket watches and admitted that it was very late. The sun disappeared behind the hills. The darkness came and a sadness pervaded the atmosphere. Suddenly the frogs began to croak and this started up the others in the surroundings. They were heard from all directions. So the long days filled with hard work passed and I fell on my bed completely exhausted. I was

filled with anxiety of what was to come.

Nights without sleep. My thoughts took me back to the village where I was born. Now everything there was asleept. The incitement of Hitler had not penetrated the Soviet areas nor come to the ears of the inhabitants. Somewhere over there a light wind was rustling in the trees. A dog stretched outhis head to the sky and howled. A baby woke from its sleep and the mothers heart trembled in the quiet. I turned to think about the people of my town. From the time I was a youngster I had seen and realised the hard life they had to lead. One struggled for a dry piece of bread and the other for a morsel of meat. I watched their joy and their sadness. In these nights I saw their great eyes watching in fear. Tears were streaming from their eyes. Swords dipped in blood flashed before them. Bruno had already returned to his unit. He was full of energy, hope and confidence. He hurrédd as if he had an important mission to fulfill for his people. He said goodbye and left. The Fraulein called after him "Auf Wiedernehm" The farmer Raiman raised his whip and the horsed galloped away. The mistress of the farm stood for a long time watching the dust that rose from the horses feet. She returned to the kitchen with the prayer: "Let Hitler protect him the way he protects all our soldiers. We depend on him" (This the maids told us.)

Everybody said that Germany was about to attack Russia. These were the adults, the women and children in the fields and the kitchen, even Kuba told me this. Everybody was waiting for the war to begin. Every German sure that things would proceed as they had on the Polish and French fronts and so they maintained that instead of the Russians attacking the Germans, the Germans would surprise them. Their victory was absolutely sure.

In the middle of June another unit of the Wehrmacht came to the farm. There were high ranking officers, among them and they had just been brought from North Africa. There was a small

monkey with them. It always sat on the shoulders of a soldier who worked in the kitchen. It entertained them. The officers went round the fields and stood on the hilltops with their faces in the direction of Rastenburg. They opened maps and consulted each other. Wrote, erased, corrected. The soldiers spread out on the hills and planted flags in places which would be used for gun emplacements when the time came. This time they were not interested in the inhabitants of the place. I had no fears and suspiciins regarding myself. They left after a few days. The masters greeted them with "Heil!"

In the last couple of months my job was to harness one of the horses to the small cart,to load the cart with the large milk cans and drive to the collecting base that was on the side of the main road going to Konigsberg. At the collecting base there was a long high table on which they placed the cans from the village farms but at that place danger threatened me. Here I met German Party men or Ukranian prisoners that I did not know. These people would ask me questions to find out more about me. My friends told me in secret that the Germans were suspicious of me and advised me how to behave because if I were discovered and handed over to the Gestapp they would have got into trouble. (The Germans were now more suspicious and sensitive than they had previously been. Rumours had spread that Jews had infiltrated into the ranks of Polish and French prisoners. They suspected, looked for and were quiet.). My friends told me the news from the fronts which they had heard from the Germans. They gave me tobacco. It was the same tobacco which I collected from butts on the roadside. I crumbled it and we smoked it together. After the guard stopped going with me I felt less confident. At that time there was a lot of movement on the road. The Wehrmacht and the SS were transporting cannon and camoflauged tanks.

My horse took fright at the huge transport behicles and broke through the vehicles causing the army traffic to stop for a quarter of an hour. The horse jumped on to the platform with

its forelegs. Her hoofs reached the long gun-barrel and she had loosened herself from the harness. The SS or the motorbikes who kept order were forced to intervene. They pulled the horse away from the guns and pulled the horse and cart completely to the side of the road. I had a hard job controlling the horse which had covered itself with spittle, while they were helping me the SS tried to speak to me and question me. At the crossroads on the main road stood a "gasthaus" which also served as a grocery store. The owners were two brothers who were always dressed in brown shirts and ties with swastikas on their sleeves. I often had to stop there and get things for the kitchen. They were fanatical party members and treated me and all prisoners in a belittling manner. Whenever I went there I was afraid and lacked confidence. Near the store was a post office,whenever I passed the village I had to post the letters and parcels of the owners of the farm and I had to get the letters that the postman hadn't managed to deliver during the day. Here I found silent enmity. When I went in the officials would regard me with unfriendly eyes, asking what I was sending and to whom. Usually they opened the parcels. I told them that only the farmer knew what the parcels contained. I told the guard and the master that they opened and examined the parcels and he complained to the village committee. The guard again accompanied me and he spoke to the officials. After a while I again went on my own. The officials stopped questioning me. Their faces were a little less severe. They gave me farm post without trouble but their hatred and suspicion though suppressed, was still there. At the same post office branch, worked a postman whom I got to know. He was about 50, with the swastika on his arm band, a party man. In the autumn in rainy weather when there was storms he would ride his motorbike with the postbag on his back. Parcels and bags full of letters were tied to the bike. In winter he was wrapped in scarves and wore his high boots.

He would go through deep snow to the farthest roads and lanes to bring the post to the exact places on time. It happened that I was transporting a heavy load of wood on a sleigh and met him when he had deviated from the road and got stuck in a ditch. In spite of great effort he could not get out and the snow began to cover him. I told him to get onto the sleigh. He got on completely exhausted cursing Poles and Jews who were causing him this suffering. I was very careful of him but he had a warmth and friendliness. When sitting on the sleigh, the postman, the faithful partyman, drew out a bottle from one of his pockets and invited me to partake of it. After he too had taken a couple of mouthfuls his tongue grew looser and he began to complain about the difficulties of his work. He complained about the masters, the landowners who ate "speck" in plenty whereas he had difficulty in raising a piglet. His face got red. He warmed to his subject and let out the bitterness of his heart. He hoped that after the war things would be better for him and he would get his compensation. After all, he was a party man, faithful to Hitler from the start.

There was a blacksmith in the village of Komminen whose job it was to fix rings on the wheels of the carts and to shoe the horses. The master usually delegated this job to Ivan or Bolek who knew how to work with horses, but sometimes I had to take the horse to the blacksmith to be shoed. It was dangerous work for me. I had to hold the horse's hoof upwards on my knees. The blacksmith had to quickly cut the horny protrusions and slits on the hoof of the animal and round it properly in order to fit on the heated horseshoe with nails, without hurting the animal. It happened that the young horse was not tame and was frightened of every movement of the blacksmith and sensitive to every touch on its body. It kicked out and sent us both flying. The smith was a choleric and got very annoyed, cursed the horse calling it a Jew and in anger hit with the iron rod on the horse's back and hind quarters. The smith was a heavy drinker. When he was drunk he was dangerous to everyone

whom he held a grudge against. He particularly cursed the Russians. He accused them of causing his bad health. He had been a P.O.W. in the First World War, had been ill several times since then and coughed heavily, smoked heavily and drank a lot. He could not bear the Slavs. He did not talk to me very much. He looked at me hesitatingly when the guard brought me to the smithy, he was by no means polite and kept up a continual rain of curses on Jews, on everything that didn't go his way. A Bylorussian captive worked for him. He warned me not to talk to him, only to answer what was necessary. The smith had no private property. His house and smithy stood on land belonging to a landowner and he paid rent for them. The two people he did not curse even when dead drunk were the landowner and the Fuhrer. G-d forbed that the Fuhrer should in any way be cursed. He was not a party member but believed in Hitler completely. He maintained that after the war Hitler would do away with the big farmers who rode their finely carved out carriages that he absolutely hated. They went to church in these carriages while he had to go on his motorbike suffering the while from his bad lungs and frost bitten feet, which he had gotten as a prisoner during the First World War.

About two weeks before the outbreak of the Russo-German war I to my surprise got a second letter from my parents' home written in Deutchmarish (Yiddish mixed with German). There were Hebrew words in Latin letters in it. They were worried about me because I had not answered their first letter. I showed the letter to one of my friends and he at once told me not to answer it. If I did I would be digging my own grave. Again I knew that all the Jews in the Russian territory did not know what was happening to the Jews in occupied territory. What made me curious however, was how the censor had passed the letters. At the same time I heard from Polish prisoners who had just come from the camps that only a few Jews who knew languages were living in the camps and they read the letters before they were passed

on to the prisoners. These Jews were used as translators from Hebrew to German by Goebels propaganda machine. They translated parts of the Talmud particularly dealing with trade relations between Jews and Gentiles (I even read parts of the Shulchan Aruch in German in the regional newspaper, the "Raiserle Zeitung"). These Poles gave me more details about those Jews working in the censorship offices under the supervision of the SS. In the end I came to the conclusion that A Jew had read the letter from my home, understood my situation and had passed the letter through. My friends came to the same conclusion. I kept the two postcards hidden for a long time in one of the storehouses on the farm (Before I began my wanderings afresh I tore them up. In the camps they would often conduct searches among the prisoners. They looked in their knapsacks, in their pockets and on their bodies for suspicious material.

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AND WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF,
CAME TRUE

(Job 3 verse 28)

The German morale was high. In a short time an important historical event was to take place. The Germans from the lowliest to the large landowners all looked to the great commander, the guider of the future. He was one of the most looked at pictures on the wall, the stern face, the little black moustache, the dark fringe on the forehead, the face which gave everyone perfect selfconfidence on certain victory and grant his people plenty of land as a compensation for the people lost and the losses they had incurred up to now. His picture hung in every office, in every affluent and poor home. In the Catholic households the picture of the Teuton had the same pride of place, that the picture of Jesus and Mary had. The Germans, chuckling, said that the Fuhrer was preparing a mess of pottage for the Russians which they would eat and dip in their blood. No, it would not be a long war with the spilling of so much blood. It would essentially be an internal Russian War. The Fuhrer would start the war and it would turn into a revolt against the Jewish Bolshevist Government. The revolt would bring about the release of the Ukranians from the slavery of the Muscovites and also the salvation of the Russian people themselves from hard labour and hunger. The German himself would come out of this with light losses.

More than once I wondered at the Germans. Feller had a son in the army. One of the women, a mother of small children, had a husband in the army. The master of the farm had an adult son participating in battles. What were their inner feelings regarding their family? Did they worry about their lives, their safety? I doubted it. I was sure their spirits were high. The subject that absorbed them was what to do with the marks that they had. What else should they buy. Although they were limited by ration cards, they kept on buying in large quantities

as against their ability to buy during previous governments. The landworker enjoyed a good standard of living. In addition to the usual salary they got parcels from their sons and husbands who looted in the conquered territories. Goebels saw to it that the radio filled their minds and did not allow them to think about material difficulties or worries. So they had no thought of danger or worry in their heads for their sons and husbands in the army. (However, in 1942, the Germans began to open their eyes and they began to sigh in secret and sing sad songs.)

With the approach of war I began to be anxious about the fate of my family. I saw the tall SS soldiers wearing their steel helmets with the death's head symbol on it and with their koshes in their hands. Under their helmets were expressionless faces like that of automatons. One heard the tread of heavy nailed boots at every step. These images remained permanently engraved in my mind. I remember when old Jews with torn beards were being chased and suddenly these monsters with steel helmets appeared in their midst. One of them grabbed the beard of an old man with a white beard and the face of a "rabbi". In his left hand he held the beard and in his right hand he hit the head of the old man with his kosh. The Polish prisoners crossed themselves at this terrible sight. In my eyes the victim seemed to be the image of my father. I came out from among the ranks of the prisoners and I had just opened my mouth to ask him to stop beating the old man when I found myself surrounded by bodies that had been trampled and beaten. The SS had kicked with their nailed boots and mouths and heads were bleeding and wounded. One heard moans and groans mixed with their curses. Mud and blood were mixed with their sweat. Somehow I came up out of the heap of bodies and stood on my feet. My fellow prisoners dragged me back into their ranks. I wiped the blood from my burning face. I leaned on the arms of my comrades and dragged my feet a long way.

This came to my mind as I looked into the future. In the Germans crossed the Soviet border and penetrated to the towns and villages populated by the Jewish communities this would happen again. A few days before the outbreak of the war I was sent to a landowner in the village to help with the threshing which meant dragging bags of grain to the store house. In these cases I would return so utterly exhausted that my hands and feet would be trembling and shaking. I sat in my room near the window and breathed in the fragrance of the aroma of the cigarette. The sun had already gone down and I was overcome by a terrible restlessness. I had an ominous feeling of threat which I could not shake off. Airplanes had stopped flying. The drone of the planes that had not stopped day and night ceased than and there was silence. The men in my room spoke about the war that was to break out. They expressed their opinions according to their national sentiments. The conversation became more aggressive and they began to quarrel and curse each other until one drew out a knive and began to wave it about. I interfered trying to quieten them but they shouted at me saying it was because of me that they were placed in this position. I answered aggressively. The Ukranian and the Pole thought I would not dare to answer. For a long time the atmosphere was unbearable. Hatred burned and engulfed us. We did not light the lamp. The youngest of us held a knife in his hand. I leaned my head on my bed opposite them, and watched every movement. It seemed as if they wanted to attack me. This silent tension lasted for an hour until they fell asleep. The next day was June 22nd, 1941. If I had gone on that day to drag sacks of grain I would have collapsed. But the master Raiman changed his plans and told me to take the milk cans to the collecting base and I travelled there as fast as I could. In the middle of the village stood Germans chuckling loudly. It was something unusual to go out in the early hours of the morning and stand around doing nothing. Something had happened. At the collection base I met my friend Vasiel Gursky. He spoke to me quietly so that the others would not

hear us. "Our homeland is burning", and continued, "The schwabs have crossed the border and are advancing. There is no serious resistence. They are destroying and burning everything they can find on the way and at the army airports the airplanes have not managed to take off. They are burning on the ground and the Russian pilots are running away in their underpants. So my master told me," added Vasiel, "they have sold Mother Russia." I felt a choking feeling in my throat. In my imagination I saw the Jews helpless, bent and shot at. I had no doubt Hitler would attack the Jews of Russia in the same way as he had attacked those of Poland." The drunken blacksmith remarked: "Hitler sees the future a thousand years ahead. The cards are in his hands and he sees his victory. What he promises, he keeps."

"The Jews and Poles are responsible for the war," the postman said. "We must root the Jews out of human society," the knecht Feller said as he stood in the middle of the yard. The yard of the farm was in an uproar. From time to time the radio gave out news. The main news. They had caught a young Jewess who was shooting at the German soldiers. When this was heard the Germans in the yard felt like going out to lynch the Jews. One of the maids shouted: "Death to the Jews." The children did not go to school that day. They ran about singing army marching songs. Kuba stood upright and began singing the Horst Wessel song and the whole farm population cheered. Rino got a basin of soup. The Fraulein prepared a meal to mark the end of a Catholic feast. The master Raiman pleased with the news had a flushed face from the fum he had drunk in honour of the occasion. He scratched his back and walked across the fields. For a few days the radio announced that they had caught an old Jewish woman who was giving signals to the enemy of the movements of the Wehrmacht.

During the first months of the war the German propaganda machine said that the war was not against the Russians who lacked bread but against the Jews, the communists and the commissars. The

Russian soldiers did not want to fight for the Bolsheviks. They were throwing away their arms and going to the camps, and kissing the German soldiers who were distributing bread among them.

The German army advanced like lightning conquering huge areas. According to them they liberated the Ukranians, the Bylorussians and other minorities. They reached Smolensk in three weeks and after four months of war they took Kharkov. Now Hitler's greatness was secure and steadfast among millions of Germans and prisoners. His success even surprised the Germans themselves. The Ukranians were jubilant. They were waiting for a change in the political situation and prepared to be released from captivity. The Bylorussians hesitated. Many had not made up their minds and were worried about the differences of opinion. In the meantime many Ukranians and Bylorussians all civilians, were brought over the border for forced labour. They were the first to tell about the mass murder of the Jews and the maltreatment of the Russian population. The Einsatzgruppen carried out these operations, and there were inhabitants co-operating with them. (So the German civilians told me.) "Ja", said Feller, the Fuhrer has many learned helpers. One is Rosenberg a philosopher. He is also a practical man. He has been sent to the Baltic countries which he is making "Judenrein". The second comrade of the Fuhrer is Dr. Goebels, a learned man and very intelligent. They are both strategists who can manage things. They will know what to do in Russia."

At the same time a command came to collect the prisoners in groups of twenty in the village under the supervision of the guards. In this way they wanted to prevent the flight of prisoners to their homelands for example to Galicia or Bylorussia. The room was narrow and it was hard to contain everyone. Among them were those who had been brought to Germany recently, and they told about the atrocities that had been committed against the

Jews.

The hatred of the Ukranians against the Jews increased to such an extent that it was greater than it had been in the last two years. The Ukranians expressed their sorrow that they were not in their homeland at the moment and were not able to take the opportunity of avenging themselves against the Jews, looting their property and punishing them. On the other hand, those who had recently been brought to Germany completely differed from them and were far less extreme.

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What can man achieve?
He waits for death every day
What has flesh to say
It is brought to the grave
The body falls into the pit
Into the dark and unfortunate place
His imagination his
thoughts are in vain
He is like an animal
His days are few and difficult
(Part of the Yom Kippur prayers - Free translation)

I was very sad. I thought of the death of thousands that were thrown into pits. Their bodies rotted and were infested by worms. It was a disgusting end to life. I remembered the time of my youth. My father held my hand and I walked to the shul on the day of Judgement. When we reached the words "The body falls into the pit, into a dark unfortunate place", where the poet describes the reality of the end of life, my father cried, and I was amazed at the fact that my father could break down in this way. I knew him as a serious exacting man, but not as one who cried easily. My childish heart filled with pity. With that I did not understand the complete tragedy of mortal man. When I left the shul the sadness left me. Now I remembered the sentences in greater depth and greater understanding and pain. All these thoughts came to me, connected to the extermination of the Jews of Eastern Poland.

I went through an unbearably difficult time then. Again I got the feeling that I was being persecuted. A feeling that people were following me. It was the feeling of a destroyed soul, it was part of reality. A feeling of tension overwhelmed me like a rumbling volcano about to burst forth. I had no peace and quiet whatsoever. I had a feeling of helplessness, misery and powerlessness. I was alone without anyone. I lived in spirit with my unhappy family and people.

Every announcement from the radio broke me. I gathered my last strength together to keep control of myself. I kept a hold on myself to stop myself from crying and not pouring all my danger out on the Germans in the yard outside. At the same time I was in very great fear. I felt hundreds of eyes jumping around me and stinging me like wasps that would not let me alone. Every time I had to cross the village I trembled. Along the way small windows opened out from the stone houses of the streets. Flaxen haired women and children looked out. They gossipped about everyone passing and particularly pointed me out. From every stable where farmers and servants worked, death threatened. From every home, from every door, that was opened a crack, from behind every fence, death watched.

The gasthaus owners with their swastika armbands thought of imprisoning me. The drunken smith and his apprentices, the postal officials, the Wehrmacht and the SS who wore the death's head emblem on their helmets, all stared at me with the eyes of death.

I lashed at the horse and galloped away, shot out like an arrow from a bow and after me death chased. (Sometimes I was afraid of myself, perhaps these were illusions of fear.) At any rate my spirit was alienated from life. I awaited death and I hoped that it would come soon and free me as quickly as possible from these dregs of humanity. There was no life for me on the face of the earth. I could not carry on with the

camouflage of the Bylorussian. Every jeering remark about the Jews seemed to touch me personally, it was like rubbing salt into wounds. It was like pouring dirty water on the graves of my exterminated people. My mental state got worse, I lost my appetite, I told my workmates that I was suffering a stomach upet. Sadness overcame me. I began to feel shortness of breath as if my throat was caught in a vice and worst of all I began to smoke less. In the evening when we came to the place where we all slept together the prisoners played cards but I fell on my straw bed. Somewhere in my mind grew the idea. It was one of dispair: "suicide". The idea did not leave me - I could not get rid of it and also did not want to - the murdering of the Jews continued and increased in the place where I had spent the greater part of my youth. I knew the community at all levels, old, young, rich, poor. I knew as they were not only from the stories of Sholem, Aleichem and Mendele or from heresay. I used to watch them carefully and it was clear to me that their fate was mine. I was part of them, of their sorrow, their joy, their many sided culture, their humane values. I could laught at them and criticise their weaknesses. Their stinginess and love of money; their stupid self importance and self love, I could respect them for their modesty and even drop a tear of sympathy for them in their poverty and difficulty. I saw windows and orphans struggling to get their crust of bread. I remembered their dependance on others who were harsh and my heart tightened within me.

I was afraid for the many branches of my family scattered in the area . I feared they might be exterminated. The descendants of my family lived in every town and village. Now they were in danger of being wiped out. As I remembered, all this my heard bled. So the ideas of suicide became real to me. After I had made a definite decision my depression decreased a little. I was no longer hesitant and I saw the solution and release from all the complications in this decision. Deliberately I began to

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prepare for what people call an "act of insanity". I was like a person lost in a dark forest and could not find the way out! After walking a long while I suddenly found an opening among the trees. There was an open space there with the sun shining on it. So death beckoned me as a release. I had no fear of the few minutes of suffering that awaited me. I thought of various ways of dying. I could not cut a vein or stick a knife into myself. I chose hanging. In the store room were square beams. I would tie a rope and prepare a noose. During the following days I would watch if the Gestapo or the police were coming to arrest me. I would act before them. I would put my head into the noose and throw myself down. I would prevent them from having the pleasure of getting me alive. With this the business of hanging would be over. I remembered that after my death they would discover the sign of my Jewishness. This would lead to a general search of hidden Jews among the French, the Poles, or even the Ukranians. (There were very few but it was said there were a few.) I particularly thought of Alderowitz who lived in the same village and who suffered at the hands of a certain Ukranian. I would be the cause of all those deaths. My conscience troubled me. I began to hesitate. "Man" I said to myself, "all the while you are living you are responsible for your fellow man, your friend who is living under the same conditions of capticity as you are. Probably the Polish proverb is true: "Life is nothing as against eternity". With your suicide you save yourself from difficulties but cause others to get into trouble. Others, whose conditions are not yours. The sword is not threateneing their lives. Their point of view is not yours. Humanity is based on feeling and conscience and you have no right to cause them trouble. I began to think deeply. To die as one of many without identity. What of it? Millions of Jews and non-Jews have been buried without any sign and without any prayer. The winds and rain level the heaps on their graves, if there were at all graves.

Perhaps in my case my friends would honour me by taking off their hats and crossing themselves over me. A minute of Christian prayer over a lonely Jew who found himself among them and died. As for the people who were the cause of this, I wished them eternal shame. So I comforted myself. In spite of my hesitation I came to the conclusion that suicide was my salvation. Peace and death.

When Józef my friend from Bylorussia saw me he was horrified at the change in me "Drudjok, what hashappened to you? Why are you so worried?" I answered: "I want to die. Now! With the Germans advancing into Bylorussia all my hope is gone. This is the end of my people and of my family. You understand my meaning. In a little while the prospects of my staying alive will come to an end. So I have decided to forestall what is to come. I am still in a condition when I can lay my hands on a rope and a knife."

"Really, you are talking nonsense! You have lived through two dangerous years and you are alive. Regarding the advance of the Germans into Russia (it is true your people will suffer more than anyone else as you know.) But it is not the end of the story. Wait for another month when the autumn and the rains come and after that general winter. They will stop running. The Germans are already whispering among themselves and fear a turn for the worse. You know what Stalin said ' the sun will also shine in our street'. I am telling you as well as I know you, throw out the foolish ideas that are not part of you. We are all in one boat. The same waves fling us all around. We will all be drowned together or come to safe harbour together.."

"Yes, Druch", I said, "there is a big ship which can overcome the wild rocking of the waves, but I am not in it, I am in a lonely little fragile craft which any storm could capsize any minute." "Listen, I admit that your family and people will not have an easy time but It is still worthwhile for you tolive. Even if you are only one of many that remains alive, there will be someone that remembers them."

"No, I did not commit suicide probably because of my hesitancy but more than anything else, the words of Józef influenced me. The feeling of the warm hand upon me. My dispair lessened. Time blunted the acute dispairing cry of my family. The disaster of my people.became muffled. It came to me as if from a distance. From within me came sparks of hope. Slowly I came to myself. We stopped sleeping together in a group . The command was given that the prisoners could sleep at their place of work.

Months passed from the time of the outbreak of the war. The summer passed, the sky darkened, the wind began to blow. The ploughs overturned the field of stubble. Flocks of crows with bright black eyes spread out on the ploughed field. They jumped into the furrow after the plough and pulled out worms and seeds from the clods. Not a ray of light was seen which was very depressing.

The Germans slowed down their advance at the front and said that the rains lashed at them and that they sank in the mud. Now they had to conquer every city in Russia at the cost of a great many lives. One could gather this from reading between the lines in the regional newspaper. The newspapers were publishing pages of obituary notices. Everyone was decorated with an iron cross.

On one of the autumn days a cart slowly entered the yard of the farm, alowly and seriously a high ranking army officer got down, a regional policeman and an important official from the local council, an important farmer and party man, and they went straight to the master's house. There they informed them that their son Bruno had fallen in the war in a bloody battle near Odessa and added that he gave his life like a hero, as was befitting a German. The adopted parents crossed themselves. The face of the master distorted and shook. He tried not to cry. The mistress wiped her nose in her apron. She gave her guests coffee and cake. The master gave them cognac. He himself swallowed two glassfuls. After a quarter of an hour the officer left

together with the civilian with the swastika armband and the policeman. The masters still sat stunned. The Freulein said something and the master was quiet. She went into the kitchen and said: "Bruno ist tot", then she went to the pigsty, to the calves, she went around the stables and round the store house and came to the chicken run. After a long time, she came to the kitchen. After the bearers of the bad news had left, the master drenk two glasses of rum, went out with a flushed face and a cane in his hand. He walked slowly across the fields, went up the hillocks and sat down on a pile of stones. He sat thinking for a long time. He walked along the ploughed fields. He examined the ploughing, touched the backs of the horses, and remakred, "The horses are sweating". He wandered around for two hours till he returned home and did not go out again till the next day. The way of life in the big house did not change in any way. The work on the farm continued as usual. The masters did not show great signs of sorrow, only they went to church more often. They lit candles. THey lit candles in memory of the fallen son and heir. They saw that they went to confession regularly and the master began to drink more schnapps.

The autumn and winter made things very difficult for the German army. The Germans themselves told how the soldiers sank into mountains of snow. The soldiers complained at the lack of warm clothing. The women would sit in the evenings after a hard day's work knitting thick socks and gloves and sweaters. The soldiers wrote to their families that they were confiscating all the woollen things from the conquered populations particularly from the Jews who hid furs and gloves from them. It was impossible to hide anything from the German soldier, they boasted. There were workers who said that the conditions on the Moscow front was very bad "It is the first time our army has come up against unexpected difficulty. The soldiers have frozen hands and feet and they were not given suitable clothing for the winter." The master of the farm and the Fraulein did not worry very much about what was happening on the front. Their son was

no longer alive and the two old people had nothing more to do but look after the farm and the animals. They continued to manage the farm as if the war did not touch them. At that time I often worked at other farms in the same village. I had the opportunity to talk to Germans. Of course, they did not learn anything from me. When the Wehrmacht was no longer supreme the ordinary non-party German showed a lot of understanding for the hardship of the prisoner but the moment there was victory on the long Russian Front, propaganda was used to influence the people to justify the oppression of the civilian population and the Jews. Then the attitude towards the prisoners got worse. I am not talking about the landowners or the party people whose attitude to prisoners was always harsh. The prisoners who worked there were in tension and fear from morning to night. If Goebels propaganda put most of the blame on the Jews, when the first defeat occurred near Moscow, they could not only put the blame on the Jews alone. One could not always lie to the people and stop the German people from asking the question: Why is the Russian being killed for the sake of the Jew? From then on Goebels began to be careful of what he said and he began to lay the blame on all the Russians. He still thought well of the Ukranians, the same Soviet minority who co-operated with the Germans. The Germans themselves began to remember the Napoleonic Wars and their defeat because of General Winter. They spoke about the case of Napoleon during every quiet moment and many of them did not see the future optimistically. When the frost near Moscow was at its height and the Germans froze in the positions they began to comfort themselves with the historical case of Napoleon. They openly said that Napoleon was not able to understand the phenomenon of the winter so he did not understand that the Russian Winter could defeat him. The winter was at its worst, my clothes wore thin and every time I found ragged dusty trousers that had been thrown away with the rest of the rags in the attic, I put them on instead of underpants so that the masters could not see that I had not taken them without leave. I again sank

into the snow in my clogs which were my footwear. This winter was also severe. Twice a week we went to the forest in the bitter cold that cut like knives and burnt ones hands and face. Under these conditions Ivan and I would saw the heavy pines. There was tension between us every day and unending quarrels accompanied by threats against me. Whenever anything went wrong or the tools were blunt he would put the blame on me. He only stopped when I began to shout and curse at him in Ukranian then he became careful not to call me "Djid". He calmed down and asked my pardon. As he was quick to get angry, so he easily calmed down. It happened that he swung an axe at me and I got hold of a heavy piece of wood. I was waiting for him to approach. In the end he calmed down. Its true that he did not betray me to any German or to the masters on the farm. He knew that I had friends who could cut him off from the society of others. However, his aggressiveness continually returned and embittered my life. The threshing time arrived, and we had to carry heavy bags, clear the snow and so on. On very cold days we could go out and chase hares from among the bushes or from among the heaps of snow or from behind the hay across the hunting area. We came back to the cold unheated room because the master would not give us wood or turf for heating.

The Wehrmacht near Moscow sank into the snow with their tanks. The horses and sleighs they had taken from the inhabitants of the area to help them out, sank with them. But on the farms they did not feel the war. The German army was fed by the occupied countries. Here the landowners wore their heavy coats and their wives their furs and felt as if they were wrapped in down when they travelled to the church in their sleighs. They also arranged hunting parties every month. When the hunting was over the guests returned to the home of the host and ate and drank to their fill. The servants complained but only in the privacy of their families. On the morrow they returned like faithful dogs to their masters. Hitler well knew

what everlasting slaves he had. They answered every command from above with Jawohl and Heil. Thus they would always remain, even if the hated Stalin came. He would be able to change them in a minute. He would only have to promise them plenty and they would crawl on all fours shouting "Jawohl". They were shortsighted and stupid. They would grab every bone that was thrown to them from every leader. They grabbed it with hoy and thanks. With a people such as this no wonder the Fuhrer was sure he could rule a thousand years.

Christmas and Sylvester passed uneventfully for the masters. They went to church and peppared a festive meal at home. The master Raiman asked me to take them to church. I told him I wanted to wash and mend my clothes that day. Ivan, a Greek Catholic did not like the Catholic Church but he wanted to pray to the Great Creator even if it was in the Roman Catholic Church. Without taking the differences into account he entered, crossed himself and walked pp to the altar. There he knelt down and there was silence all around. When everyone got up, a German signed to him that his place was near the door. After that he never wwnt to church again. For Sylvester, 1942, ten prisoners got together in a stable of one of the farmers of the village. One of the prisoners brought four bottles of "Samagon" (Home made spirits). I was among them. We were Poles, Bylorussians and Ukranians. There was a Pole present who had never been in our company before (I will still write about him). We were suspicious of him. Pavel Gal took a glass of spirits and blessed brotherhood of Christians without worrying about the denominations. He blessed all men who found themselves in captivity (This was for me). Everyone drank, I together with the rest. The morale was high. Suddenly Antek came over to me and took my hand. One of the company became very sad remembering his wife and family and began to cry. We had black bread and sausage to eat, together with the spirits. Everyone softened up under the influence

of the spirits. They spoke about their difficulties and sorrows. We went back to our living quarters at one in the morning. Ivan was very drunk. When we came out of the stables we were overcome by the fresh air and the bright snow blinded us. Hand in hand and supporting Ivan, we zigzagged across the fields and ditches in a heavy snow storm. We sank neck ddep intothe snow and lost our way. Ivan lost consciousness. He did not know where he was and under what conditions. He said he could not go farther after he got to his parents home in Ukraine. He begged us to let him die down and rest. I drank no less than the rest but I was quite sober. I was afraid that if we sat down we would be frozen to death. Its true it would be pleasant to lie down in the blanketing snow. The body gives off heat, the face is burning and one tends to fall asleep. In a second I fell asleep, perhaps I fainted. Someone was throwing cold water on me. I began to shiver, some inner force awoke me.

Soft snow hit my face. My ears and chin froze. I got up bewildered. I dragged Ivan who was cursing everyone. Late at night we reached our room, suffering from headache and nausea.

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THE STATUS OF THE FORCED LABOURER

Rumours came from the guards that our status was to be changed from that of captives to forced labourers with the rights of civilians and this would remove us from the authority of the camps. From that time on our conversation centred around the subject of getting rights as civilians. One could go home on vacation as the Germans said. The Ukranians were prepared but the Bylorussians were not enthusiastic after they got letters from home which told about bad things there and after they heard news from people who had been exiled to Prussia. There was lack of food. They had been mobilized into the police, there were partisan activities and there were villages that were burnt down either as a punishment from the partisans or as punishment from the Germans. In the same year, with the increase of the captives from the whole of Europe they granted the Bylorussians and Ukranians rights. They gotthe rights of citizens according to a new German Law. They got money as captives previously but with it they could buy more, such as wooden clogs, cigarettes, tobacco, pipes and clothes. In reality these promises were only partly realised. Thus we were taken over by the civilian authority.

One morning the captives were called to a meeting. As usual it was a long and tiring procedure in the presence of SS officers and the police. As usual they threatened and in the end they spoke more politely. They gave out printed forms and demanded that we sign the agreement to become civilians. Considering the matter I saw factors not to my advantage. My friends told me to sign the way they did because the whole procedure was worth nothing anyway. I did so. An officer spoke in a monotoneus unrevealing voice. Does anyone oppose? Among the thousands congregated there no-one dared to refuse. Now I was in tension not knowing what to expect in the future.

In reality nothing changed for me, neither better or worse. (But in the future the new Law could cause me trouble.) The 'points' of the ration cards the employers took for themselves and the civilians still wore the ragged clothing of the Polish army. Not only did the Wehrmacht guard us but the Police also got authority over us. Besides that we got the right to visit our families in the German occupied territories. In time I heard of volunteers to the German army particularly from among the Ukranians and a few from the Bylorussians. These were put into units in the rear, such as the T.O.T. organization, and also in the units that had to "make order,"among the occupied population. The French prisoners told me also about the French Fascist Units who volunteered into the Wehrmacht. In the end they joined the Vlasov army. In the meantime I was a civilian and a captive at the same time. I had the same status and rights as millions of forced labourers who were exiled to Germany from the conquered territories. The value of the foreign worker was determined by the strength of his muscles, but his value as a person, whether he was a civilian or a prisoner was worth nothing. The Ukranians asked for leave so many of them went to visit their families and their destroyed farms. Some remained there and began to rebuild what had been destroyed. Others became officials in their village councils such as inspectors or policemen or joined the units helping the SS exterminate the Jews. Most of them returned to Germany. They could not accept the destruction of their farms or pay the heavy taxes that were demanded of them to be able to grow food or keep animals. It took away their entire earnings. Their lives were also threatened continually. They returned disappointed. Among them was my friend Stiopa, who visited his family in Halichni and described the real conditions in Ukraina. Among the Ukranians who returned to Germany were those who worked for the Gestapo. Very few Bylorussians went away to visit. They pref-

ferred the yoke of captivity, to suffer insults, be quiet and wait. They pressed me to go home and visit my family. It was a complicated and dangerous problem. As I knew from original sources the Jews from my area who had still remained alive were in ghettos or in work camps. Of course, I would have got into serious difficulties but my refusal to go on leave aroused suspicion both among the Germans and the prisoners. I thought about the leave very seriously. If I managed to leave Germany with official papers there was a hidden spark of hope - perhaps I should succeed in avoiding the train on the way to Bylorussia and disappear into the thick forests and join the partisans who were fighting the Germans. While I hesitated the whisper dame "Take your fate in your hands again and exploit this opportunity." I knew that if I stayed my end was near. Ten months had already passed since I got two letters from my family and my fear of their fate had become greater. The matter worried me and I wanted to see them again in my life. When my friends got to know what I was thinking of they warned me not to go. I was to stay where I was just as they were. After the Bylorussians and the Poles from the Eastern conquered territories did not ask for leave to visit their families the pressure from the Germans stopped and my journey was cancelled. In this narrative I could say that if they had continued to exert pressure on me I would have decided willingly or unwillingly to go on leave to a dangerous area and my life would have changed, and I don't know where it would have ended.

We captives would meet once or twice a week. Every time at someone else's place. One of the popular places to meet was our room (time showed that it was not to my advantage.) We were four nationalities in a single room. Among the visitors was a Pole named Antek who worked in the same village of Kominen with a large landowner. It was said that Antek flattered the Germans and betrayed people to them, one should not talk

politics in his presence. Antek who was older than we were came to the war from the reserves. He was a taxi driver and had left a wife and children at home. I received him in our room with hesitancy and suspicion. Why did he seek our society - I wondered. In the course of time I got to know him better. He was sociable and clever but also shrewd and dangerous. He had an endless store of jokes and stories. It seems that captivity had taught him to be tolerant and understanding to others as he had never been in his life before. He could speak all the dialects of the Plish language including the underworld slang and also spole Platdeutch and Hochdeutch well. He was the spokesman of the captives on the big estate and the master looked on him as his man. Before the war and after the conquest of Poland by the Germans he believed that Hitler would be the salvation of the Poles. He had been active in the Polish Fascist party "Endeksia", one of the "Nara". He would attack the Jews in Lodz or Warsaw as a hit and run driver. He would take every opportunity to physically hurt a young child or aged Jew. He did not slow down and knocked them down on purpose. "A Jew less", he would say as he drove away. In the company where he worked the drivers were Poles and Volksdeutch, all belonging to Endeksia. In their office they would lay out a table with sausages and herrings. When they got drunk they would put up a picture of Hitler whom they wanted to help them wipe out the Jews, and they would stand at attention and sing "Deutchland Uber Alles" quietly;when they saw a stranger coming into the office they quickly took down Hitler's picture and hung up the picture of the head of the armed forces Ries Schmeigly; Here in the first years of captivity Antek was self confident and spoke smoothly to the guards and the local Germans. He hoped that after the turmoil and upset of war the Germans would help bring Poland back to its previous condition - this time without the Jews - Jedenrein - when he tried to influence the Germans to his way of thinking they

called him 'Verfluchte Polak'. This humiliated and hurt him, life in captivity broke him, but he did not speak openly of his disappointment. But he mocked the Germans as much as he wanted. In the beginning he was suspicious of me and he insulted the Jews in my presence. When he began to visit me he stopped mocking the Jewish types. It became clear to me that he was good natured, loyal to me and understanding. Once under the influence of liquor he told me "We both fought for our Polish homeland and we are both suffering for her." He gave me tobacco and told me news every time we met.

His last hope was disappointed: The Polish captives from the annexed territories including Lodz were not allowed to visit their families. This was only allowed to the people who had been brought over a forced labourers. Once he told me that his wife and children were suffering badly from lack of food. Antek again began to dream of his release from captivity and asked to register as a Volksdeutcher, but this was in vain. The Germans were not in a hurry to grant him the rights of the super race, in spite of the fact that he was blond, with blue eyes and spoke German fluently, his request was not granted. Then his friendship with the Germans stopped. He stopped going to the Catholic Church and came closer to the Polish prisoners. Although he was disappointed by the Germans, he was still popular among them. He tried to become friendly with the German women and came closer to them, however, the punishment of death was a severe deterrent. The German women was threatened with being sent to camp and even worse than that. Among the workers and servants on the estate where he worked were girls who belonged to the "Hitler Youth" and these people watched out for incidents like that. Once when Antek was working in the fields pulling out beets by chance he stayed alone with a girl. She was not particularly attractive and it was even said that she was a little backward. Antek was said to be attracted to her. It was said that he tried to embrace her and stroke her breasts. Others said that he did not

lay a finger on her but suggested they make love. The German girl at once remembered the laws of the Fuhrer who looked down at her day and night from the picture on the wall of her room. The Fuhrer forbade relations with strange races. She became afraid and saw it as her duty to complain about him. She went to her friends in the Hitlerjugend and told them that Antek the Polak wanted to rape her. Antek was taken to the regional city and sentenced to death according to law against defiling German blood which was forbidden to every non-Aryan. Antek who most of his leisure time in civilian life and in captivity had spent his time playing cards at which he was very successful - did not succeed this time. He who had embraced the cause of the National Socialism who waited eagerly for the Germans to come to Poland - and his wish was realised - who in captivity had developed wonderful personal relations with the Germans. This Antek was hanged. His handsome head hung on one side, his teeth were bared and his blue eyes bulged out in astonishment as if they were looking in anger: "You pigs, you ingrates, so you repaid your faithful servant. So you treated a friend of Hitler's!"

Ivan requested leave to go home and as a proper Ukranian got permission in two weeks. I went with him to the wagon. He stood for a minute and said: "Believe me, I am returning to my native land with mixed feelings and in fear; but I promise you I will not come back to slavery. Let them kill me there. I will die in my land. He shook my hand: "Let G-d guard you. Excuse my insults to you." He dropped his eyes and tears rolled down his face. Ivan did not come back to captivity.

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THE SPRING OF 1942=

The month of March is always difficult, torn clouds continually cross the sky. Heavy mists crawled on the face of the earth. All I could do was comfort myself. Another two weeks, another month, spring would be there. Perhaps there would be some sunshine for me. In the meantime the yard was sodden in mud. Sleet fell and I had no place to shelter myself. Wherever I turned it was wet. The clogs splashed water as one walked. I was wet to the skin. I felt depressed. Life was grey. The yoke was heavy. Again and again the question arose - why? What was I to expect? Where would the end of the war find me? if ever I got there - in a lonely grave - or in a pit together with those murdered? I still had to come face to face with the symbol of the shul topped by the swastika.

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In Prussia there were fewer and fewer German men. As the Germans conquered more territory in Russia so more German soldiers fell in the war. Mobilization followed mobilization, so in the village of Kommenen most of the men were away and every farm lacked workers. A month before the harvest lots of men and women were brought into Germany from Poland across the River Bug and they were sent to the factories and farms to swell the work force. They also brought two men to Raiman's farm: Watsek, a Pole who swore that they had kidnapped him from the other side of the River Bug. He was an honest Catholic who did not exploit his religion or have any false illusions. He maintained that he had already experienced both Governments. The Russian and the German. In 1939 the Soviets had penetrated into his area but after a short time they had to retreat and the Germans took over the area according to the agreement of the two powers. So he knew both the Germans and the Russians. The

[illegible] from the area of Kursk. He had worked in the mines in Donbas. When the Germans came he fled to his home. For months he had lived in the forests and villages until they caught him and sent him for forced labour in Germany. He once was a communist, a faithful follower of Stalin, and had taken part in the Revolution in 1917. Now, after they had conquered the area the Germans began with their propaganda and Andrei was influenced by it to a certain extent. Suddenly he began to see the disadvantages in communist Government and he became anti-semitic and said: "Now I understand the Jewish danger to Russia"; for all that he still looked on Stalin as the saviour of Russia. He was a typical Russian with the two typically humane characteristics of the Russians, a good heart and a lot of wisdom and understanding.

Prussia therefore got a great variety of people. Poles, French, Russians. From now on Germany was used as a shelter for Russian soldiers who managed to get rid of their uniforms when they were surrounded. There were also communist partisans from all nations who found themselves surrounded and they infiltrated into the villages so as not to fall into the hands of the SS. Among them were also deserters from the Vlasov army who had wandered along the roads and burnt villages. Now they were without work and starving: Some were caught by the Germans and some volunteered to wipe out their past. They were all put into cattle trucks, transported to Germany and put into camps. They starved them. Women, 16 years and upwards, were not strong enough to overcome the dirt and hunger. They were weak and helpless. They gave their bodies for a piece of dry bread. Women who became pregnant were taken out of the camp and never seen again.

After suffering hunger and neglect they divided the people up to work in the factories and on the farms. So everyone lived under very difficult conditions and did hard labour but they were satisfied to be saved from the horror of war from the front,

from the forest and from the destroyed houses. Most important of all. Here their past political opinions were hidden and they lived in the spirit of the ruling German ideas. Many became attracted to fascism, others remained indifferent. At any rate both the communists and the Vlasovites were waiting for the end of the war in order to return to their homeland. Even so many were sure they would have to give an account of their doings during the war. Later I got to know more details about them. All of them were filled with a poisonous hatred against the Jews. Quite a few of them helped the "Einsatzgruppen" in the conquered territories taking the Jews to the extermination pits. It was a complete mix up of people among them many wicked and cruel men, scoundrels, murderers, and people without consciences, whose hands were covered with the blood of their Russian brothers and also Jews. Most of them were refugees fleeing from an avenging hand. We, the captives had to be very careful of these people and avoid arguments with them. In the muddy water of this flotsam and jetsum of people the Ukranians tried to hunt for hidden Jews or Soviet supporters. This new population brought their own way of life with them. Because most of the German men were mobilized and only elderly farmers remained, all the branches of the farmwork were taken over by the strangers. They also began to distil brandy secretly in spite of the draconic laws against the waste of potatoes, beets or cereals which was considered sabotage against the victory of the war. In the distilling of alcohol the servants helped and even the farmers themselves. In most of the farms Polish and Russian women worked in the kitchens in the pigsties and in the chicken runs. They helped the same captives who did not have enough food. Couples grew to know each other in spite of the fact that sexual relations were forbidden among strangers. Nevertheless there were affairs some deep and permanent with the idea of marriage after the war.

The Polish and French captives received these new people coolly and with suspicion. The Vlasovites of the past were among

them. After they felt what it was like to work hard, have insufficient food and suffer the humiliation of the Germans towards them, they began to approach the captives. Personally I got to know many of them. They would visit our room on Sundays. I got to know their leaders very well but I don't remember their names. They began to disturb my peace (I shall still write about them.) I will call them by their characteristic bodily features. One was elderly, broadboned and slow of speech. He had a serious face and was a fanatic nationalist. I will call him "scarface", because of a cut on his face.

The second was tall, would always speak in hints and would always give a chuckle enjoying his own stories. He was a boaster and a fool. I will call him "Crooked Mouth". I often met them in the fields of the neighbouring farmers. They would stop their work for a minute and come over to me to exchange a few words, roll a cigarette and ask about the latest news. I had no intention of talking to them on politics. They continually complained about the mistresses they were working for. They spread the jam very thinly over their bread. They hardly covered the holes in the bread. They did not know much about me, only that I had a lot of friends amongst the captives and that I was popular among them. However, I knew a lot about them and their activities among the captives and the forced labourers. Their visits to our room increased as time went on and they would bring homemade alcohol which they offered all around. The drink had a disgusting taste but as time went on I got used to it and in the end I would gulp it down in the same way they did. After they got drunk their secrets would come out so I knew with whom I had to do and what type of people they were. My friends also sat astounded. They could not imagine that these peoples hands were so covered with blood and that robbery, rape and mass murder were on their consciences.

After they felt they had revealed too much, they kept quiet. My friends and I were very careful of them and now I was more afraid of their adherents, Vlasov people.

People streamed to Germany, not because they had to but because they wanted to. These last came from the Russian intelligensia - teachers, writers, artists and journalists from South Russia. Goebels published newspapers and magazines mainly in Ukranian and Russian. The journalists were from Russia. I remember a writer named Rosenthal apparently a Volksdeutcher from the German population on the Volga. The readers regarded him as their spokesman and his articles filled most of the paper with attacks and insults against the Jews. His admirers called him Goebels No. 2. In the paper were descriptions of the Russians oppressed by the Stalinists. They wrote that the managers were all Jews and also the salesmen and storemen the officials and the NKVD. In fact the entire establishment and the military were all Jews. Under then were the great Russian people from the highest to the lowest, even Stalin was Jewish. They proved this "scientifically" with long explanations. The rest of the material in the Russian, Ukranian newspaper were jokes and derisement and mockery about the Jews. There was no article, pheliton, poem or crossword puzzle in which the subject of the Jew did not appear or Jewish characters in caricature; the work of Russian caricaturists who had at one time written for the great Soviet papers and for some reason not clear to me had fallen into the hands of the Germans and there sold their souls to the devil. In these Russian papers parts of Der Sturmer also appeared. The Nazi newspaper that was known for its incitement. In the newspapers there were false accusations against the Jews, made by Provoslav priests. Most of these were taken from the Protocols of Zion. The atmosphere of inquisition from the darkness of the Middle Ages held sway. The Nazi papers in Poland and France did not reach such a level of barbarism as those of Russian and Ukranian. In spite

of everything I must say that most of the captives were not impressed with the propaganda, it was too blatant and they were tired of it. After reading the papers I felt my blood boiling. I wanted to rise above the poison. After thinking things over for myself and with my friends we came to the conclusion that tolerance and understanding would yet appear, and the Sturmers and otherrrubbish would yet disappear. I comforted myself with these thoughts in order to overcome my depression.and dispair. Four of us lived in the cramped attic above. In the narrow aisle between the beds stood a table,on it was tobacco ash and cigarette butts. We sat together with the French captives and ex-Vlasov followers who looked for society and came to our room. We played cards. The game becamentense and took on the dangerous nature of gambling. One try after another. To win or to risk. To gain or to lose. Tension that encourages the being (living) in the life of humiliation. The urge to gamble was controlled among whose who had been captives a long time; but those who had recently arrived were excitable. They were eager to get the money, that was mounting up on the table and which captives could use in the most limited way. After I had joined the players on the advice of my friends, I played with the ex-Vlasov people and I was interested in playing as one of them. In a short time I was as good a player as they were. At times after a few hours of success I gambled like everyone else on the complete stakes and put the money into my pocket in spite of the fact that it did not please them, but I also had friends at the table. The game of cards made them forget the atrocities at least for a time. I got to know their way of thinking and their plans. Between cards they would reveal facts of their hidden past.

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ARGUMENTS AND OUTBURSTS OF HATE

It is hard to live with a person 24 hours a day, at work at meals, in a bedroom where beds are next to each other. When he hurts your feelings and insults your people who are daily being exterminated and demonstrates national superiority and religious fanaticism without considering the other who does not identify with your point of view.

We had supper in the cramped room at the narrow table after a hard depressing day's work that tensed the nerves and we sat and ate silently. Usually we blamed the Germans for all our troubles: the master, the servants, their wives and children. One of the people in the room wanted to anger his mate during the meal. Bolek, the young Polish forced labourer would began talking about Polish History at meal times. There was always tension at work between Bolek the Pole, Watsek the Pole and Andreiv the Russian. The latter two would accuse him of pandering too much to the master. This time at table, Bolek began to touch on a period of Polish History. He mentioned the Polish monarchs who in their campaigns had reached Kiev and he further boasted that they brought Christianity to the Lithuanians who had been idol worshippers. More important, he mentioned the wars against their enemies especially in the First World War the Jews acted as spies for the enemy. In the end the soldiers of General Heller taught them a lesson. Watsek would not accept Bolek's historical peroration and told him that he lacked a great deal of knowledge, was chauvenistic and that his teachers at school had told him a lot of lies. More than once arguments would break out between them and the good tempered Andreiv would make a joke of Bolek's opinions. On another occassion Bolek praised the Polish Government that ruled prior to the war. He accused the Jews of not allowing a Polish economy to develop

by undermining the policy and having a strong tendency towards Bolshevism. He accused the Jews of ammassing wealth and wanting to be the rulers in order to exploit the honest millions belonging to the Catholics. I felt that in arguing against the accusations that were being thrown at the Jews Watsek was on my side. In this way he wanted to prevent me from entering the argument which would have serious consequences for me as everything that happened in our room would somehow or other become known to the people on the farm. Andrei also did not want me to answer Bolek's accusations, so most of the time I would be quiet. Sometimes I showed up his mistakes concerning the Jews of Poland. I told him that he got his ideas from the German agents in Poland before the war. At that time that was the general opinion that was going round. I told him: "Many like you did not know or did not want to know that among thousands of Jewish families in the big cities and the little towns, there was continual hunger and lack of food. With the coming of the summer one could see carts with men, women and children who wandered from town to town. They were beggars begging for a slice of bread. The Polish Government did not take care of all her citizens in the same way. It was the Jewish communities who cared for these people and did not all succeed in giving them enough. " "Why don't you talk about the rich Jews whosepockets were filled with Zlotys?" "Correct," I said, "just like there were rich Poles and landowners who exploited their workers very badly. Or Polish factory owners who exploited their fellow Poles." Watsek who came from the small town of Brisk where he knew about poor Jewish neighbourhoods supported my assertions. Bolek however, at once attacking him, taunted: "You got friendly with the "Moshkim",(the Jewboys,) and you from your early years absorbed the German propaganda and you still believe these ideas which spread lies in the world. Know that a wise Pole and an honest Christian does not think like you do. Really, where have you been, and what

have you seen in life? Your mother's milk is still on your lips." Andrei interrupted "With your ideas Poles in 1939 were German agents and thought they were bringing you salvation. They did not want to fight and sold your motherland to Hitler." Bolek answered avidly: "We have seen your Russian brothers with their moustached leader. With the first shot, they ran off in their underpants. They ran tons of kilometers in one breath without looking back. Now look at the Russians, many of them faithful Bolsheviks, throwing down their arms and surrendering to the Germans to captivity. Many of the Russians are following General Vlasov. Nearly half of Russia is co-operating with the Germans and you talk about Poland. At least before the war the Poles knew how to live well. They ate and brank and dressed in the latest fashion. We had everything we wished for. It is true we did not think of getting guns and tanks. And what happened with you? A rich country that lacked sufficient bread. Vodka was expensive so you drank the stinking Samagon. The beggars of Poland did notwant to wear your clothes. Your aeroplanes, of the worst quality remained on the airfields like burned skeletons." "See," said Andrei, "all that belongs to the past;you will still see the strength coming from the depth of Russia and from Siberia. They are already pressing and pushing forward with new strength and in the rear of the German front partisans are fighting in the forests but what of the Poles who sees them or hears of them now? Where are the Polish partisans fighting the Germans? You were heroes against the Bylorussians and the weak Jews where are your heroes? They are hiding in the holes hoping that the Russians will come and liberate them. You can be sure if the Russians liberate you from German slavery, they will institute a similar regime to theirs in Poland - the estates will be divided up amongst the landless and the "Pani" will be exiled to the land of the White Bears." Watsek who had experienced both conquests added: "Yes, Bolek, that apparently is the case. I will

tell you, my friend, let both of them be blown away by the wind, let them both tear each others heads off. What we Poles need is real independance in which there is social justice and freedom for man. The Russians are the lesser evil. If G-d forbid the Germans are victorious they won'tleave your father on his farm. They will drag him away to forced labour and you will plough their fields while your back breaks and you waddle about like Juba. You will die, with the letter P on you." "No," said Bolek, "neither the Germans nor the Russians will manage that. At the end of the war the Poles will get back their independance. The Prussian land estates will go over to the hands of the Poles and we will organise and 'bring order' like in the German regime."

So they argued nearly every night until they got to shouting and hurling personal insults at each other, and I had to separate them. With that Watsek and Andrei avoided bringing me into the quarrel. Bolek incited me and wanted me to react and attack him physically but Watsek and Andrei did their best for me. I sensed that Bolek wanted to attack and hurt the Jew within me. I decided that in that case I would really let him have it. I did my best to avoid a dangerous quarrel. The Germans below heard the loud quarreling that came from the room every night and they wanted to know what had happened. Later I got to know that the women did not give us knives to eat with. They explained that this was on the instructions of the Fraulein who was afriad that knives could be used in a fight. "The Polaks would begin to knife each other the way they did in their own country." The guards even got to know about our quarrels.

On one of these tense evenings we sat down to eat our evening meal. On the table stood a bowl of potato soup, Bolek again began to talk about Polish history, about the

kings and their success in conquering neighbouring lands, particularly the Russians where they boasted they had reached Kiev. He took most of his stories from the book by Sienkiewiecz, the Fire and the Sword, and used to tell about them as if they were real historical facts. He particularly admired the hero of the book, Zagloba, who with the single sweep of his sword, would knock off a great number of heads. Andrei the Russian could not control himself and burst out laughing and said, "Nonsense, it is a fool who would believe your stories which are similar to those of the Coesack knights during the time of the Czars. The stories are suitable for lads of thirteen and fourteen." I interrupted and said quietly: "Siekiewiecz was a writer who had a wonderful imagination. He discribed the struggle for Polish independance at the time of the uprisings of the Cossaks with tense heroic descriptions. That is why he created an imaginary character like Zagloba, but it does not mean that it all happened in reality. The Fire and the Sword is literature, hot history. It is on a high level, rich in fine and fascinating stories." "Sure," said Bolek, and raised his voice"and have you ever heard of a 'Djid' who believes in Polish history, in the wars of the people against their enemies, and for their independance" Here I have to say that from the time of my captivity I had friends among the Poles and Polish minorities, there were even anti-semites among them. At times they were very depressed and could not stand each other, perhaps because of the crowdedness in the room, the poor food and clothing, or for reasons that cannot easily be explained. Urges that came up from the sub-conscious which would burst forth and cause a quarrel. They even raised fists against each other; but as he raised his hand, so he at once lowered it, just so that the fact that they were fighting should not come to the ears of the Germans. So they also related to me. They would make remarks about the Jews in my presence but only in the third person. It never touched me to the quick, but when Bolek called me "Djid", he gave me a shock and his roommates were also dis-

gusted at his extraordinary disloyal and dangerous behaviour. They stood stunned. They were afraid that the word "Djid" would be heard by the people outside (The Germans had already got to know the word as well as some Polish curses). Here they would learn that a hidden Jew was living in their midst. He was living and not dead like others of his inferior race.

So Bolek had said the word and there was shocked silence. The silence before the storm. My throat closed, I choked, I was dizzy. My heart began to beat and my temples throbbed (My friends told me later that I turned very pale.) For a minute I lost my inner control which I always kept. I forgot that I was living in unusual circumstances. I raised my two fists and banged on the table. The basin of soup and the cutlery were scattered in all direction. The soup was spilt. I immediately became quiet. I looked into Bolek's eyes and spoke in a quiet voice. "Yes, I am a Jew. I am one of the thousands of Jews and Poles who fought for you and your parents' home. I am from the people who are persecuted to death by all who find them and you and your parents enriched yourselves at their expense. You looted the Jews' houses, you helped the Germans throw them out of their houses, you great patriots, who learnt from Sienkiewiecz's books. The war is not yet over." Bolek stood his ground and shouted fearlessly: "Don't you threaten me! One shout and you will be where your brothers are." He pushed the table with the dishes towards me. Now there was a struggle. We grasped both sides of the table, pushed it towards each other, back and forth. The table scraped the floor. The floor creaked and moved under us. We cursed each other. I wanted to push the table onto him and push him against the wall. The others tried to separate us but did not succeed. In the end I raised the rable on him, on his head. We heard footsteps and voices outside. I was shaking with anger. I sat on my bed leaning against the wall

on which hung the picture of Jesus whose heart was spilling blood. I smoked my pipe continually. Two maid servants from the kitchen came to collect the dishes. One said: "I will tell the Fraulein how you scraped the floor and the dirt you have scattered. You have made your room a pigsty." They left. When the tension had eased off Watsek and Andrei said to Bolek: "You insulted Theophile and where does your confidence come from. Have you made an agreement with the farmer or with Hitler? We will still see you." "Don't you dare threaten me!" shouted Bolek. Each sat on his bed smoking!

I did not say another word. Bolek grumbled in a low voice and there was a depressed silence. After a time Bolek began to talk to me as if to justify himself: "You hurt me first when you said that I looted the Jewish houses". "It's true, you yourself boasted of it when you first came here. You said that you all helped the Germans to throw the Jews out of their houses." "Correct, and if we had not got them out the Germans would have burnt them in their houses." "That is not an excuse or a justification. A believing Christian does not behave like that, ask his pardon. He is ourecomrade equal to us in everything. His people are being exterminated and are rotting in the earth."

"Your people and mine have also been exterminated and are rotting in the earth.like them," answered Bolek. He sat isolated. After a long time he got up from his isolation, sat on my bed and in a pacifying voice said to me: "Listen, I want to explain to you, you are the first who attacked and hurt my national feeling, that is why I got angry." "I did not attack your nationalism at all. I respect the Polish nation that has civilised values. I have read and studied a lot but I don't have to believe in imaginary tales which in themselves are beautiful and pleasant to read." "Think", Andrei interrupted, "which Polish king came to the Gates of Kiev long ago and you think he won all the Ukranian lands? They educated you on those lies in Poland."

"There are no bigger lies than what your moustached one tells you. We saw the results in 1941. All that is a figment of the imagination."
"Bolek", repeated Watsek and was not overwhelmed by him, "ask his pardon, you have cut him to the quick. His family and nation are being destroyed. I saw with my own eyes how the devils are destroying them. It is an old nation. His ancestors were tortured by the Archbishops during the Middle Ages and their hands are not yet clean of blood"(Watsek's words surprised me. I did not expect a Catholic to talk like that.) Bolek sat next to me on the edge of the bed; Lowered his head, put his hand on my knee and tears flowed from his eyes. It's possible that my eyes were also wet: "I'll tell you straight Bolek", Watsek said in a low voice, "you are servile to the master, you jump to more than the others at work. Know that we are all slaves and a Polak proud of his nationality does not behave like that". So Watsek continued to lecture him. "You are young, listen to people older than you," said Andrei, whose long legs and huge body did not fit into the bed. "You are living in a room with different peoples and you insult them." Suddenly Bolek jumped to his feet and shouted with red eyes: "I will not ask for anyone's pardon!"

Now it was an argument between him, Andrei and Watsek and it continued for a few hours.

The next day the Germans asked us what we had fought about. Our explanations were not accepted. They were also not eager to let others know what was happening on the farm. They did not want it to come to the ears of the guards. But the village people especially the party members were interested in the prisoners, their ideas and their quarrels. In the meantime they did not interfere. But there were rumours that in the summer some of the prisoners would be taken to the front to dig trenches and build bunkers. They would send those that they did not like. Many of us, myself included, sensed that dangerous

adventures awaited us - perhaps the last in our lives.

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THE CAPTIVE AND LOVE

Love is the strongest emotion there is. It breaks through barbed wire fences. It breaks the severest laws just for a few moments of satisfaction and this when you talk about honest love, and Particularly when you talk about honest love, that begins with understanding for each other and mutual help. This love is worthwhile even if it continues for a few months or a few weeks. Love was denied the captive by draconic laws. The captive was continually being warned and he knew fullwell that he would pay with his life if he broke the law. Nevertheless love breaks all barriers and pushes towards its goal with all its might, no matter what lies in the way.

My friend Vasiel Gursky who worked for the farmer Zeth, lived with his friend Kudashov. On the other side of the wall lived a German woman with three small children. Her husband had been mobilized since 1939. It was a family of servants who were dependant on the farmer for everything. They could not change their place of work except through the arbeitsampt which in most cases refused this. In the absence of her husband from work the woman had to supply the required number of days of work for him, according to law and agreement. She had to ignore her children's cries when the farmer demanded the days work from her. She had to prepare her own wood for heating in winter without any help. On one winter day she asked Gursky to prepare her some wood for her fire. She would give him a packet of cigarettes. From then on he often helped her and when her husband came of leave he was pleased that the captive had helped his family. He would thank him and bring him cigarettes - so Vasiel told me. "You understand, brother, I helped this woman in all her household work. With that I became friendly with her husband and we were like two comrades. When he came on leave,

he would tell me of all the cruelties perpetrated against the people in the territories they occupied. He told me clearly: "The Germans will lose the war and Hitler will be kaput." He always cursed the strict and demanding master of the farm", Vasiel said, "I don't say anything. I listen and keep quiet. Know that you must never believe a German." Sometimes he brought a bottle of schnapps and the three of us would drink, he, his wife and I. The next day he would return to his unit. You understand brother, what could I do? It was years since I had had a woman. I was without children or family love, I work like a slave till late at night, and curse my life and as for this poor woman the master makes her work and has no mercy. He demands the work of two people from her. When night comes she is tired and lonely and cries. I too am lonely. So you understand, dear friend, that was the way we became closer to each other. We both discovered an inexhaustible well of life. Chiefly it refreshes and cools the burning fever in man. She also loves me very much. She washes my shirt, patches my clothes. Sometimes when I am still hungry after my own meal she cuts me a piece of sausage and a good slice of cake. I take it to my room and Kudashov and I finish it off. All this I am telling you most confidentially, as the best of friends." I told him: "I advise you as your best friend, be careful!" "Yes, I know. Sometimes I fear I won't come out of this adventure safely, but I cannot stop. Whenever I tell her that we are being watched and that I won 't come again, she falls on my neck and covers me with kisses and tears. Understand, even though she is a German, she is being bitterly exploited. I have no heart to leave her." I asked him: "Do you love her?" "Theophile, brother, I don't say that I love her, but she is good to me and she attracts me. Regarding love - I once loved my wife - she was a lovely girl - not to be compared to this one - I wrote to her a couple of months ago. If she betrays me then she must remember if one day I return well and strong she won't have anything from me. Understand my brother, my

myheavenly love is finished, what remains is pity and the honesty that there is in the heart. When I see how this woman lives under the yoke of work and is oppressed by a load of work and looking after her children, I sense that she needs encouragement and she finds me to be a support in life. I help her with her household work. I killed her a piglet for the holidays and I do other work as well.. I will tell you the truth. In her arms I know that the farmer suspects me and I am very careful, I don't denigrate my life. I haven't lost my reason."

About two months after this secret conversation I had something to ask him and went to visit him. He was very pleased to see me. "Ho,"my brother, I have been longing for you. My heart told me that you would come. Listen, I have something to tell you confidentially. Only Pavluk knows about it. He took out half a bottle of schnapps from under his bed and said " "Without you, I would not drink it, but first I must tell you how I got it." A week ago on Saturday evening before I finished my work in the stables, the master Zeth came to me, looked here and there and suddenly began to shout at me. Why had I done work that was not to his liking. I was in a depressed state. I held the hay fork in my hand and without meaning to I raised the fork and shouted at him: "For years I have been working for you, for nothing. I am like a dog in a kennel. I eat scraps from your rable and you still shout at me?" The tall farmer Zeth with the large stomach and wide fat face, seeing me with the fork, was afraid I would attack him. His face became as white as chalk. He had never experienced an outburst like this from any German servant and certainly not from a captive like me. He stepped back and spoke in a quiet voice: 'Vasiel, I know you are alone and embittered. I have no complaints. I only remarked on what you had done, no more.' The women in the kitchen, his wife and his unmarried sister came running when they heard my shouting and asked me to be quiet. They became good natured and easy: 'Come and eat' they said, but I did not go

to supper. I went straight to the hut. It was a summer evening. My blood was boiling. I was angry and upset. My heart was crushed at the thought of my cruel and bitter fate. I did not long for my wife, but I thought about my children growing up without me. I went straight to my neighbour's room. Her children were sleeping. She fell on my neck hot with desire. She fired me in turn and I saw nothing else, only her. Suddenly someone knocked at the door and shouted: "Open up Hilda!". It was her husband who had come on two days' leave. I was covered with sweat. I would not stop. I decided to continue with my lovemaking. If necessary I would knock down the fat little man, but Hilda pushed me away, opened a back window and told me to jump out. This I did and entered my room. Only then I sobered up. I found an iron rod from the plough and took it to bed with me, waiting. I did not sleep the whole night. Pavluk also did not sleep and said that I would bring catastrophe to myself, to him, and to all the other captives in the village. They would hang me like they hanged Antek and he also said that he wanted to remain alive till the end of the war and was not prepared to sacrifice himself for the German females. Pavluk was truelly right. All my courage vanished. In the afternoon I saw the soldier in the yard and greeted him. He answered me coldly. After that I met Hilda and she told me. that he knew everything. At night I lay down to rest. Suddenly the door opened and the soldier came in. I was terrified. I even forgot about the iron under my pillow. With an embarassed smile he invited Pavluk and myself to come and have a drink. The next day he was going back to his unit, which was going to the Russian front, he told us. We thought this was a trick and that he wanted to finish us off in his room, not outside. Pavluk at once said, "Herr Soldat, I have stomach pains. I cannot eat or drink." to me he said, "you go. I do not want to be killed because of whores." I put my coat on, hid the iron under my arm and joined the soldier. In his house I was well received. He thanked me for my help to his

wife and children. All the while I was suspicious, watching him. We clinked glasses but I did not hurry to drink. He was on his second and I had not yet finished my first. He was on the third and I had not yet started the second. He spoke as if to a father confessor and I was quiet. I watched his every move. I did not see any weapon of any sort. When he was drunk he put his hand on my shoulder and said: "Kamerad,we, the soldiers and the captives do not have faithful women. Neither you, nor me. Where we are there are also women. Faithfulness is only momentary, only our children are faithful to us", again he cursed the farmer and the regime and whispering in my ear so that his wife and children should not hear, said: "Hitler will be finished - Molotov and Stalin will come and divide the land among the workers." He wanted to embrace and kiss me but I pushed away. His wife and I put him to bed and he fell asleep instantly. I hurried out of the house breathing a sigh of relief." Gursky's face was radiant and in the end he burst out laughing. Kudashov said with a broad smile: "Vasya has more luck than sense." "Brothers," said Vasiel, "We will finish the half bottle now. We will drink from heart to heart and curse ~~of~~ the enemies, the Schwabs! To our health and to their destruction!"

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R. J. F.

We captives had a problem with soap. We could get rough soap for washing clothes which was not of very great use. Later the mistresses would give us soap from the ration cards. They were grey oblong pieces. On the centre of the soap were the letters R.J.F. The soap did not give off enough foam to clean clothes. Whenever I used the soap I wanted to know what the Letters stood for. I asked my friends in the village and it seemed that they got the same soap. They also did not know the meaning of the letters. We all thought that it was the initials of the firm that produced the soap. Once Bolek in our name complained that the soap was too slippery and didn't give enough foam, and didn't allow one to wash. Ones clothes properly. She answered angrily and loudly: "We don't have better soap, the good soap is sent to our soldiers at the front and even they at times use this soap", and added loudly, "This is the best soap we have. We, the Germans in the towns and villages use it. It is as written, Reines Juden Fett - made from the fat of Jews," she said. We were all astonished (I remembered the words of the Pole who had escaped from a concentration camp - about the matter of making soap. His story had not been clear.) Bolek asked innocently "Fat from people?" "No, only from Jews," she answered. (I hid a piece of soap during my wanderings and did not use it again.) We four prisoners looked at each other and dropped our heads. Yes, so what the Fraulein told us was true. This hurt me to the depth of my being. I was horrified, I shuddered. This was the greeting I got from my family. I grabbed my head in both my hands and cursed: "Ho, canibals from the civilised jungle, even Dante in Hell did not envisage such a thing: Ho, cursed land! May you be consumed by fire and change to wilderness. May only a few broken walls be left of you and may the thick smoke rise from them night and day and even cats

and mice be repelled from touching you. May the chastisement from the Torah be over you for ever." Sweat and tears covered my face. A moan broke through from the depth of my heart. I wanted to burst forth and cry to the universe and the heavens. I saw everything seared and impermeable without feeling. From my years of captivity I sometimes get the feeling of dispair, but this time I went to the very depth of dispair. Even if I believed in G-d, the G-d of my Fathers who benefits the living even till the worm under the stone, I would be comforted by the vengeance that would be brought on to those sons of Belial even though we gain nothing from the deeds of that scrum of the earth. Even if I believed in the words of the Man of Nazareth, who promised the kingdom of heaven to the poor, the persecuted, and the righteous. Even if I believed in Allah or Mahommed, the son of the dried out burning desert who was praying for a drop of water and even if I had worshipped the earming comforting sun, I would have spread my arms to the sky and prayed to all the living and probably I would have accepted the deed, the horror in blind faith. The shochet kills and remains righteous. But all my belief was lost. None of the gods had stood the test. Everyone had disappointed me. Only my human heart trembled. I was bitterly sad. One is bitterly sad when one puts faith in the Master of the World who gives of his goodness to all living on the face of the earth, and finds a deed like this has been done. One is also sad when there is no belief. One is very sad.

But from no Jewish body that was melted down and turned to soap, from no curse of mine or from any complaint did the foundations of the earth tremble. The heavens remained quiet and I continued to carry the yoke of captivity. Only sometimes the sun shone on me and made me forget my difficulties for a time. Only at night more nightmares were added to the rest. Two teeth were buried biting into corpses among which I was. The teeth were tearing them to shreds and arranging them in orderly fashion on butchers' shelves or hanging them on hooks.

AUTUMN 1942 - A WORK ACCIDENT AND TEETH EXTRACTION

Autumn could be felt wherever one turned. The days were dark and rainy. There was no dry place on the farm, where one could rest oneself. On one of the dreary autumn days I returned wet from field work with two horses. I took them to the stables. They had been very restless all the way. When they came to the stables they nearly burst out of their harness to run away. I pulled the reins and pressed the bit in their mouths. They became frightened of the harness that was hitting their hind legs. They began to jump over streams and puddles of water and mud and suddenly they wanted to push their way through a narrow pass between two farm buildings beyond the stables. I felt that I was unable to stop them. The reins were pulled from my hands and I was thrown out against the foundations of the wall. I guarded my face with my right hand and put my left hand out to break my fall. I got up stunned, my hands and face badly scratched. I did not feel much with my left hand. After a few minutes I saw that the palm of my left hand was bent upwards, and calmly I pulled my left hand back to its normal position. In twenty minutes my hands and fingers were swollen up and fiery hot. My hand continued to swell until I felt pain up to my shoulder. In half an hour's time I was not able to move the shoulder or joints. The masters got to know about this through the servants. The masters did not ask about my health but wanted to find a way of returning me to the camp because it was evident that I would not be able to work properly. My work mates advised me to try and work as usual and not let the masters have the possibility of sending a captive back to the camp. My friends tried to help me with home-made remedies. To put packs of wet clay and to change it frequently. I tore off a piece of my shirt and put the clay on it then on my hand, in this way drew out the inflamation. So I changed the clay every two hours, night and day. I did not sleep for months. I dug

drains with my right hand and only touching the elbow of the injured hand. I began to think how a man without an arm worked and helped himself. I used my injured hand as much as I could. I again drove horses, I again loaded grain on carts. I sawed heavy trees in the forest. Many a time my friends helped me with the chopping of the wood which needed both hands. After months of treating myself with wet clay and heat and the swelling went down, I began to help myself with two fingers of the injured hand. With the encouragement of my friends I overcame the pain and the masters did not dare to get rid of me. For months I used the clay. Two years later I still suffered pain along the entire arm. I particularly suffered when I was sent to dig trenches at the front.

Another miserable incident occurred at the end of 1942. From the beginning of captivity I suffered from my teeth and gums. Most of the captives suffered toothache because of lack of vitamins and lack of care and as a result the teeth began to crumble. The guards brought the patients to the dentists, and the dentists extracted them without thinking very much about the matter. If he needed a lot of treatment they returned him to the camp. My toothache became absolutely unbearable. I tried everything such as; putting spirit in the holes, alcohol, putting in strong tobacco in the holes but they only caused the walls of the teeth to crumble. In the end I was left with the roots and terrible pain. When they suggested I go to a doctor I would put it off. I avoided seeing a German doctor under any circumstances. The pain made me mad. In the end the master sent me to a dentist with a guard. It was in the town of Raise. The doctor lived in a huge house which had a waiting room and a surgery. He called me to sit on the chair and asked: "Russ, Fransoze oder Polak?" I showed him where I had the pain. He immediately took the dentists tongs, grasped the protrusions of the roots, turned right and left, and

extracted. Blood came from the wound and he put in a wad of cottonwool. The pain was deep as if he had pulled a bone from my head. The doctor was cruel, intolerant and rude. His moustache and hair were dressed in the Hitler style. He kept a picture of him on the wall. He denigrated me, put both his hands in my mouth and to every reaction of mine to the pain hit me hard. But I hated him a thousand times more than he me. I compared him to the excreta of pigs. Suddenly the doctor hit his hands on his hips and began to laugh evilly and called to his aid: "Ja, he is still alive, I thought he was dying!" He grabbed the tongs again and grasped the protrusions of the roots of the second tooth. He tried to extract that but did not succeed. Again he put the tongs in my mouth, tore the flesh between the roots, dug in deep and pulled out the roots in pieces. My hands and feet were dug into the chair. I sank deeper and he shouted: "Verflucht!" I closed my eyes and dulled my senses. I stopped my breath. I stream of blood covered me. The doctor stopped the wound with cotton wool but the blood kept flowing. He threw me out to the waiting room and shouted that I should not G-d forbid, dirty the floor and slammed the door of the surgery. My teeth and gums were hacked to pieces, my whole mouth was one big wound. For days I was not able to chew but only swallowed liquid food. I drank cold water and sucked ice.

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The Germans retreated from Moscow and Leningrad as they polluted the Russian earth with their bodies, but at the same time pressed forward into Central and South Russia, and reached the Northern Caucuses. In November, 1942 the Germans planted their flag on one of the summits of the Caucuses Mountains that was near the city of Grozgro on the summit of Albroz. This the Fraulein told everybody who was working in the yard at the time. "As the radio has announced the fields of the sunflower seeds are in the German Reich."

But in the rear things were not going so well for the German army. In the North of Bylorussia in the forests and the swamps the Partisans harassed the Germans. Goebels screamed in anger and promised vengeance to the Bolsheviks and the Jews. So the war progressed in one place and retreated in another. So they penetrated the length of the Russian border.

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THE YEAR 1943

The winter was very hard for me in many ways. The pain in my hand which was hurt in the accident did not cease and I became very weak. So I had to do all the hard work with practically one hand only. I had to find a new way of doing the work. I took as an example a man who had only one arm. A man like that not only had to serve himself but earn his own living. This was indeed a difficult problem. I used by body in different ways so that I could aid the injured hand. After months I began to feel improvement but my health was not in good condition. I would suffer from colds for months. I also suffered frmm coughs, headaches and shivering. In spite of that I continued to wash naked to the waist in icy cold water every day after work. This I did both summer and winter to keep my body strong enough to overcome all types of illnesses.that could come with the change of weather and not to let the illness penetrate or weaken the body but I suffered the cold throughout the winter months.

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THE GHETTO GOES UP IN FLAMES

In the spring of 1943 news came through Poles who were brought to us as forced labourers about the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto and that the ghetto was burning for weeks on end. They spoke about the murder of Jews in secret, in cellars and in bunkers. They also said that the Germans could not make the Jews surrender and the Germans were suffering losses in dead and wounded. There were days when the Germans were afraid to enter the streets of the ghetto. Death was waiting for them at every window of every building. The Poles who told us this/were confirmed anti-semites but when they spoke about the ghetto they spoke about the Jews with respect and one could sense the frustration they felt that the Poles had not done something similar. A greater part of the Polish population especially in Warsaw did business with the SS soliers. They sold them leather and skins and high boots looted from the Jews. For this they got tins of conserves. One could sense feelings of honest shame among the Polish captives, although they also began to talk about the Polish partisans and their activities. The local Germans knew all about the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The Knecht Feller told me about the impertinence of the Jews who attacked German soldiers in the streets of the ghetto;as a punishment they fired into their hiding places, cleaned out their bunkers and exterminated men, women and children as the women were fighting alongside the men. Two German soldiers who came on leave to their families told me the same thing and added with satisfaction, the Jews of Poland are finally being liquidated. The soul of the Jew in captivity was burning together with those in the ghetto. "The burning bush that was not burned up," was being burned within me.

My friends who spoke a great deal about the millions of Jews of Poland and of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto could not realise the actual tragedy. I continued to struggle with my daily work in captivity but in my mind I was with the fighters in the ghetto but I could not do anything, only mourn within myself and keep my head and listen to everything and keep quiet ..... keep quiet .....

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MY FRIENDS ARE SENT TO THE MINES IN WESTPHALIA

In that spring Westphalia was heavily bombed especially the city of the mines, Dortmund and many Germans were rendered homeless. At that time captives and forced labourers from Prussia were sent to those places, among others Pavel Gal and Watsek. For a long time they said in the village that they kept an eye on certain of the captives. It was clear to me why they had been chosen and I knew that my turn would come. The removal of these two people was a heavy blow to me. Before they left I told them that if they lacked food they should write to me and I would do my utmost to send them food even though I did not know how to do it, and even if such an act would endanger me, but my conscience did not allow me to desist from doing this. I got my first letter from Watsek in which he plainly hinted about their dangerous work in the bowels of the earth. He spoke about the Allied bombing raids which caused fires, floods of water and the bursting of the gas pipes in the mines. They were suffering hunger. This hurt me and did not let me rest. I decided that I must help them even if I endangered my own life.

That same summer the farmer ordered me to bring the milk cans to the collecting base early in the morning. The Fraulein asked me to take letters to the local postal branch. The officials knew me from the previous year. They trusted me and did not interrogate me as they had done then. I asked my friends to collect bread for our comrades in Westphalia and this they did, and I asked the Polish girls who were working in the kitchens of the farms to help. They gave me knitted gloves and slices of sausage. All this I sent to my friends in Dortmund. The problem was in whose name to send the parcels. A few of the captives agreed to send in their names but only a few times. In the end I endangered myself and

sent the parcels in my name. For a long time I was able to send a parcel of food every week. The parcel did not contain much but it would mean a lot to a hungry man. I made up the parcels the way the Germans did, the way the Fraulein sent parcels to her adopted son when he was still alive. I wrote the address in Gothic letters beautifully decorated. The postman who knew me from the previous winter snows would greet me heartily whenever he saw me. He trusted me and received my parcels. Twice I sent the parcels in the name of the master, parcels that were sent successfully, the rest I went in my own name. The friends in Dortmund sent short letters in reply as had been agreed upon before they left and thanked everybody including myself. This gave me a great deal of satisfaction. It was clear that the sending of food parcels was against the law and I could have paid with my life. Once an official suddenly opened a parcel, gave me a long look and handed me over to my friend, the postman, the partyman, to deal with the matter. He also examined the food parcel, slices of dry bread, slices of beets, that I had taken from the cow shed, a few onions and salt well wrapped in paper. He did not cancel the parcel and he sent it in my name to the given address. He wanted to know details about the parcels and I told him the truth.

Two days later the farmer Raiman got to know about this. He asked me about the parcels. I told him about my friends - whom he knew - who were working in the mines and were suffering hunger and that the parcels contained a few onions and a few slices of dry bread. He warned me that the matter could reach the ministry of food and told me to stop sending parcels at once. If not, I could be sent to a place from which people did not return. From then on, I stopped sending the parcels. At that time Western Germany was being ceaselessly bombed and the mines particularly suffered. The link between me and my friends was broken.

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THE SS MAN

The war continued. The sons of the farmers and servants would from time to time come on short leave. When they came home they at once began to work and did not stop until the end of their leave. Their work was the most important thing for them. They were tied to it like to an iron linked Prussian chain and the cycle of seasonal work never ceased. Season followed season. Nevertheless I could hear from time to time a complaint about the long working day which they were not enthusiastic about and which did not give them any pleasure. Because their fathers the servants, were on a low status in society, their only hope was to gain compensation from the war. Meantime what they had from their daily work was food from the land. This they looked on as something important in life. Their main subjectsof conversation were the words of Goebels, the weather and the flavour of the food. They spoke a great deal about this last subject. They also did not look forward to the coming of the winter. The heavy rainfilled clouds were waiting for them on the front. The soldiers who was the son of a farmer, the landowner and who came on leave would harness a pair of fine horses to a finely upholstered cart or get the motorcar ready and go to Church with his family or to the "gasthaus". The son of the servant would also go to town, on foot or by bicycle. There he would go in for a moment to the silence of the Church and whisper his confession into the ears of the chaplain. After that he would go to the "gasthaus", wash the strong liquor down his throat and return to the simple servants home of his parents.

During the season I was sent to the farmer Zeth for a few days of work. This time Hans the son of the farmer was at home. This was not the same fifteen year old youngster of former days. In former times I would meet him on his

bike going unwillingly to the gymnasia. He preferred working on the farm, smoking cigars, secretly and chiefly he liked being in the company of the captives in the evenings. He felt at home among us. The captives would tell him of the adventures they had had in their lives, especially experiences with women. Hans would speak of his ambition to be among the chosen fighters of his people, the SS. He wanted to go to different countries and try his luck with the fair sex there. Even then he was physically well developed and an easy going person. He was blond with blue eyes. He had a soft open face. He was always ready for a friendly conversation. After he got to know me he used to like having a friendly conversation with me. Whenever I worked in the field alongside of him he would come over to me, offer me a cigarette and we would exchange a few words. He would quote long passages of "Mein Kampf", by heart. These he had learned at school. Most of the quotations had to do with Jews. In spite of that he was a polite and clever youngster. Now coming back to work after a few years I saw a tall broad-shouldered young man walking confidently over the farm. He finally realised his dream. He was serving in an SS unit and he had got to know the good and bad points of most of the women in Europe and he knew how to manage his victims easily with all the ruthlessness and authority of the super race. He did not become involved in romantic love. In all his dealings with women he was ready for supprises and guarded the pistol he had at his side. Vasiel whispered in my ear: "He especially curses the French women who honoured him with a 'present' (gonorrhoea)." In the evening I sat in my friends room for a friendly conversation. Suddenly Hans (now an SS man) came to visit the captives as he had done in the past. He offered us cigarettes. In secret he told us of the battles, of the victories and defeats in Europe and especially in Russia. He spoke about the hunting down of partisans and Jews. "It was not difficult to uncover the hiding places of the Jews," he said, "the local population co-operate

with us and if we give them a few tins of conserved meat, things go easily. We throw a few hand grenades into their hiding places and they come out dirty and naked and we finish them off at once." Vasiel Gursky asked him: "Also women and children?" Hans answered: "Yes, also women and children. If we left the children they would grow up as a threat to us." Kudashov asked him innocently: "Hans, did you go to Church with your parents on Sunday. How is it possible that you killed unarmed people or helpless women and children?" Hans was amazed at such a question. He did not see any sin in it. In fact, it did not enter his mind that it was a human wrong. No-one had ever pointed this out to him. Neither his parents nor any other Germans even if they were Catholics.

In the end Hans said to them: "But those are Jews," and when he saw that this did not satisfy Kudashov and Gursky, he added, "Aber befehl ist befehl, nichts 'zu machen." Pavluk again asked: "And when you were at confession, did you tell him about it?" "I told him of all my deeds and do you think he doesn't know?" "What did he say to you?" "What he always says, 'my son, heaven will forgive you, you are fighting against the unbelievers. I will pray for you.' You will not find a single German who thinks that our actions are sinful. On the contrary, the whole nation is united in the justice of our cause against the communists and the Jews. We are saving the nation and the fatherland." I was quiet the whole time. I only listened. My friends were stunned. They couldn't look him in the face. Hans was also sorry for the things he had said without thinking. He did not feel at ease and quickly left the room. He avoided meeting us face to face. He went round the yard like a shadow. He worked here, worked there, and did not finish a job straight through. His parents were worried: "Hans is a little down. He works little and smokes a lot. Apparently he is longing to go back

to his unit. There they work hard ..... but what the result will be only G-d knows. G-d forbid that the Russians should come here, added the farmer with a bitter laugh. Before the end of his leave Hans suddenly asked Gursky: "Tell me - ist Theophile ein Jude?" (He meant me). "How can that be, he is a Bylorussian like we are." Hans gave them a long look and left. My friends told me that he stole glances at me when we were working in the store room. Sometimes he looked at me a long time. True, I did not know it but I sensed that there was an unspoken unfriendly breach between us. If someone reads this account he will understand my feelings and will perhaps understand my self control. To my sorrow I must say that we greeted each other every morning that I was there. Sometimes he would greet me the first. I did not look him in the face and he did not approach me or talk to me. After four days of threshing and dragging bags we went to my friends' room for a little talk. After a short time Hans also came, it was the last night of his leave. He was dressed in the SS uniform with its distinctive badges. He was a little nervous. He did not talk much and wanted to smoke "Mahorka". "One must get used to this tarry tobacco, I am again returning to the Russians, this time it won't be easy."

My friends were very controlled and careful as they had never been before. (As they told me, one never knows what is going on in the mind of Satan.)

They spoke about the weather in Prussia, Russia and France. Hans was deep in thought. In the end he threw away the cigarette, got up and said : "Auf Wiedernlin", and left. Kudashov said in wonder: "Have you seen what a murderer the farmer Zeth has raised? He is only about eighteen or nineteen. His mother's milk is still on his lips and he has already raped and murdered half of Europe." Vasiel added, "I promise you dogs and wolves are waiting for his corpse in Russia! Anti-Christ! A pity he didn't choke inhhis mother's womb".

The fine days I worked there were very hard. I felt I was furtively being watched. After that came a peridd when my self confidence increased but not for long.

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THOSE WHO FEAR GOD

Ascension Day drew near. The master told me the day before to get the carriage and the horses ready to take them to the Church the following day. I was not overenthusiastic. I never wanted to be seen in public places and especially not on Holy days, and I avoided being near a Church or a gasthaus. I was afraid of appearing in a regional centre where there were Government Offices and institutions, also at a railway station or the main road that cut across the city going northwards to Konigsberg. It had happened that I had met captives near the station where I used to go who had come from areas and were suspicious of me. Mostly the meetings went off well but the suspicion remained. This time I could not refuse. The carriage that was painted in black laquer was washed and shone like a mirror. I harnessed a pair of plump horses with thin legs to the carriage. They were chestnuts, well brushed and shining. I wore my French army coat and Polish army hat which I pulled well over my ears so that I would not be easily recognised. The Herr and the Fraulein dressed in their best, in hats decorated with feathers. They sat at their ease in the upholstered seats. Before leaving the farmer had downed a few glasses of his favourite schnapps. Before I got up on to the driver's seat my workmates called: "Go into the Church and see to whom they are praying." The plump well-fed horses who had rested the day before started off at a gallop. While they were pulling and kicking at each other I restrained them so that they would not run away. We got on to the broad High Road. There horses and carriages were riding along and passengers greeted each other with raised arms and "Heil!" It was like a show with the horses, the carriages and festive clothes and there was a servant or war captive on every driver's seat.

In short, it was earth to high heaven on Ascension Day. On both sides of the road were fields of hay. The clover was flowering beautifully. The air was filled with the scent of blossoms Suddenly a light breeze passed over the cornfields. The breeze waved across the fields giving promises of a good crop. The horses clattered along carrying their masters to Church. On the sides of the road, young and old were riding bicycles and the poorer people walked along carrying knotted canes. This, I was told, had been the custom for generations and nothing had changed. The landowners sat at their ease in their carriages and listened to the rhythm of the clopping hoofs while beside him on the same road, walked the poor man with his cane.

It was a scene of peace and quiet but the captives foresaw that this was the last generation that would live like this and the last generation of slaves.

Far away there was a war of extermination going on but it did not seem to touch this place. The same spring sun was shining on the roads that were being torn open and where pools of blood and mutulated bodies lay. No doubt the storm in time would reach these well laid out roads, the wheat fields and the hay and bring an end to slavery and fascism. Who would trump the strong hand of cards. There were those who said it would come from the west. Kudashov said only from the east close by. The carriages passed the pedestrians quickly and the farmers reached the Church first and took the better places near the altar. The master Raiman instructed me to look after the horses. They should not break free from the harness. So I tied the horses to the pole fence nearest the Church and waited until the people all went into the Church. I looked to the right and the left and when I was certain that no-one was following me - either in uniform or civilian dress - and there was no-one in the square, I went into the Church. I took off my hat, and entered standing close to the door.

People from the village of Komminen, party members, were among the congregation and there were others who could be identified by their swastika armbands. The statues of Jesus had short grey beards. Above the walls and through the coloured glass windows high up the faces of angels radiated down and the stern faces of saints in red, blue and gold looked on. Near the altar knelt the farmers and the other more prominent people like obedient children and farther back knelt the servants and the labourers (I knew them by their clothes). There was absolute quiet. It was after the sermon of the Chaplain. They moved their lips in prayer, their hands they held together above their faces. Humbly they were pouring out their hearts. They were each united personally with their creator. The silent murmer continued for a long time . From time to time they raised their eyes to "the crucified one". Slowly the silent prayer ceased and the congregation was prepared for the next part of the service. Suddenly the organ thundered. The first chords jumped and resounded to the heights, reverberated against the cupolas and the arches, going down into the hearts of the supplicants who dared not raise their heads until the sounds of the organ had died away. After a pause the organ again played some mute muffled chords and the sound spread out across the arches slowly sinking down lower to the depth of the abyss, murmering away into the unknown silence. Slowly the tones rose up again rising high and disappearing into the heavens. Quietly touching the hearts, appealing and begging for mercy and forgiveness. The congregants who bent their heads crossed themselves in fear and submission "All is vanity", the quiet sounds swirled round and seemed to talk in dialogue. They rose again and climbed in winding crecendo in wonderful nuances from the genius of the composer. Slowly they receded, became softer and were suddenly cut off to start again immediately and quietly and softly hovering and humming spilt over into the well of the church, reaching into each individual soul

touching the pain in the heart. The notes trembled, coming down into each person and bringing pain and suffering into the soul. The sound whispered: "Man make a reconing for the fate that awaits you. You are dependant on someone and your security is as nothing." Terrible wailing sounds burst forth. These were morning sighs that fluttered through space. Suddenly they were cut off and silence pervaded.

Did I understand the composer or was all this just my own personal feeling? Perhaps they were the feelings of those kneeling and closing their eyes in shame at the actions of their sons and husbands in the way.

The congregation crossed themselves, murmered again, crossed themselves and begged for Grace and Mercy. They lifted their heads, they looked at the crucified one from whom the blood was flowing. Their faces expressed anger and resentment against those who caused it. Their eyes wandered to the Holy Mother, holding her child and to the Apostles and all the stern-faced Saints and the good angels who looked out of the coloured glass windows radiating golden rays.

Suddenly there was a feeling of great relief. The organ played loudly and clearly filling the church with the sound of encouragement, joy and happiness. The congregation got to their feet. Their golden crosses flashed many ikons, madonnas and saints in all shapes and forms were held aloft. The choir voices burst forth with the humming of the great organ.

I was the first out of the Church. The horses were eating their clover, shaking the harness and lashing with tails, with white foamy saliva at their mouths. I loosened the bits from their mouths and let them eat in peace. The roar of the organ could be heard coming from the Church across the square around the closest streets. It could be heard a long time. I sat meditating and thinking, going far deeper into my soul than the sounds of the organ could penetrate. Oh, if I could only

write down what the heart of a Jew felt - a Jew in my position. If it had only been given to me to express the splendour and nobility that were in the more than human tones, that were able to give deep inspiration and feeling of brotherhood that mortal man should have onthis earth. Together with that, that same believing man begging for mercy could live a double life, one of hypocricy and lies; live arrogantly,tyrannically, even killing and murdering. Talking loudly the Herr and Fraulein came to the carriage. They got in, sitting down satisfied and comfortable. "To the gasthaus", they called to me.

"Did you go to the Church?"

"Ja,, a little," I answered.

"It was beautiful, wasn't it?"

"Ja."

"Were the horses all right while you were away?"

"Ja."

I knew the gasthaus where the farmers and their servants used to visit. Of course, everybody in his own room and with his own society. To drink and talk gaily with his peers. The master let me have a glass of rum. At the same time I met Józef who had driven with his masters in their carriage. We chatted and talked about all kinds of things. Opposite us sat a person in presentable civilian clothes and listened to our conversation. He suddenly turned to me and burst forth in Bylorussian: "Who are you?""And who are you?", I returned angrily. "I am a Bylorussian who is fighting for the independance of his fatherland", he said. "Very nice, to your good health, I am also a Bylorussian," I said, "We are all Bylorussians," interrupted Józef", and don't speak to us in an unfriendly tone. We are all captives." "I want to know the name of the village where you work," he continued to press us. "It's not your business and leave us alone - don't put your nose in our business, if not, we will call the guard", Józef answered.

My life was like that of a minefield, in which mines would explode without warning or like a viper that suddenly crosses one's path out of the dry grass and is prepared to strike in a second. This fellow had been wandering around for two months among the Ukranians and Bylorussians in the villages. As I later got to know he was a Bylorussian serving the Germans and he had come from Berlin from the organisation of Polish Minorities which had existed before the war. This time his job was to follow Soviet admirers or to mobilize volunteers from among the captives for militia units to carry on fighting in the occupied territories against the Jews and partisans. He spoke Bylorussian in the accent of the area I came from. They also told me that he was able to tell the difference between different racial groups according to their outward appearances and accents and he had the intention of dealing with me. In any case, he frightened Poles who had registered as Bylorussians or Ukranians. He wanted to check them according to their passports and prove that their statements regarding their nationality was false. Apparently, however, the regional authorities did not trust him and gave him no leave to act. He soon disappeared from the scene. During one of the busy months of the harvest, the farmer came to me in the fields and told me to harness the horse and cart and go to the police station that lay between the village of Kominnen and the town of Raisel: "The inspector of Police has to talk to you. They found inaccuracies in your certificate". I felt as if a thunderbolt had hit me. I did as he said. I took my side bag with my very few belongings with me in case I was not to return. After I had got on the way I let the horse go slowly, took out my certificate and tried to see what could be wrong with it. (Actually most of the details were incorrect.) I decided to insist that everything was exact even if they handed me over to the Gestapo. I memorised all the details in case the Inspector wanted to test me. I went into the police station and greeted the Inspector. In fact, I knew him. I often passed the police

station when I tool bags of grain to the railway station. The Inspector would stop me and give me forms for the farmer to fill in. He often asked me to give the Fraulein regards. He probably got gifts for the holidays such as a good piece of meat after the killing of a pig. The Inspector with the rank of sergeant major was a huge man, very tall and bread shouldered, who carried a huge head on his shoulders. He was not stout but his body was not in proportion. His shoulder blades stuck out. His face was long and fallen in with the cheekbones protruding. He was not only chief sergeant, but a party member and a big swastika was tied round one sleeve. In the next room sat a young Gestapo man with a woman worker, busy getting papers in order. They were talking and laughing together. The Chief took a copy of my certificate out of his drawer, put it in front of me and asked me about all the details. I answered everything. He again read the certificate over from the Beginning and stopped at a detail that he could not read: "What is your surname?" "Karchmar", I answered. "A name like that I never heard, not among the Poles, the Russians, the Ukranians and not among the French." I was taken aback. Something was being planned against me! I thought. He gave me a long stern look. The chief sergeant could speak and read a little Polish. He could speak a little Russian but read it with difficulty. He pointed to my certificate: "Kapzmap". I amswered him: "As a Bylorussian I use Cyrilic letters." At his request I added and explained. The Polish P is also the Russian R, the Polish R is pronounced 'tch' and so on. The sergeant listened carefully and learned the difference.between the similar sounding letters in the two languages which in reality were called differently. He looked at me sternly and doubted my explanation. I looked at him straight in the face so that he would believe in the honesty of my words. "Ach so", said the surprised policeman and continued to stare into my eyes. In the end he added : "Look, I thought you were someone else." In the end he corrected all my certificates and when he was satsified that everything

was in order, he began to talk about himself: "Ja, before the First World War I lived with my parents close to Siberia. We had an estate. As a German I did not learn Russian because all the Germans were concentrated in a colony and spoke German. The little Russian I could speak I forgot and even forgot to write Russian. With the outbreak of the revolution they took away our estate and we fled to Germany." He again looked atmy signature and he began to believe that he had made a mistake. He again looked at me seriously and added: "I thought it was a Jewish name. My knowledge of Russian is weak. I must learn the language. When we have finished the war perhaps I will go to Russia and get a higher position". (He was still dreaming about a thing like that when the Russians were already advancing westwards across Kiev and Smolensk). "Ja, now everything is in order, you can return to work." I greeted him and left the police station more calmly than I had come in. My heart was still beating. I rolled a cigarette, I whipped the horse and left the place quickly.

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MY POSITION BECOMES DANGEROUS

At the end of 1943 people who were hostile to me decided to do away with me because of chauvenistic nationalistic reasons. People in whose society I had been and whose attitude to me had been tolerant plotted to betray me. In short, a period of nervous tension started. I could not sleep and was depressed. It passed. From where did I get the mental strength to overcome it and not to break down? In that year I was indifferent and tired of everything. I had reached the end but did not think of committing suicide as I had once planned. With every incident that arose I was forced to fight by myself without consulting my friends because I did not want to involve them. I defended myself according to my own judgment and according to the common sense I had learned. Something said to me. Fight for your life, Jew! Don't surrender! Don't throw yourself to the wolves. Fight honestly and squarely for your life. Prove yourself with your deeds and gain the goodwill of your comrades and friends but guard your self respect even if you expect that one night or one fine day they will take you from here and shoot you or hang you. In spite of the fact that your life is bitter and your future black and you are in dispair prove yourself to them. Carry on the way you have from the beginning.

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1 9 4 3 - "W E I N A C H T E N"

Only in the month of December did the storms become severe and cover the landscape from edge to edge. Visibility became poor. Whirls of snow covered the huts. The farm buildings became dwarfed as they sank behind the embankments of snow. Only paths were cleared of snow to make a way to the doors of the buildings. From the cowsheds one heard the lowing of the cows. In the stables the horses rattled their chains and from time to time they stamped their legs on the concrete floor. As usual Kuba lay in the cowshed under a thick eiderdown with a pipe in his mouth. In the middle of the night he would get up as spread beets and bran in the manger. As if saying thank you the cows turned their heads towards him and looked at him with big eyes. Now with the approach of Christmas Eve he also told the cows about the festival. Once many, many years ago the ancestresses of the cows got the privilege of sharing their shelter with the Messiah. The cows listened to his words but their only reaction to him was to low and expect another portion of bran. He told the same story to whomever he met in the yard. Everybody prepared for the festival. Families had already begun a few weeks ago. They already began to dream of the night when a halo of holy lights would evelope the Church and the mysterious sounds of the organ with the songs of the choir singing about the nativity pervaded the air. Everyone looked forward to the night and the day on which one could rest. The brotherhood of captives and all the forced labourers, provoslavs and Greek Catholics decided to have a common Christmas with the others. Although their nativity feast was always celebrated at a later date. They organised this in a hut on one of the farms in the village. A family of three from Leningrad lived in this hut. They had recently been brought to Prussia as forced labourers. All the nationalities participated, a Lithuanian couple and all the Polish captives. (It was said that the Lithuanians had spent a year in the forests as

partisans. Others said that they had been officials under the Germans and when the Front came closer decided to volunteer for work in Germany in order to cover their past.) Most of the participants knew about me except for the Ukranians whom I have already mentioned and whom I will talk about presently.

Actually I hesitated about going to the Christmas party because I was afraid of meeting people hostile to me. I would have preferred to stay in the room but my friends specially wanted me to be at the feast. The Russian family specially invited me, they said that if anybody by any chance were to insult me under the influence of liquor they would stop it at once. So I set out with my roommate Andrei. We walked a distance of about three kilometers through fields and paths in the snow. The night was dim. The snow glistened like magic. The storm was not severe but the wind swept the snow easily and little hillocks were formed. The hares fascinated by the night, sat motionless close to the snowy hillocks. I was pleased to meet my old friends in the Russian home. They hugged and embraced me very warmly. I felt no strangeness. I was one of them. There were 20 people and I knew most of them. Among the length of the room was a long table covered with white sheets. It had been done by some Russian women together with the hostess. Candles burned and the room was decorated with greenery. All in all a festive atmosphere pervaded. The table had bottles of semagon, puddings, pasties and all kinds of roasted and boiled meat, and all kinds of sausages. As far as I knew the German servants with the knowledge of their masters had helped to prepare the semagon and had helped to get the food. Everything was prepared by the Russian family, forced labourers, who in the short time they had been there had managed to build up a friendly relationship with the farm workers. A thing the captives had not maaaged to do in all the years they had been there. People became more friendly to each other that night. Human warmth enveloped everyone. We all gripped hands and said: "May we celebrate at home next year." I sat at the table with Jozef and Michal too

my left and Gursky and Pavel opposite. To my right were two Ukranians mentioned before, "crooked mouth" and next to him "scarface". The captives had tears in their eyes and their thoughts were far away. There was silence in the room, all shared the same emotions. Four years had passed since we had been cut off from home and family. We were brothers suffering the same cruel fate together. We began by singing the Christmas Polish song. After that we sang in Russian especially the Bylorussians and the provoslavs. We clinked the first glasses. (Tea glasses). After that we took the wafers each one according to his tradition. Normally the Russians and the Soviets did not celebrate the festival traditionally but ate and drank without a religious connotation.

After the first glass the pervading depression and homesickness lifted. People became more cheerful, eyes shone again, glasses were clinked and people embraced and began to talk their hearts out. One spoke about his children whom he could not forget, the other about his wife whom he suspected of taking other men, and against whom he bore a grudge for this. The bachelors spoke of girlfriends whom they had left in the years past and they now suspected them of going with Germans for a tin of jam or fruit while they were rotting in captivity, but everyone swore they should not forget that it was through the Germans that they were wasting the best years of their lives. The semagon flowed like water. The guests, in spite of the drink did not lose their self control. One did not hear any swearing and everybody behaved politely except for the quiet curses against the Germans. There were also women at the table and the rule was that if there were women in the company there was self control and patience but they acted like a damper on the atmosphere, bringing feelings of frustration, jealousy and hate connected with past memories.

After a while Józef began to sing a Bylorussian song. His wonderful voice spilled over like a waterfall, like a mass of shining pearls, like thunder accompanying lightning.

After that his song became clear and quiet. It was like a many coloured rainbow in a clodd. One was amazed at the phenomina that seemed as if it was stilling the thirst man had. The guests were quiet, amazed and stunned. Memories of their childhood came back to them. They went back to the places where they had been when they were happy. Memories were changed to sweet dreams but in the meantime the soul was drawn to the voice of Jozef on the waves of sound that rose and fell. After the song the people sat as if hypnotised, and they woke from their depression feeling that there could still be brightness for them.

The "crooked mouth" kept on pouring out semagon for me and for himself and I drank with him from time to time. After every remark he made he would give a sharp broken laugh. He behaved as if he were shy and he had a lot to tell but kept many things back. He spoke a sharp slipped off Ukranian. He would turn to "Scarface" from time to time to see if he also appreciated his sallies. But on the frozen faceeof the other there was only a forced smile and he kept quiet. For some reason the people took no notice of his stories and even I did not pay much attention to him. It seemed as if his stories did not fit into the atmosphere of that evening. More and more "Crooked Mouth" spoke of wild unrestrained actions under the Germans in the recent past. Spoke, and finished each sentence with a chuckle. I sobered quickly and became curious.

"Do you think it is a simple matter to lie in wait for partisans and Jews day and night in the forests and the swamps and even the Polaks got their share of the punishment," and again he chuckled. "Of course we ate and drank before each action. We had everything we wanted. All enjoyments were at our disposal." After his last words I was amazed. I looked at the fact of this unusual type of person and asked: "Did you serve in the German army?" "No, our unit had an even more important task. We belonged to the Ukranian militia that was attached to the SS Einsatzgruppe. We worked hard but we had a good time." He chuckled

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with pleasure. "Imagine, I sat on the edge of the pit with a machine gun and we aimed at Jew boys and Jew girls and their bastards. All were naked. All I did was pull the trigger and shoot them. One by one they fell into the pit, but before that I drank a full bottle of pure German schnapps and I did not hear their screams." He bent his crooked mouth towards me as if telling me a secret. The people around me stopped eating, listening aghast at what he had to say: "Listen, with my own hands I killed two thousand Jews in the Stanislav area. There were those who defied us. The SS pulled them to the pit and put a bullet through them." Once he spoke in annoyance, "Be damned: A naked Jewess held a baby in her arms. The SS wanted to take the baby from her but she did not let them. With her fingernails she scratched the face of the German. She fought with him. He put a bullet through her and she fell into the pit with the living baby." Again he gave his cut-off chuckle. "I had everything money, gold and drank as much as I wanted." When he saw that I did not nod my head (I was shaken to the depths of my being to hear things like that spoken by the executioner himself - ~~I began to shudder and to choke.~~) He chuckled again and added: "All this for the Ukranian Mother-land." Józef could not control himself and added: "Let us stop eating and talking. As one says: the one who talks when drunk, talks nonsense." Gursky added: "When wine goes in, the secrets come out." Everyone laughed and wanted to wipe out the terrible depression that had settled on everyone. He gave his cut-off chuckle. Only "Scarface" kept quiet. "In that case let us be merry together!" said one of the company. "But before that let us drink to the downfall of the mous-tached Ashimadai - Beelzebub". I was still staring at the murderer of the Jews of Stanislav. Kudashov tried to calm me. He was afraid I would lose control and cause everyone trouble. He begged me: "Leave him. This is not the place to settle accounts with him. We must be careful, the time of

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. I was dumbfounded by thee shock of what I had just heard and I was searching in my mind to answer him without becoming hysterical. To give him areasonably controlled answer. A tale from my youth flased through my memory.
I asked him: " Have you ever heard of a great Provoslav Russian writer named Dostoyevsky? "
""Yes , I've heard of him," Crooked Mouth replied. "He wrote a book called "The Brothers Karamasov", Have you ever read the book?"
"No, " he said, "I only read Ukranian Books." "In that case I will tell you what This great writer said."
———————— -My friends and the Russian host listened earnestly and attentively somewhat curiously. They were afraid that there might be an argument that would lead to undesired violence.
" This Karamazov was a wealthy man of great property. With that he was a drunkard, a gluttton and a lascivious womaniser, who would have wild orgies with naked and half naked women. He had three sons. Each son differed from the other in character and outlook on life. One son rebelled against his father. He was filled with anger against him and the establishment. The youngest son was a monk, good natured and innocent of the ways of the world. —— I don't remember their names. " Vasil interrupted—— :"I'll tellyou their names, Ivan Feodorowitz and the youngest one was Alyosha." "Well Ivan Feodorowitz was involved in an argument, I don't remember with whom, and wanted to show how hypocritical the religious really were and usually did the exact opposite of G-D's commandments He said that a Bulgarian had once told him people had been slaughtered by the Turks and the Tcherkasians at the end of the 19th Century. He described how the Bulgarian women had been raped , the babies literally murdered in cold blood. The Turks acted in a way to make the blood run cold. They would tickle a baby held lovingly in its mother's arms and at the same time aiming their gun at its head and as the little victim would stretch out its arms , he would pull the trigger and splinter its little head to smithereens! A shocked silence ensued. Quietly I spoke to Crooked Mouth. :" Tell me now, who are the Believers who carry o out G-D'S command?" "There are no Believers —— " said Yusuf (Religion is just a routine for them—— something by the way———" Believers of various nations butcher each other without without the slightest qualms of conscience."
The Ukranian with the scar on his face sat silently, morosely, glumly, something I did not like. It boded ill for me. Crooked Mouth too sat silent without his usual chuckle .Suddenly he caught the drift of my questions. In self justification he cried out :" The Jews are the worst non-Believers of them all."
I felt that I had said more than enough.
Yuzuf who could contain himself no longer took my arm and cried out——:"

Juggernaut is approaching and his end too will come." I was shaking. The Russian hosts gave me something cold to drink so that I could come to myself. Everything was turning before my eyes. The walls, the roof, the floor and within this movement the faces of "Crooked Mouth" and "Scarface" intruded, holding a machine gun, shooting fire, laughing a terrible stupid devlish laugh.

Although I had had a lot of alcohol, I got up slowly and said goodbye to my hosts and friends. Andrei at once joined me and we went out. We weren't steady on our legs. We walked upright. Outside, dry snow was falling and the wind lashed our faces. It cooled me and made me forget the terrible figure that had sat beside me the whole evening.

We directed our steps in the best direction we thought, past a small group of grey white buildings of the Raiman farm. Andrei, a tall man with a clumsy figure. This elderly man was for me the typical symbol of the Russian type. More than once he told me about his life and adventures. The great stretches of his country and the long distances fascinated him. The restlessness within him made him a wanderer. He went to look for work far away in the mines, leaving behind his wife and children. He went down deep into the bowels of the earth. Then, he was immensely strong. He excelled as a "molotoboi" and did not give himself time to think. He was a Stachanovite (a work hero). Among the laboring people he produced work the way Stalin wanted. After a heavy day's work he wanted to fill up the empty spaces in his soul. He had already drunk a great deal with his friends to recognise and celebrate the excellency of his work. In spite of that he longed for something greated in spirit. Again he would find oblivion in drink or fall into the arms of a woman and warm his heart, enjoying her charms but that did not satisfy him, because there was no real feeling in these relationships. He

longed for his family for his children, and for peace within himself. When he returned home again after a long absence he sensed a rift between himself and his wife. She had cared for the children herself all the while he had been away and she resented this. Again he became saddened but did not dispair. He looked for brotherhood and friendliness with his fellow man. He simply needed to give vent to his feelings. His wife did not understand him. Perhaps a strange woman would? No, he did not believe in them any more. She also listened to the stories of other men. After she got her presents she laughed at them behind their backs. He was looking for a friend to whom he could uncover the pain in his heart and still the gnawing ache within himself. He would drown his troubles in a glass of alcohol in the company of faithful friends who listened to him and understood him. In his time Andrei had helped to bring about the revolution. After that there were stormy times. Hard times of trouble and hunger, but he had remained faithful to the tenets of the revolution and to the people. He did not have the means to support his family in style. He could live very simply. He would wear wooden shoes (Lapchi) which according to him were light and easy on his feet rather than leather. However, he could not give his family much meat to eat. Either his money gave out before the time or there was no meat at the butcher's. He was not a real drunkard. He would just take a good few drinks from time to time to warm himself, to burn up the worm that was within him. He often felt that he had been exploited and cheated and this hurt him badly. He had given so much of himself physically, not like others who had arranged jobs for themselves in offices and stores. He kept his complaints to himself. It was not worthwhile talking out loudly. In spite of everything he remained optimistic. In the end he came to terms with himself and optimistically hoped things would improve. Only during the war he kept asking himself how the failure had happened. Had

someone betrayed Stalin? Perhaps the Jews were really responsible the way they said hourly and daily in Germany. Since the great debacle in the war he dared to call Stalin a real fool. A narrow minded fool. He certainly wasn't a pope nor was he really Russian, so he wasn't able to really understand the Motherland. Now Andrei was tired and longed for home. If they demanded an account from him and asked him where he had been and what he had done during the war he was prepared to give it, but in his homeland, nowhere else!

The wind blew and the storm raged. From the time we left the festivities Andrei did not mentionethe incident of "Crooked Mouth". He was understanding. He knew for a long time that I carried a pain for which there was no healing medicament. This time he did not want to touch a fresh wound. Suddenly he stopped and said: "Theophile, eit is paso", and added, "you will not bring them back to life, you won't change anything, and we must be careful of the "Chochol" (Ukranians), He took a cigarette and gave me one and said, "We will warm our fingers and our noses. There are only Prussian storms. In Russia when there is a storm you won't be able to recognise your own house that has changed into a mountain of snow."

Andrei walked first and I came after him. We again examined the direction we had been walking in which according to our feeling and orientation would bring us to our destination. He wanted to go first. He claimed that the snow spread all over could cause one to lose the way. "My legs know the winter season more than yours. Russian winters cut like knives and there is no end to the deserts of snow." We began to walk shoulder to shoulder, a slow walk against the wind in which we sank into the snow. Again he mentioned the incident at the party. "I heard everything, the "Chochol" said to you. I know those faces well. I saw them in the territories occupied by the Germans. They looted and robbed the population and afterwards murdered them

and then went on wild eating and drinking orgies. We have no option friend. Now we must keep quiet and wait." We sank into the heaps of snow. We fell from one heap to another. After every step we had to pull our legs out of the snow. Every post looked like the one before it. The white snow wiped out all our confidence. We struggled and breathed heavily. This went on for two hours. We had walked in a circle of three kilometers. With great difficulty did we finally free ourselves from the blinding snow.

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THE LOCAL BANDEROVTZIM AND THE VLASOVITES DISCUSS AND SENTENCE ME

At the end of December, 1943, and the beginning of January, 1944, the winter cold and snow became more severe. This was especially hard for a captive like me without clothes. As usual we would go to the forest to cut down trees for heating. The horses struggled to make their way through the heaped snow that piled up during the night and had evened out roads and ditches and fields. The horses would go off the road and sink down till their stomachs were in the snow. Probably they had got themselves into a ditch and then the horses in fear of the unusual conditions would jump up until they had freed themselves from their harness while my friend and I were thrown from the sleigh and everything fell apart. It is hard to estimate the amount of physical strength and patience a man had to reload the logs of wood on the sleigh, tie them up again and continue to grope his way in the grey dusk. On nights like these I was exhausted. My trousers were torn from the knots and branches. My head cut open and hands and face scratched by the branches of the trees.. Before going to sleep I would sit in my room which was unusually cold and add more patches to my already patched clothes. On those long winter nights friends from the nearby farms would visit us. Among the visitors were Ukranians, some whom I had not yet got to know. They were the only ones of gaining through a German victory (They were the followers of Bandera.) They hoped it would bring the Ukranians independance. The news that the Germans were retreating on the front was not to their liking. My friends warned me: "Know that they are dangerous. They are planning some trouble." In the beginning my friends did not want to frighten me and only hinted here and there, but after some time they told me straight that those people, the fanatics, were plotting

against me and the other Jew in the village. They began to undermine my position in the worst ways possible. This time it was clear to me that "Crooked Mouth" and "Scarface" were not only members but the leaders of a hidden branch of "Banderovtzim". Their job, in the case of a Soviet invasion of Prussia, was to help liquidate all those who were ddngerous to the Nazi regime.

Stefan, a Ukranian from Galica, a war captive from Poland in Germany had already visited his family in the Ukraina and returned to captivity. We had been friends and had visited each other. He tried to ensure himself in two worlds; with the Nazis and also with the Soviets, in case they penetrated into Prussia (As far as I knew he belonged to the Communist Ukranian Party that wanted to join Ukraina to the Greater Ukraina in the Soviet Union.) Those Ukranians who had but recently arrived met Stefan in the village and he councilled them. He was clever, had logic, was very shrewd and did not want to belong to any national group whatsoever. One day he called me and told me openly: "You should know that the Ukranians who have recently arrived and who came to your room are plotting against you. They want to hand you and your mate over to the Gestapo. I was against it. Their council had meetings and discussed your fate and decided to hand you over to the Gestapo. As you know this has not yet been carried out, but some Germans in the village already know about it. In fact, the Germans themselves are worried and frightened for their lives. They would like to quieten the matter and wait for developments on the Front. So your life hangs in the balance of political developments. No-one knows what the position of the Ukranians will be in any regime that will come. The Germans are also careful. They think that the war is at a crucial point and can continue at the utmost only another six months. Both sides reserve their decisions." (I must say the Germans did not see me as an immediate problem and they wanted to defer the matter completely.

They all knew me and they were afraid that after I had been betrayed, the Gestapo would accuse them of harboring a Jew, a thing that was against the race laws. The Germans were also afraid that if they betrayed me they would be victims open to attack and vengeance from the captives. The "Banderovtzim" also thought that when the Soviets came they would be the victims of my friends, the captives. "But," said Stefan, "this does not ensure your security. One whistle to the Gestapo from one fanatic and you are finished." Without thinking much, I answered, "Stefan, I promise, I will run even in the bitter cold". "Every person's life is dear to him. It is one's fight to fight for one's life but you should know ahead of time: No German will let you in, even to warm yourself. The Germans are more careful than they ever were. Most of the parachutists that the Soviets sent down over Prussia were caught. Those who were left died of the cold and hunger, hiding in haystacks. This has also been the fate of many runaway captives. It's enough for a German child to report you and you are finished, or you have the ill-luck to come across an armed German and you've had it." "So, according to you I must clearly expect death?" "Perhaps that is your fate. I, in your place, would not resist it. You may well call it the conditions of the times that you can't evade. Realise that this is the times the Jews are sentenced to extinction." I did not ask for his advice again, nor did I ask him to intercede for me. For some reason I deeply respected him. He had learned a lot from his experience in life. He had been my friend for a long time. At times I hadllearned a lot from his experience in life. Suddenly I doubted his sincerity. This time he did not give me a word of comfort as if he had finally decided my fate and the fate of the Jewish people who were enclosed in a hermetical circle from which there was no way out. I was caught in my thoughts and could not get away from them. We both smoked and were silent and his words rang in my ears: "Know that this is the time that the Jews are sentenced to extinction." That is the judgement, that is the reality. The horizon of my future became even narrower. Before

I left the room he filled his pipe again and added: "I would like to change the decision of the council but I have no influence there." I left with a greater feeling of lonliness that I had ever had. That I was of no importance whatever, but I did not lose my nerve. Stunned, I dragged my legs like a homeless dog until he met A German who would put a bullet into him and with a short yelp would be thrown on the dust heap. Again I heard the echo of the voice: "Realise, the Jewish people have been fated for extinction". I understood what his words meant to me, but for some reason I did not want to commit suicide this time. I felt indifferent about what would happen to me. I could no longer judge. I had one idea, if the hangman came I would spit in his face frmm the very depths of my soul. I could curse man and all humanity. I leaned against a wall in my room and thought about my approaching end. No, I will not run away. The idea of "Kiddush Hashem" had lost its meaning for me because the numbers killed had already gone beyond what one could imagine. Who would record in the history of humanity the suffering of those smothered and burnt and they burn out the fat of the corpses as a present to the German Christian nation.

An honest Christian will come and will dare in all innocence to show how those who wore the cross had been defiled, who saw and participated in the bestial murders. Job will still arise from the tortured and cry out: "Earth, do not cover my blood." A Jeremiah will arise who will mourn the Jews of Europe. Will a poet like Bialik come to shout: "Heavens, beg mercy for me!

If there is a God among you
and you have found your way to him
I have not found him
You pray for me, my Heart is dead
and I have no prayer on my lips

(Free translation from Bialik)

Will a historian, a writer, a poet arise who can for a moment identify himself on black and white with the feeling of those sentenced to extenction? Will he be able to uncover their

thoughts and determine to which salvation they raised their eyes before death. And perhaps they only saw the final dispair that wiped out the Holy Salvation now shattered?

Perhaps man will not be able to go down to those depths to uncover this and he will surrender. He will drop his eyes over his worktable and weep in dispair as the flow of tears will cover his writing and his heart will shudder.

Now the whole village knew that I was a'Jew'. Every strange German who came into the yard or to the house of the farmer seemed to me to be the one who was coming to arrest me. At night I could not sleep. I remembered "Les Miserables" that I had read in my youth. The hero Jean, Valjean, had stolen the Priest's candlesticks. He had been in prison and escaped. Someone had betrayed him. It is said that on that same night he was sleepless. His fear made his hair go white. Then, in my youth I did not understand the reality of this fear, nor did I ever think anything similar could happen to me. Perhaps Victor Hugo had exaggerated, why did my hair not become white? My years of life was one of tension and fear, but I knew how to hide it within myself. I knew what would happen to me if I were like a hunted animal on an open field.

On one of the Sundays some Ukranians visited me, among them "Scarface" and "Crooked Mouth". It was evident that the German retreat worried them. On the suffece they gave the impression that the Germans would gain the victory. At the last minute the Germans would use a secret weapon that the world had not yet heard of. They left after two hours and I accompanied them as far as the yard. "Scarface" asked to stay with me and told his friend to go on. (From the beginning of their visit I felt that they had come to tell me something connected to my fate.) I looked at the man. I extimated that he was over 40. A serious person, settled in his opinions. As far as I knew he had had an adventurous past and had cO-operated with the Germans. As a

fanatical nationalist he was an organiser of actions against the Poles and Jews. When he saw that the pressure on the Germans was increasing he began like thousands of other "Banderovtzim" to stop serving the Germans. When the Germans saw that they could not depend on them they sent them to Germany to forced labour. Here too they made contact with the local police and with the Nazi Party.

"Theophile", he started the conversation, "I have had the opportunity to get to know you. A short time ago I learned of your origin. I will not deny your people are being exterminated and as a Ukranian I have done my share in helping with this. Know that most of the Ukranians in the village want to hand you over to the Gestapo. But you have friends amongst the Poles and the minorities and I got to know you, and I could not vote against you. You should know that it has been decided to hand you over to the Gestapo, but this has not yet been finalised. They will again discuss your fate and that of your friend. According to the national idea of the Germans and Ukranians, these countries must be "Judenrein"." He said this last word in German. He offered me a cigarette and I looked at him. How could a man explain his motive for murder with shame? He spoke with confidence and belief, to one of those whose people were being exterminated. I continued to look at him. He spoke quietly: It was hard to believe that this man was a murderer. He looked like a typical Ukranian farmer who worked hard on his land.

I did not ask for mercy or kneel to him. He looked like all his other comrades in the "Banderovtzim" and the "Vlasovim", murderers without a conscience, scoundrels, the scum of the earth, no more. We stood together a long time and smoked and smoked. Man to man, looking as if we were discussing daily events. The others had walked on and did not hear our fateful conversation on my life, but they knew what we were talking about. In the end I spoke to him in a quiet controlled manner. "See here, in reality

we are both German captives. No-one has more or less right. Even if the Ukranians are more popular with the Germans than other nationalities there is as yet no justification for one captive to kill his mate. We are all strangers labouring from morning to night for potatoes and a slice of bread. Would you find anyone among the strangers who is certain that he won't find his death in this war? What tomorrow holds we can only guess at. I won't deny that there are political principles but there can't be differences of opinion on the principles of human morals and it is because of these that we have managed to live until the outbreak of World War II." After a while I added: "We got to know each other a short time ago", (he nodded), "It is for me to tell you. Do what your human conscience obliges you to do." We separated after that without another word.

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P A R T II

1944 HARD LABOUR AND FLIGHT

In 1943 refugees came to Prussia from West Germany. They came from Berlin, Dortmund, Dusseldorf and their surrounding areas. These cities had been bombed by the Allies and there were many casualties. The German radio did not tell its people the truth and they lived with the illusion that all was well. The Prussians lived a peaceful life and those who knew anything avoided talking about the subject. It was only when the evacuees came to Prussia that they got to know the truth. The evacuees were mostly people from the cities; mothers and children, young women whose husbands were in the army or who had been killed. Their families however, still got maintenance from the army. In Prussia the evacuees were divided up among the families in the villages. The Prussians did not like these women (there were no men), because they did not want to work on the farms. The evacuees on the other hand were dissatisfied with the uncivil behaviour of the farmers and criticised the slave regime here that was unknown in Western Germany. East Prussia seemed to be a safe shelter in comparison to the West where huge fires were burning and which could not be put out, and people were being killed.

The population enjoyed an even greated feeling of security when they heard that the Fuhrer built his headquarters there. Prussia was the granary of Germany. It was called the German Ukraine. So the evacuees streamed eastwards. Atthe end of 1944 captives were taken from Bishopsburg, where they had worked in villages and sent to the Russian Lithuanian border to build

bunkers and anti-tank entrenchments. There were rumours that the Russians had begun a general attack along the whole front and had broken through in many places in West Bylorussia.

So it happened that one morning they came to take Vasiel Gursky and myself. We were the two taken from our village. Again we were in difficulties and wandering. The third man who joined us from the next village was Emilian, a Russian civilian from Kursk. The three of us were taken to dig trenches. We divided every piece of bread we came by into three equal parts - we drank swamp water fromthe same cup we divided the frozen potatoes, carrots and cabbages into three and when I could not catch up to the others because of weakness I leaned on the arms of my comrades. When Emilian got water blisters on the soles of his feet and could not walk, he leaned on our shoulders and so it was also with Vasiel.. We were among thousands of captives, Poles, French, and Italian abd elderly Polish civilians who had very recently been caught and brought over to do forced labour. There were also Lithuanians, Ukranians and Russians who had been brought to Prussia some six months ago. It was a mixed crowd of nationalities from sixteen to sixty, from different backgrounds and different pasts. Now the collaborators had a change to again prove their faithfulness to the Third Reich. This time without arms against helpless people. Not with rape and greed, but with spade and hammer in the hand and wearing rags infested with fleas. Along both sides of the Prussian Lithuanian border there were hundred of anti-tank trenches. Near the lakes, water streamed through the trenches and so a chain of lakes were joined. Asphalt roads - between the lakes were cut through and topped by narrow one-way bridges. The great estates belonging to Russian-German owners had long ago been vacated. Only the old "Knecht" the women and the aged remained. Every group was apportioned a section of the work and Vlasov typants were put in charge of them. The people over them were land surveyors of the Banderovtzim. They were German speaking Ukranians. At every 100 meters an SS soldier was placed with a machine gun.

Over everybody were the SS horsemen. If they felt anyone was slow at his work he would come down with his horse and lash out right and left with his whip. At 3 a.m. we were ready for parade and counting. At 4 we were on the way and we returned at 10 at night. At night we got our rations for the following day, 150 grams of bread and a spoon of jam and a square of margarine. In the afternoon we got soup with the bones of some animal. At the same time Soviet planes bombed troop concentrations in Lithuania and Konigsberg. Echoes and flashes came to us from the North. The bombs fell frequently and the five lit up the horizon for a long time.. At night we were in such tension that we could not sleep. There were rumours that the Germans were going to burn the stables with us in them. We remained awake and stole out from time to time. When the guards saw us they fell on us and pushed us back into the stables. Vasiel, dead tired after work, lay down weak and crying to himself. He did not cross himself or call to his God as was his wont. I had no wishes or dreams. I was sure I had no family or saviour. These two friends took the place of my family. Would the bombs bring salvation? Who knew under what conditions my freedom would come? With closed eyes that did not move we awaited freedom. Gursky and I had lived through four years of captivity. Only Emilian was an optimist and said: "Do you see the Prussian skies? They are reddening. Satan is knocking at the doors of the Germans. He was a practical man. He suggested exploiting the darkness of the night to collect potatoes from the shed behind the building. Usually the two of us, Emilian and myself, would go out. I would crawl under the wall of the stable where one of the cow's urine had run and now that of the prisoners. I was thin and slipped through without difficulty. My friend with his broad bones and long legs found it difficult. Once I pushed him in and once I pulled him out. In the course of time, however, the captives had widened the gap. We were out, without the guards knowing it. After they shot out at us a few times we stopped risking our lives. The

Best food was the vegetables left in the yard especially the potatoes that had not been damaged by the frost. However, we got stomach trouble from this food. It weakened the captives and they could not continue with their hard work and were soon taken from the camp to an unknown place. I also began to have stomach pains and I would not stand on my feet. I told my friends (who were also suffering.) "To-day I won't go to work. I"ll ask the guard to let me stay in the stables and lie on the straw (a place for the sick.)" Both of them were against this. It is better to crawl on the bunkers only not to stay here.They were sure that when they returned at night, they would not find me there. But I was in a bad way and at the parade I went to the side of the sick. I writhed with pain. One sick person who knew me supported me so that I went on with the parade. A third of the hundred in the group begged for rest and they asked for special help. These were the wounded and those who had stomach troubles. The doctor received the sick parade. The commander and the guards followed him. Most were sent away to work. When my turn came I told the doctor about my loss of blood and weakness. The doctor pushed me with his stick and made me fall. The "humane" guard hit me on the back and shouted to me to get up.

My two comrades and I were dirty with wild-grown hair. The parasites had sucked our blood and made us itch. The clogs hurt my legs and rubbed the skin off my feet will they were raw. Every step was torture. I bandaged my legs and put parafin on my body but that did not help. I could not lift the spade with clay to the height of a meter. It was necessary to lift it two meters so that it reached the other clay already there. Fresh blisters opened up. For a long time I ate no vegetables and did not drink water. I just lived on the rations. I smoked strong tobacco that I found in the garden and got a bit stronger. This time Emilian was less hurt and helped us.

I got to know Emilian the year before when the guard had brought us to the mill to carry heavy bags. I could not do the work and was returned to the farmer. Emilian worked there with three Vlasovites who were exploited till they got terrible back pains. After some time they brought him to work for a small farmer on a neighbouring farm. He came to visit me a few times and gave out an air of confidence. He did not talk politics but was sure of a German defeat. Once he told me about himself when he was still a lad, the revolution came to his village. His father and two big brothers joined. After this First World War, life improved and he married and became a Party Member. He had a small farm round his house. As the farm was not sufficient for maintenance he had to go and look for work in the mines every winter. He excelled in the work there but the effort he made undermined his health. He got a weak spine, stopped competing in the production of coal and his connection with the Party became weaker. He was mobilized into the reserves at the outbreak of war but his unit was defeated and surrounded. He managed to escape the encirclement, wandered in the forests for a few months till he got home. There he was caught as a civilian by the Germans and brought for forced labour. He was tall, broad boned and thin. Full of confidence and hope.

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A BUTCHERING OF VLASOV PEOPLE AND OTHER CAPTIVES

In my last year of captivity I had the opportunity of watching the behaviour of the Russians and minorities and among them high standing people from the regime who were dragged into the Vlasov circles; their rudeness and their antipathy to their fellow man came out not only towards people who were against them, but among themeelves.

Two years of giving way to baser instincts had wiped out all sparks of the feeling of the brotherhood of man (if there ever had been one of it). True, the Soviet regime brought injustices not only to those who disagreed with them, but also to the working people who struggled to make ends meet and held a grudge because of it. Vlasov and his followers were something like a copy of their grandfathers who had been in the white guards who had gone their wild way across the Russia of their time, and had attacked the Jews then. Now they were returning to the land where their traditions and values held sway (especially among the nations of South Russia.)

When we got back from work at night the distribution of food began. The Germans threw fifteen loaves of bread and 10 packets of margarine to 100 men. The distribution was difficult and accompanied by quarrels, kicks, and blows. All the people were divided into groups. Some decided to muddle up the division and cause chaos and in this way get the bread away from the others. They threatened to betray some to the Germans if they did not get double rations. These were usually the ex-Vlasovites. They were not used to suffering hunger. During the day at the trenches they never opened their mouths. Their nadness began at night where the captives lived. They attacked anyone they fancied. So for example, they attacked the Russian captives from the Red Army who had succeeded in infiltrating

amongst us (Soviet captives were usually kept in special camps). This time they attacked two Georgians and called them Jews. One Georgian, Ivan, looked like the oriental people. He was short and his thin face was covered with short clusters of black hair. There were about 50 Georgians among us, some were perhaps ex-Vlasovites, some were deserters from the Red Army or perhaps German collaborators. Ivan was a negative character, shrewd, a flatterer and an informer; a boaster, cursing on all sides as his black eyes shifted back and forth. He would never give in to anyone or turn aside from anyone, and if others didn't turn aside his knife would appear. He spoke a broken Russian and was the leader of the Georgians who wanted to rule everybody. The Vlasovites said that Ivan was not Ivan, at all but a Jew , by the name of Morduch Djugusvilli (this was a hint of condemnation referring to Stalin), from Taflis. There was a fight between the Vlasovites and the Georgians. The result was that there were wounded on both sides. At the height of the fighting the Germans burst in with dogs. They dragged out lots of the fighters but also quiet people who were there by sheer chance at the time. The Germans incited the dogs to attack them and threw them into closed lorries and they disappeared into the darkness. Late in the night, we heard shots and screams. Early in the morning when we went on our way to the bunkers through the forest the guards called out: "Look" and pointed to the side of the road. The bushes and grass were trampled and we saw fresh blood marks, pieces of meat covered with dust and earth were hanging on bushes. Apparently they had thrown grenades at the people and the dogs had finished the work. The guards said: "That is the end of your comrades, the Bolshevik bastards." (At that time every slav was their enemy and they called them Rus - Bolsheveik). This butchery depressed the forced labourers and captives. In spite of that the people did not learn and the distribution of food continued as before with the strong getting more than their share.

It was simply hard to get the ration the Germans determined. Many lay without strength and without hope of getting anything from either friend or foe. There was no spark of hope or comfort, belief in man and the feeling of brotherhood that was among the exploited was destroyed. It was terrible to live an outcast lying anda lump of filthy straw. These people would not die with a kiss of death or with a comforting smile on the pale lips of a neighbour. His neighbour took absolutely no notice of him. His lonliness was terrible until he found release - in godlessness. He is angry because he has been led astray and blames his G-d, his friend from childhood with whom he has walked for years in innocence. So the adult lay eaten up with sorrow and suffering and he thought back in bitterness of his farm and his home, his past. He used to cross himself beside every cross that stood on the highway. At each chapel he would bow and say a prayer. He went to Church every Sunday. He confessed to the priest and praised his G-d. Suddenly he burst out loudly. "There is no G-d!", went to the center of the building and shouted: "Lies! Jesus was not born to take our sins. He was tortured and G-d did not ask him, like they don't ask us whether we suffer or not. Gentlemen, brother eats brother here. The butchery that you have seen is nothing to what is being prepared for us. After the Jews it will be our turn." He spoke about what he had managed to see during the conquest of the Germans. He spoke with emotion and foresaw a dark future. While he has talking the noise ceased and he became quiet. Was a prophet speaking? Actually, they thought that he was right. It did not matter if there was a G-d or not. We ourselves are to blame. The whole of humanity is to blame. We ourselves caused the bloodbath. Here there was no natural disaster. Mountains did not collapse in an earthquake, cities did not collapse on their populations. The hand of man has caused this. So the people spoke among themselves. After a short time someone in the crowd came to himself and spoke to the Pole with a Ukranian accent: "It is not true that G-d exists

but he has left you, the Poles and the Jews." Vasiel said: "The Pole is right, we have no G-d any more and no help in our sorrow." The old Pole still walked up and down. He warned of the trouble to come, of the horror that would still overtake us. He was angry at the lack of unity amongst us and the lack of help from all sides.

This spread pessimism among us but his ideas penetrated and people began thinking. It was the cry of a farmer of 30 who had been taken by force together with other farmers by the Germans a year ago. It had happened on a Sunday when they were coming out of the Church. Since then he had not seen his farm or his family. They had dragged him from estate to estate and exploited him by making him work hard and now forcing him with the digging. He began to doubt as a Christian. His sufferings had reached its maximum. He was alone, deserted by all, fallen into the claws of man. The Pole lay down on the straw not far from me and did not talk again. Four hours a day was given for rest and sleep. The suffering was great, cold and hunger and stomach pains, and above all weariness plagued us all. If any had gone on his knees to pray at the start of captivity he did not do so now. If one of the CatholicsPoles prayed quietly he was stopped by the whiplash. This time I also dreamt and thought less about my family. I was in a whirlpool of thousands of grey colourless slaves repressed and helpless. In spite of the continual worry of getting the slice of bread and the little boiled water, ~~the people~~ used to fight and argue during their four hours of rest. Most of them expected the Soviets to come and it was clear that every minute that they were late in coming more people were liable to lose their lives.

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FRENCHMEN AND ITALIANS

The years '43 and '44 were years of stress and tension for the Germans at the front and in occupied countries and within their own country there was great psychological tension. Doubts began to be felt among the nation regarding final victory, but the belief in their Fuhrer still upheld them. One of the occupied nations, France, did not give them any peace. It continued unceasingly with its underground partisan actions. So if once the German soldier had found a pleasant place for leave in Paris, France now was no longer such a place for them. The special rights that Petain had gotten for the French were curtailed. The Red Cross visited them less and less. In short, the position of the French became the same as those of the slavs. If the French reminded the Germans that they had fought side by side against the Russians, the Germans were not impressed and if he boasted in any way he was made to feel the whiplash. All they could do was keep quiet in spite of the fact that the French were mobilized into an auxiliary army for the Germans in the rear such as in the T.O.T. organisation and even in battle units. At the start even here at the trenches the French preserved their special status. They were kept together and guarded their unity. They were more individualistic than the Slavs who were there in greater numbers. In the end the differences in culture were wiped out as well as their different ways and customs of living. One thing united everybody. The common enemy - the German, and the German related to everybody in the same way.

One night in the later hours after we had already lain down to sleep, they brought in a group of soldiers without arms, or coats on their shivering bodies. They only wore rain cloaks and had kitbags on their backs. They wore boatshaped hats. One could see black shining eyes. They spoke badly in an ununderstandable language. They looked in every corner and moved from

everyone in turn three words that had the same meaning: Chleba (Russian) Brot (German Pani (Italian) - bread. They kept repeating the words. They dragged out everything they could from those lying down. In an amazing manner they dragged out pieces of clothing from under the heads of those sleeping. they took every piece of clothing they could lay their hands on. Everyone began to protest and complain. The captives got to their feet and pushed them back forcibly. They did not start a fight, they gave in and kept crying; Pani, chleva, brot! These were Italians. They had been starved to madness. It was like a swarm of locusts on a barren piece of ground. They were without self control. They did not know what was allowed or not allowed and ate orange peels which the captives had thrown away. When they were thrown out they did not resist but came back inside. They were suffering from the same dangerous hunger madness that I once had. In the end they were pushed outside but the Germans pushed them back. They suffered from dysentry and soiled the place they were on - they cursed in Russian and German. They attacked people, scratched their faces and shouted: "Food!" I don't think they showed fascist behaviour by this. Perhaps the years they were in the army caused this criminal behaviour and made them lost their values but chiefly the cruel hunger that hurts the weak spirit and distorts every human feeling made them act like this. It hurts the weak spirit and distorts every human feeling. I too, once had experienced this and seen it with others. Our section decided to organise and eject them forcibly.

It was hard to know what the Germans wanted when they put the hungered people with us. Perhaps they thought we would eat each other. Then they would bring in the dogs and finally shoot us as they done a short time before with the others. The tension between the two sections was great but we did not come to the fighting stage. The Italians did not want to become involved and we did not want to battle with them. We knew what

would ensue and decided to control ourselves. In the end we gave them a little ofoour ration to quieten them. The night of fear passed. At dawn we were taken out on parade. On the horizon we saw the first faint light of dawn. With it the shadow of death disappeared. I began to distinguish the Italians in the darkness. They were standing together with bent heads quiet and depressed. They were shivering like a frightened flock of sheep. Their shepherd be boastful. Duce had sent them on a way which led to perdition and had handed them over to the "tender mercies of their friends". After the Italians had suffered defeat at the front at Stalingrad in 1942, they were pushed back to the river Don and those remaining began to flee.

They were caught and kept in capcitivy by the Germans and sent to different sites of work. So they came to the trenches and were ground down to the dust, losing their humanity, drawling to everyone with open mouths and tongues hanging out. They were prepared to eat not only bread but every piece of dirt that came to hand.

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THE GYPSIES

We all suffered under the wardens who were appointed over us. Their role became more important as time went on. They listened to the conversation of the diggers and betrayed them to the Germans. As a result captives and forced labourers were taken away and did not return again. Suddenly these "supervisors" were commanded to take spades and start digging. If they resisted and began to talk about the past, how they killed Jews and partisans they got some of their own medicine back. The commander of the section was an SS man, handsome and blue eyed with white gloves, riding a shiny well brushed horse (If crossed or angered in any way he would jump from his horse and beat the offender over the head with the butt of his gun. It was no secret to many in that section that he was a sexual deviate and had relations with his horse.) His face would grow red, the muscles would stiffen and swell and in the end he would shoot the man. He would jump back and forth over the trenches, his horse obeying him instantly till he came to a spot from where he would watch the digging with his field glasses.

One evening they brought in about thirty men between the ages of eighteen to thirty. They stood at the entrance of the stables hesitating to enter such a dirty place. They were beautifully dressed, in suits, white shirts with ties and summer or autumn coats over their arms. Their hair was brushed down smooth with brilliantine according to the fashion of the Fuhrer. They carried little suitcases and smoked cigarillos. They were smiling and spoke a pure German that sounded as if it was their mother tongue. They remarked with pride that they had been sent to do essential war work:- to supervise the digging of the trenches. They were German citizens. After searching questions on the past of the captives (who wanted to know the truth because they aroused suspicion), they ad-

mitted that they were registered as gypsies. They had been mobilized into the army but they performed all the important tasks in all the places they were most needed for the war effort. They spoke of new German victories and Russian defeats and also the fateful end of the Jews. All this boastfully and with confidence. They spoke as if they were equal partners with the Germans.

The fact that they were gypsies spread quickly amongst the people. Indeed I was amazed to see gypsies in European dress speaking so confidently. What I remembered of these people was that during the summertime groups of wandering gypsies used to come to our area of North East Poland with caravans of covered wagons to which one or two horses were harnessed. Gypsies of all ages were in the wagons and behind they tied the young horses, that they had bought or exchanged at markets. Foals walked between the legs of the harnessed horses and from time to time they suckled from the udders of the mares. Dogs ran after the wagons. Women, covered with beads and little dark-eyed children peeped out from the wagon. The women wore large round rings in their ears. Curly headed babies sucked from their full breasts. One could hear the clucking of fowls and the grunting of piglets. The men with jet black hair, most of them with pock-marked faces from the pox and wide pants that were tucked into their high boots had whips in their hands and were driving the horses on. On the way they looked into every corner with their flashing black eyes watching with confidence, and offered to exchange horses or to buy or sell other things. They grabbed what they could. If one chased them from the front door, they would come in from the back door, or through an open window and when they were caught they knew how to talk themselves out of a difficult situation. Vasiel, who lay quiet and indifferent the whole time, said in wonder: "I would never have said that these were gypsies. See how they have Germanised them-

selves. Fools! To be proud of the German Motherland! One should not believe what they are saying." "One should be more careful of them than of the Vlasovites," added Emilian. Different remarks were heard from all sides, such as: "The Germans have brought new masters to rule over us"; "they will be worse than the Germans, flatterers from birth"; "shrewd thieves, watch your things", someone said in Ukranian: "I thought that the Germans had killed them long ago together with the Jews. Know this, a gypsy is like a cat. Throw him from the roof and he will fall on his feet." In short, everyone thought that this was a new trouble for us but the Pole, the atheist, who had had the outburst denying G-d said: "Friends, you are wrong, the fate of the gypsies is like the fate of the Jews."

The next day the gypsies began their work enthusiastically. They demonstrated their faithfulness and said of themselves: "We like all the other Germans, are making the utmost effort to achieve victory." They were appointed as supervisors and surveyors. They came to all places in their fine clean and ironed clothes (which were the only ones they had). They were included in the discussions of the Germans regarding the next day's plans. They were the chosen and their rations were better than the others. This, however, only lasted two weeks. Then the signal was given. Suddenly the SS attacked them, hitting and cursing them. "You lazy people, eating German bread for nothing. You are spies and G-d help the Reich." The gypsies were taken aback but grabbed a stick or a spade and to prove their loyalty began digging more energetically (they knew how to work). From the start of the Hitler regime they were forbidden to wander about. They were placed in workshops and factories. But the SS paid no attention to their work. They hit them over the head and called them Jews. From that moment the guards completely changed towards them. They began to curse them and kick them as if they had never known them before. Within a week their clothes were ragged, torn and dirty. They were

neglected, their beards began to grow and they became like-infested like everybody else. They were bent over on their spades. They had no strength. At first the captives tried to bully and provoke them because they had been so superior at first, but they soon became brothers in sorrow. They found more in common with the captives than with the ex-Vlasovites. The gypsies stopped complaining about being discriminated against and became very suspicious of the Germans. They also did not talk much to the captives. They learned to be careful and hide their pain and anger deep in their hearts. They were beaten more than the captives but they swallowed the humiliation and kept quiet. It was a shock for them. Before they left Konigsberg they had been promised so much. "With your devoted work you will be the finest workers in the rear." So they had been lied to. It was the same system they had used against the Jews. They had told them to take one ironed suit with them. "Your job will be to supervise the lazy Poles and Russians". This was the first time that the gypsies of Prussia felt what it was like to be without a homeland, rejected on all sides with nowhere to turn. Once they had been free people who had roamed at will and whose horizons were limitless. They had broad grazing fields and had traversed wide roads living an exciting life; loving passionately under the broad sky in which the stars burned brightly at nights. They sat round burning campfires, a passionate race whose instincts and urges were alive and strong. The dancers spun wildly round the fire and their dancing continued far into the night. In this way the wandering tribe lived without a fixed motherland to guard her childrens rights. For many generations they continued this way of life and life was good to them. They did not want anything different. Now as the stars winked down at them, hidden memories from their childhood came to them. Stories their fathers and grandfathers had told them from their lives in the caravans and tents and the longing cried out within them.

Pushkin said:

".....and happiness is not to be found
among you/
sons of the poor of the earth/
dwellers of broken tents, you live a hard life/
you live with imaginary ideas/
and your dreams make you wander
in your rocking carts/
the plains don't save you from poverty/
in all places you find suffering/
andyyou can't escape your fate."

(Free translation from Pushkin)

After a months cruel humiliation from the Germans they were woken in the middle of the night and told: Get dressed quickly, you are to be sent to the Polish Government. At once the rumour went round particularly from those Poles who had recently been brought from Poland as forced labourers that they would be taken to the extermination camp of Maidanek near Lublin. I knew and everyone else knew that Poland was used as a common graveyard for millions; Jews, Gypsies, Russian prisoners of war and other European people. We were all of the opinion that if they did not take us to the place to which they had transported the Gypsies, they would shoot us down with machine gune and cover us with the same clay we had dug out.

Now there were no preferred rights. In the eyes of the Germans the Frenchman was as dung; the Italians had failed. Instead of fighting they had run away from the Southern Russian Front and had been the cause of the Germans losing the battle. There was no dppending on the Italians. The hungry Italian was busy with himself only, looking for a crumb of bread, hunting for sustenance like a baby looking for the nipple of its mother's breast. He was looking for warmth and sunshine and looking for the skies of his motherland, full of light. In the night when we were imprisoned in the stone stables of the estate, the earth shook and trembled from artillery fire, somewhere across the borders of Germany and in the late hours of the night the bombardment of the city of Konigsberg began. Every bomb made the air vibrate and lit up the horizon. Fire flashed out of the skies. The

deeply reddened skies of Eastern Prussia, that changed to a rainbow of colours, orange, blue and wiolet, that slowly faded away with the first light of morning. Then Prussia and her farms returned to her forced peacefulness. Then the guards again pressed us with forced anger and vengeance.

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THE UNBELIEVER CONFESSES AND REVEALS

Two opponents unequal in their strength, but the two sides are fearful of their future. The first is armed of his life. He cruelly gives commands to preserve his own life: "The defence line must be made with all the means at our disposal. The Russian must not pass. Prussia will be a German Stalingrad and will not give in." Against this stands a passive camp: Forced labourers, hungry people, who fear the oncoming angry storm who carries with it not only destruction for the armed German, but also for them. They know that the storm of death can touch them too. So we all sat and thought. My friends and I as well. "Listen fellow", said Vasiel to his rebellious neighbour who had burst out against G-d and believers previously. "Haven't we suffered enough? Don't we deserve to gain our expected freedom?"

"Know", said the man, "we are not worthy of remaining alive. Old chap, we are rif-raff. We cover our faces by making the sign of the cross. We murmer prayers and we think we are the holy tortured ones. The truth is that we are helpless. We have no will and fear to live, we love ourselves. We are shirkers and evaders. We flow along passively forced into ugly slavery. We have no character, national honour or faithfulness to family. In order to save our skin we can leave our nearest and dearest in tears, our old parents, our wives and children. The main thing is that we mustn't suffer and come out alive.! He stopped for a minute and continued in a voice trembling with emotion and pain. "Friend, I confess to you, as once I confessed to the priest. It happened about a year ago when my wife and my children and I went to Church on Sunday. When we came out of the Church at the end of the prayers the Germans had prepared for us. Suddenly we were surrounded by them. They ted the men from the women and children - my wife broke free to me. A German beat her up and she fell on the ground wept bitterly. My children ran to her crying bitterly.

I stood stunned and was deeply shocked. I did not run to my family. I was afraid of the bayonets threatening me. I did not risk myself even when they took us, 50 men, to the lorries, and I would have turned to one side and vanished into the field.

I lacked the courage to try. The fear of the German bullet froze my blood." He spoke slowly and haltingly. He sighed and added: "So I abandoned my family and farm because of self love. We have lived for three years under the German conquest as territories annexed to Germany. During all that time I made no moral accounting." Again he stopped for a few minutes. He spoke haltingly. Inner conflict blacked the flow of his speech. Now he continued quietly: "We wanted the salt fish from the shop, the eiderdowns and tableclothes from the Jews as if we did not have enough of our own. All those belonged to our neighbours, the Yankelles and Abrahamas who were thrown out of their houses and concentrated in the ghetto. We, their friends from childhood looted them without any qualms of conscience and divided the loot among the residents of the village - it was the same when the soldiers divided up Jesus's things. After this I confessed what I had done to the priest. The priest said "pray and be comforted. G-d is punishing Judas the traitor!So the conquerors of our land will be punished and he himself murmered the text: Forgive them for they know not what they do. When they took the Jews out of the ghetto they brought them to the pits. There they shot them. Then I and other parishioners ran to look for loot. When I saw what was happening there I took nothing. I came back stunned to my home and family."

"Fellows", a friend interrupted, "I was one of those who were forced to cover them with earth. Oh, G-d! Two days later the smell of blood and rotting corpses spread over the villages.

ht, farmers saw wounded Jews covered with blood looking

ding places in the haystacks and storehouses. There were

o spread rumours of distorted figures moaning among the

There were scoundrels who ran after them with axes;

hit them over the heads and then killed them. The earth did not rest, and will not rest," The unbeliever said, "When I told the priest what was being done to the Jews he became afraid. He collected his congregants, secretly, and said in a trembling voice: "Lucifer is going mad. Pray for us, ask for mercy for ourselves and ask for mercy for the unbelievers (Jews)." For a long time he was quiet; sighed and then said: "Colleagues, we have no right to life". Someone spoke out in pure Polish: "Now that the Jews are being exterminated you are sorry. Before the war you wanted Poland 'Judenrein', and you got it." One could not be sure if he meant it as a reprimand or an expression of disgust. I did not go into his true meaning. In any case the captives did not react to his words. A dumb dispair settled on everyone. Again one heard echoes of explosions from the direction of Konigsberg that re-echoed again and again in the late hours of the night. Outside there was the sound of footsteps running and someone shouted "Halt!". Bullets cut into the darkness of the night; ricochetted on the water of the lake or hit those running away. Another series of bullets fired to frighten were fired over the thick trees. After that there was quiet Everything was tense and controlled. The night, the dark horizon, the captives and the deserted estate.

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KONIGSBERG BOMBED - CHAOS AND LOOTING

After months of digging, suddenly hundredsof people among them my two friends, and myself, were taken in a closed cattle truck to build fortifications in North Konigsberg. We were warned not to damage the truck. Those who did would be shot on the spot. We were terribly overcrowded. We stank and choked from the stink and insufficient air. Instead of eating we smoked tobacco leaves that we had picked in the deserted gardens of the estate. The close air and stink of vomit forced us to make holes in the floor and walls of the truck. Fresh air blew in and people breathed a little more easily. I looked out through the holes. I again watched the scenery of North Prussia passing by. It was the same North Prussia I hadseen four years ago. Scenes of lakes surrounded by ancient trees. Cows in pasture and many people in civilian dress and captives under the supervision of armed guards. They were bent over doing their work in the fields. The train travelled along very slowly. Near the big stations other trains rushed northwards. One could see thebandaged, and wounded in trains travelling in the opposite direction. Camouflaged soldiers and tanks and guns were being sent endlessly southwards. In the end our train stopped for a long time in the open field which enabled us to enjoy the peace and quiet of the surroundings. There was no sigh of destruction or desertion, everything was in its place. Red tiles completely untouched, covered the roofs. There were farms in which pigs were standing and drooling in the yards. They were running from the whistles of the engine. The only thing that could be heard was the sound of a young shepherd.

"Everything passes, everything changes,
After December May will soon come again
Everything passes, everything changes,
When two lovers remain faithful.

The winter changes into spring
The spring changes to summer
and the summer to autumn
So it was determined.
But what is expected does not come."

I am living in the meanwhile but my expectations are frozen under layers of snow. In the autumn they rotted under the leaves and the spring and summer only brought me bitter disappointment. The same young German shepherd who was expecting the glory of heroes crosses would soon be drawn into the maelstrom of war that cuts down the charm and modesty, together with bravery and strength. He will kill the dawn of his youth on the battlefields.

After a shaky journey of 24 hours we reached Konigsberg in the evening. The train stopped far from the central station. They opened the trucks and German railway workers gave us water which invigorated us. The sun began to set in the Baltic Sea. It set red into the sea. As masses of clouds moved closer the sun seemed to have a halo and rays of light burst through the transparent clouds. Giant images that expressed fatherliness, full of beauty and wonder, or one image met the other and stretched forth arms and embraced, and I felt myself amongst them in a place of light and goodness. How good it is to sink into the images of the heavens. To weave an imaginative reality cut off from the depressing and tiring earth. To join with them in the unity and brotherhood. A world of rainbows and clouds.

Suddenly we heard the thunder of an explosion and then the sound of disorganised shooting and frightened shouts from the city. The doors again closed. We began to bang on the doors and walls. One of the guards opened the doors and vanished in fear. The rest of the guards who had guarded us also disappeared as well. It appeared that hundreds of strangers were shut up in the wagons. Most of them now rushed in the direction of the city that was gripped in a huge fire, burning her old walls, her Gothic Churches that were hundreds of years old. Vasiel and I also went towards the lanes leading into the city. At the same time the inhabitants were in a mass flight out of the city, in the opposite direction.

Women and children carrying parcels. There was noise and

confusion. The aeroplanes lit up the burning city. Ignition bombs fell on the roofs of the houses and in the streets. They shattered and ignited everything they touched. The Germans jumped from the top floors of the buildings with burning clothes. Mad with fear, and enveloped in flames they jumped into the icy river Prugel. For about 2 hours the aeroplanes rained down ignition bombs. The aeroplanes came in groups and dropped their loads. Shops and food stores were broken open. The captives and forced labourers grabbed loaves of bread and sausages and filled their pockets with food, and cigarettes. Again the planes flew over adding more incendiary fire. They did not let the population rest. The German anti-aircraft was in action, but missed the planes. The planes threw down dummy paratroopers and the anti-aircraft fired at them. In the end even the anti-aircraft was silenced and the Russian planes had a free hand. There was no sign of order in the streets. Everything was in confusion. On the one hand the women and children wailed and ran around in a panic while the men of the super and disciplined race looted the shops, fighting pitched battles with the hungry and captives and forced labourers. In the end both sides got bread and pork. The captives retreated to the trains; thousands of captives and forced labourers disappeared to the places they were stationed at. When the raid ended and the bombing stopped, police suddenly appeared on the streets, party people and Hitler youth began to restore order. They found Germand with loot and within hours had sentenced them to death and shot them at once. After we had sat a long time in the wagons, the guards appeared, hit us with their sticks and searched our pockets. The captives, realising what was happening, emptied their bags. My two friends and I at least had eaten to our fill for one day. Some of the captives did not return. Apparently they must have been shot on the spot.

The guards appeared giving the impression of being heroes. They pushed the captives into the trucks and shouted "Verflucht!

You thought the Russians had come, did you! Our pilots and anti-aircraft brought them down. Only a few escaped"(Again they tried to give us false information but this time we had been witnesses.) Tired but satisfied we crowded on to the floor of the trucks and disappointment began to gnaw at us again. Again the train shook us. From the cracks in the side of the truck we saw the morning light. After an hour we saw men, women and children working as if nothing had happened to them. We were closed in for two days. We did not see Germans. At times bullets whistled past the openings. We had a sense of being cut off from the world without ground under our feet, all the while being shaken from side to side. I felt as if I was in the power of the black sooty locomotive which threatened us with its long and short hoots. I felt its omnipotent strength and followed it. In the two days my friends and I had learned to know when every turn was coming, every slowing down, every ascent and descent. I got to know the changes from the rythm, the creaking of the springs and wheels. The running locomotive pulled them with mighty strength. The fate of the people being in its power. Only he knew where he was taking us and what fate awaited us. Again the speed slowed down to a crawl. Somebody spread the rumour that we were surrounded by the Russians and the train was trying to evade and escape from them. Suddenly the train began to pick up speed and cover large areas of straight plain. Then it started slowing down until it stopped with a loud creaking grating sound. The locks and barrels opened noisily and we were ordered out of the trucks with a hoarse: "Raus! Raus!"

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GHOST VILLAGE - VILKOWISHKY

We found ourselves on a high road between lakes, under strict supervision of armed guards. We were divided into groups and under the pressure of the guards dug ditches in Lithuanian territory about 20 kilometers from the German border. The defence line of the anti-tank ditches was to run next to the town of Volkowishky.

At the time of the digging we found a common grave with disintegrating crumbling corpses - perhaps Jewish? Perhaps Russian? The grave was recovered and the line was diverted to another place. During the digging my friends and I had to cross the roads of the village, a number of times. It could be seen that it was a typical Jewish Lithuanian village.

It was different in style from a village in Congress Poland. It was similar to the villages of North Poland and Bylorussia. The foundations of the buildings had already sunken. The shelters were closed, the wooden pavements torn up. Weeds were growing between the sharp cobbled stones of the roads. Weeds and wild plants choked the spaces between the houses. Among the weeds around the houses the faded pages of Jewish prayer books were scattered about sometimes fluttering in a gust of wind. It was as if the wind blowing them back and forth were giving them life. The diggers used them to roll their cigarettes. I saw very few Lithuanians in the area of the town. There was very little life in the Christian houses, but the Jewish town was silent, completely dead, without a sign of life. Neither man nor animal lived. My friend murmered: "The Jews of the town were exterminated." I kept quiet. I looked at the houses and streets. The sunken houses told their story. The doors and windows were dumb. The dumb cry that told of indescribable deeds and horrors! (Oh! what the people could have told me about! Horrors that would have made one's hair stand on end!) The houses stood deserted and

isolated dreamy in their state of mourning. The wind moaned softly through the houses as if bewailing their former owners. (I had seen other scenes, like this, on the Lithuanian Prussian border.) For whom were the houses waiting? For their Jewish tenants. Even if the enemy were defeated and freedom came, these people would never return. There would never be any Jewish life there ever again. Would anyone remember the rich varied life that had been lived here? Here children had been born, and old people had lived out their lives to a good old age. The walls had borne witness to what had gone on within. The walls had participated in their joys and sorrows and pain. A rich cultural life, a hearty simple way of living had been part and parcel of the little town. There had been "chedorim" for the younger children, schools for the older ones. Rabbis had guided them in their Jewish way of life. Young men whose high ideals and hopes had beckoned to them. It was from villages like these that Mapu drew his inspiration. From the green hills, valleys and plan of Lithuania, Mapu had seen the hills of Judea and Shomron. From there their flocks descended. From this background the writer wove the rich Biblical background. Young people reading his books dreamed of and longed for Zion. Here it was in pastoral Lithuania that Mitzkevitch the writer, sensitive soul, mourned the fate of the enslaved Poland and with love and emotion described the life and adventures of Yankel the Cymbalist who wandered about this world making music at weddings. But now the strings were broken, the song grown silent, and the idyllic pastoral life was shattered. When the Catholic Lithuanians had attacked the helpless Jews with the very same axes that had been honed and sharpened by the Jewish blacksmiths, they had smashed in the bearded side-curled heads with the same implements that had been made by them. They had knocked down the good hearted mothers, raped and slaughtered them with sticked scythes. Blood had flowed on the green downs of the Lithuanian villages. The curious shepherd had left his flock of geese for a moment and ran to watch the slaughter. All this had taken place in the clear midday light in the light of

the same sun that had warmed the Jew and Christian alike for all the hundreds of years.

The sun continued to warm the earth and the weeds had managed within a short time to grow and wipe out the signs of the Jew who had once been.

Shalom to you, houses and doors and shutters, to you, the weeds that have covered up the grizzly deeds.

" ..... and you, what are you
doing here, son of man?
Rise and flee to the desert
and take your load of sorrow
with you."

(From : The Towns of Murder, by Bialik)

I did not flee. I could not break the ring of bayonets and knives that closed me in. I carried the burden of slavery together with the others and especially with my good friends, my brothers, with whom I shared a common fate. The load of sorrow and the memory of the Jews of Lithuania remained deep within my soul. It was undimmed, and not one drop of it spilled over from the cup of memory. It remained deep within me, within me ....

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AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE FROM A PLACE LEAST EXPECTED

I expected everything. An explosion could have knocked all three of us out. My two friends had the same foreboding. However, the fact that they would take Emilian away from us, we never expected nor foresaw. Neither Vasiel nor I. Once during the digging of the trenches the guards called for a parade. They wrote down the names of the people they fancied and declared : "All those registered, the strong and the tall, move forward five paces." None of us was on the list. Quickly an SS cavalryman intercepted and without worrying about the list threw out the people he didn't want. We did not understand immediately what was happening here. After a few minutes we realised that Emilian was not with us and was standing with those who were picked out. We ran after him and asked the guards to let him go as he was a relative. Emilian, seeing us, ran towards us. I used my knowledge of Plattdeutch and begged them to let him stay, but in vain. The Germans threw us out and separated us for ever. There were different explanations. There were those who said they were using the taller, stronger ones for harder work, others said they were being done away with because the Germans were afraid the bigger, stronger men would turn against them at a time of crisis. (Apparently things like that had happened.)

The disappearance of Emilian desolated and shocked us. We felt as if we had been orphaned. He had been a protective wall for us. He had been realistic about how to live in conditions like these. He [illegible] only after he had considered all the details [illegible] would be act. That was the way he got us all food. He was honest and fair when dividing food. He was free of prejudice and optimistic in nature. He claimed: "Mother Russia will not be defeated (even if Mother Russia had treated

him like a step-child). She won't betray us in spite of the failures of Stalin, Molotov and the Vlasov trators. Russia will be victorious and save all the slaves."

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VOITEK AND THE FLIGHT

Every third day we were placed a few kilometers forward. The defence line was dug on both sides of the German and Lithuanian border. Pasture land, potato fields and vegetable fields were destroyed and we were fed from the vegetables that came on to our spades. When we finished work at nine at night, we were made to return to our sleeping quarters at a brisk pace. They were in a deserted village which was surrounded by soldiers. As usual the sound of machine gun batteries firing broke the silence.

There were sounds of Germans shouting and the wailing of wounded captives who tried to escape and did not manage it. I became weaker and weaker and suffered from the cold. At night there were unscrupulous scoundrels who tried to take away things from the weaker ones. They took a sweater from me that had warmed me for months. I had got it as a present from a group of Polish women who had been forced labourers, who had knitted for the Polish captives - secretly of course. So now I remained with my worn out wooden clogs and a torn and broken jacket and trousers. As far as I estimated we were about 200 kilometers from the front. The Germans began to vacate their inhabitants about five kilometers from the border and the roads were crowded with people moving along, many of them pushing handcarts. There were also horse-drawn carts loaded with kitchen utensils, food and clothing, smoked pork and loaves of bread, cows and calves were tied to the carts to which horses were harnessed or even 4. The farmers smoking cigars sat in the carts and boys and girls who had not yet reached mobilization age wither walked beside the cart or rode in it. Everything streamed westwards into Prussia. Again I saw the flight of people I had seen in 1939 but this time it was the Germans who were moving, but under less pressure and fear and with far more orderliness.

Even when Emilian had been with us we had played with the idea of flight. The question had been, where to? Eastward to Lithuania or Poland? Both were beyond the front. Westward? We could have gone straight into the hands of the Germans. We always postponed but did not give up the idea. From the time I had first been in captivity I dreamed of flight whenever life became difficult, my desire to run away increased. At that time a Pole named Viotek began to be friendly with us. He had become a captive in 1939 and had been a reserve soldier; been dragged to 4 different camps, had worked for farmers and in workshops in the city, had run away and been caught; had been punished and come out alive and well. Now he was enslaved, digging trenches under the most difficult conditions and in spite of everything, I never saw him apathetic. He had learned to take kicks and blows and was never afraid of the yelling of the Germans. In comparison to us he was warmly dressed but suffered hunger the way we did. He always kept some dry food in his bag to chew and he always had something to smoke. Even though he had been years in captivity he hadn't learnt much German. He spoke a mixture of Polish Village slang and the slang of the underworld. My mate and I suspected him and were very careful of him. Our first impression of him was that he was reckless but had common sense (If one had taken him to the bottom of the sea he would have managed there too.) In spite of his slight stutter he knew what to say and could suit himself to any company, but he did not make friends or trust everybody. He looked for honest or upright friends. Voitek was easy going. I never saw him use force to get his rations but he always got it and even more. He always came out well from every complicated situation he got into. He never got involved in fist fights but he always had something to say about them. What attracted him to us, the depressed weak ones who were tired of everything, is hard to say. The truth of the matter was that we were drawn to him as well in spite of his recklessness. We got to know that he was goodhearted and understanding and prepared to divide his bread equally with his friends. We were convinced that

our first impression had been mistaken so we came closer to him and he became one of us. In spite of the difference of mentality between Eastern and Western Poland, we adjusted ourselves to each other. His livliness cheered us up with his folk expressions and juicy curses. He had a sharp eye and knew how to put on an innocent face, but he was clever and shrewd. He often made me forget my troubles. I wanted to get to know him better even better, to get to know his inner thoughts but with time this came of its own. Our friendship grew because of our common desire to understand and help each other.

Viotek was full of plans of escape and encouraged us in this way of thinking. "If we don't get to Poland, our Motherland," he said, "we won't be able to take this sort of life much longer." We were convinced that he was right. In the end Vasiel and I got to know the way the Prussians lived and the Plattdeutch that was spoken in the villages. We decided to save bread from our rations and put it in our bags. We looked for other sources of food for the way. At the same time we dug ditches near the homes of the Germans. Whenever the guards sat down to rest we ran to the German houses and asked for food. We would get slices of bread which we hid in our bags. I would start a conversation with them;there were those who saw the Russians as being very strong and awaited their coming very calmly. They were disappointed with their Wehrmacht. Others shut the door in our faces and as quid pro quo we would start fires in their haystacks. Viotek in cases like this would be the chief executor. When we had filled our bags sufficiently we waited for the opportunity to run away. Then he taught us how to jump from a moving railway carriage. One always jumped in the direction it was travelling. One jumped when the train was slowing down; one jumped as far from the wheels as possible. "Before the war I had jumped many trains in the Warsaw Russian line," he said, "and it always came off well. So nothing will happen to you, keep to the rules."

We were excited at the thought of the change to come in our lives and the risk we were taking - but we were also afraid.

After having completed kilometers of digging trenches came the command to move. Hundreds of captives including ourselves were taken to the trucks. This time we travelled in civilian carriages, the upholstery of which was torn and worn from taking soldiers to the front and bringing back wounded. The carriage was stinking and filthy. The guards sat at their ease in the places near the door and one was armed. The atmosphere was calm. I asked our guard to open the door a little to get fresh air and he agreed. It apparently did not enter his mind that anyone would want to escape in weather like that and in such darkness. The three of us found places near the open door. Viotek again whispered "One Jumps in the direction the train is travelling."

It was dark and there was a thick mist. Long before the bridge the train began to slow down to a crawl. The wheels knocked less frequently, the locomotive whistled intermittently and a cold northwind deafened our hearing. I was completely absorbed in the action of the present moment. I did not think at all, I dulled my nerves. I decided to jump even at the risk of being dragged under the wheels. I was second and gripped Vasiel's hand. We both trembled. I heard Viotek's quiet whispering voice. "Take notice", and then he was not there. He was swallowed into the darkness. For a minute I lost my balance, my breath stopped - and I flew forward into the wind and got a hard bang. Vashka was behind me. I felt myself sinking in the mud till the waist. A few minutes later I heard bullets whistling overhead into the forest and the lake. The train crossed the bridge and accelerated. At a distance of about twenty meters of each other we began to crawl forward to the other side of the woods. We met and rested a little. Then we turned southwest, the direction in which Poland lay (so Viotek directed us and we relied on him). After a night of wandering

around we found ourselves trapped between lakes and folliage which we could not get out of. We were a little disappointed but were not sorry for what had happened. We accepted the fact. We had dry bread which we gnawed at. For two days rain fell intermittently. The water of the lake streamed over the roots at the sides. The lake was stormy. From the distance one could hear the rattling of trains and the patter of the pouring rain. We found a little shelter under some bushes. It seemed as if no man had ever set foot there. The rain began to stream down from the higher places round the lake. We remained there crouching for two days and gnawed at the hard bread that had begun to soften a little in the damp. When the rain stopped clouds of mist moved over the trees and over the surface of the lake and hovered there and did not roll away.

I felt as if a new chapter had begun in our lives. The fact that days passed and we were free of pressure and oppression of all forms of persecution, made the rains, the cold, and the damp bearable.

Our problem was how to break through the encircling ring of the lakes. The worst was that we did not know where we were.

"Fellows", said Viotek after a long silence, "we are among the lakes that make it difficult for us to know the country. In spite of everything, I hope to try and find a way back to Poland when the mists recede. Before the way I had occasion to wander in Prussia and I know the climate (This was the first time he had told us anything about his past.)" "Did you work there?" I asked. "I thought of doing that but I returned. Understand, [illegible] this is a sad and depressing land and there is slavery in the villages and the cities. I returned to my homeland of light and freedom." "Viotek," tell the truth, what did you do before the War?" "DId you ever work?" Vasiel asked with a note of irony and doubt in his voice. "I had no patience to work, except for the cursed days in captivity, I never worked. From my youth my way of life has been adventurous. I had money, I enjoyed myself. I had as many

girls as I wanted and plenty of drink. I was a member of a special type of society. Understand, there were times when I was wanted by the Police. I spent some time behind bars. All in all I had no reason to complain. Those were good days in Poland. I was as free as a bird and I enjoyed my life."

Slowly the fog banks piled up on one another and slipped across the water and disappeared. The lake returned to its former condition. The sky cleared a little but still remained cloudy. We decided to get food. From our experience of living in Prussia we knew that farmers don't lock up at nights. Neither their kitchens nor their fowl runs. They supposed that there were no thieves around. Men having been mobilized or strangers being held in captivity as prisoners of war. One morning we left our hiding places and began to explore. We reached the edge of the forest and from there we saw the farms in the distance. At night we went exploring round the farm. We had picked for our operations. We made sure there was no dog and servants were all deeply asleep. Viotek gave us the sign to be ready. He broke into the chicken run, Vashka and I behind him. As the terrified hens flapped their wings, feathers and dust flew in the air, while the clucking of the hens was noise enough to raise the dead. In all this uproar we collected eggs and ran away from the place. The uproar of the hens died down. The farmer did not think of thieves because foxes and wolves were always looking for prey and would often attack the chicken runs.

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T H E L A K E

That same night we continued walking the entire length of the lake in a north-western direction. Till the morning light we had covered twenty kilometers. In the end we got mixed up in the lagoons and in the end we had to go round them. We did not progress much and found ourselves not far from the place that we had started from. Again we determined our hiding place, a place among thick bushes far from farms, roads and fields. After a few days our supply of food gave out and we began to eat carrots and beets used for animal fodder. After a short rest we began to progress at night to areas more inhabited. I had a small map of Prussia which I had cut out of a newspaper but this time we came across a highroad of asphalt that cut across lakes and lagoons. There was much movement on this road. At night it was the army and in the daytime farmers. We waited a long time to be able to cross this road at night. We looked for a place where there was a gap in the traffic so that we could cross more easily or a way under the bridge through which we could make our way. In the day we lay in the fields, between the high roads. The only signs of life were hares who jumped over us, or partriges who jumped up and flew away at our approach and hid in the ditches. In one of the hours of the night we managed to cross. This was a great achievement. Across the road there were fields, farms and a long deep lagoon of a lake. The beach was forested. The pine-needles and the trees stood heavily laden. The tops of the trees and the roots, being bent over into the water, turning and twisting. It was a prehistoric lake from which the black water rose and again descended. The whirlpool was incessantly turning, bubbles and foam coming up and going down. An archaic mythical lake from which one could imagine monsters emerging. The lake thundered and waterbirds dived from it. Again and again they dived and disappeared. Fish jumped up

and fell back into the waters. We rested beside this lake a number of days. Farmers with French and Polish captives would come to the lake to get trees from the swamps. "We have no option if we must get food. We must take the risk and get bread and sausages," said Viotek. "It will give us food for at least two weeks." Every night we considered another farm but the moment we approached the dogs were aware of us and their barking woke up everyone on the farm. One day Viotek was looking for poison to silence the dogs but could not find any. It appeared that he knew about such things. In the end we came back to our shelter with nothing. We were weak and shaking with cold. On one of the dark misty nights we passed along a village and at most of the houses the dogs chased us. On one small farm we found no dogs. Then Viotek was the expert and the commander. Vasiel, the clumsy heavy member, was put to guard and if he were to find anyone trying to interfere he had tohit him over the head without any hesitation. He did not give the impression that he had the strength to hit a fly when he himself could hardly stand on his own legs.

Viotek opened the kitchen window wide, jumped in and I went in after him. The 8th Commandment did not disturb my conscience. Neither before nor after the deed. The stealing of bread from one who is overfed and living at ease and does not want to listen to those who are crying out for want of bread and are being murdered by his sons and brothers is no sin. The taking of a loaf of bread is infinitesimal as against the general murder taking place then. A land where the murder of the stranger is lawful and is granted the prize of excellence is a land where the Ten Commandments do not hold. We got into the kitchen and felt our way in the darkness. In the end I stuck two loaves in my bag and from there we went through a passage into the pantry, built in the form of a wide chimney, high and sooty. Viotek took out a knife and sliced a huge chunk of meat from the smoked pork and took off a few sausages from their hooks. He pushed all this

into his bag. The operation succeeded. When I jumped from the window the pain I had gotten when I jumped from the train, started up again and I couldn't walk. We sank into the mud and struggled. there for two hours while my friends supported me with their shoulders and I jumped on one leg. We reached our place after midnight. We had not eaten so well for a long time but we suffered from it. We had diarrhoea for two days after that. We remained in the swamp for about a week until my leg got better and we saw a small piece of the moon shining at intervals from between the clouds. In the daytime we heard the depressing sound of ravens. Birds swooped down over the swamp cawing and keening. The last storks of the season and the hawks swooped down catching frogs from the swamp and swallowing them whole. Swamp cranes moved slowly along. Birds hunting the insects scratched industriously in the shallow water. Suddenly they began to fight amongst each other and they all rolled over like a big ball crying with anger. They pecked at each other viciously, spotting the different coloured feathers with blood. These feathers flew up in a great multi-coloured cloud. We heard the shouting of the hunters and faithful dogs shot out of the undergrowth and found the bodies, and brought them to their masters.

The cruel universe sank into silence. The smoke of fire was still hovering in the air. The denizins of the swamp were in a state of fear. It seemed as if the very swamp was holding its breath. Slowly the tension relaxed, again birds flew up in the sky, circled and swooped down and rose again just as quickly, without hesitation. One heard dull cries of distress. Perhaps they were looking for their young who had run away and would no longer seek shelter under their wings.

The sinking swamp in which there were birds and animals of prey cried and moaned. Tensely we watched everything and kept silent, awake to every suspicious sound. I was able to differentiate between the rustling a man made trying to find what he had hunted down, and the rustling of a snake in the grass. One

Could even hear the birds making their way to their nests. My hearing was so sharpened, no sound escaped me. The sound of a young bird beginning to fly and the faint cheep of the chick nearly broken from its shell was carried on the breeze. To be safer we left the swamp and went to the bank beside the lake. We camouflaged the place and ourselves. My knee swelled up and from previous experience I knew I should put on wet clay. This I did and the heat and the swelling went down. Our stomachs also recovered. From the pits we had dug and were hiding in we would see a long distance over the lake. In spite of the heavily laden moist air the smell of the pines in the forest overwhelmed us and went to our heads. The lake remained ancient and primitive, sometimes tempestuous with high waves and sometimes quiet and wrapped in mystery. The waves moaned sadly rising high conquering the lake and then sinking into the depths. Suddenly the sound of birds was heard again, bringing in a gay harmony to the thundering and moaning of the ancient waves. A new cry sadly moaned and wailed and re-echoed in this remote universe. It seemed as if there were a thousand taught strings in the air reverberating the sounds. A new wave of sound arose and spread out. It filled this realm of space. (It reminded me of the organ I had heard in the Church and I wandered if Bach had got his inspiration from a place like this.) There was a symphony of sound and one could discern the single sounds from each other. Were they the sounds of birds flying or the whistling of the wind breaking up and dying away? What remained was the overall moaning: "Ooh Hoo! Ooh Hoo", From the lake the sound of croaking frogs added to the reverberation. Vasiel who had a very vivid imagination broke the silence saying "These are the sounds of the souls who were drowned in the depth of the lake. They weep forever for the sweetness of life that will not come again." Viotek added, "Yes, at the bottom of the lake monsters give birth to demons that are sent to cause trouble amongst people and nations and destroy the world." After a time he added, "I say to you fellows we will still manage to get away from this cursed place and come to our precious Poland. To spring with all its blossoming scents." From the depth

of the forest we heard the echoeing of horses hoofs - it was an estate owner with a big swastika on his arm. He was riding a horse which was neighing. He carried a gun and was patrolling his woods and his land. He had inherited his property from his fathers before him. With a tense face he looked around suspiciously. His arrogant proud face hid his fear. The neighing of the horse called forth shrieks and distorted cries from different birds. What worried us was the patrolling of estate owners and the hunters and their dogs. We only had ropes and Viotek had a hunting knife and a kitchen knife he had stolen from the farmhouse kitchen. Everyday he sharpened them as the need arose. We decided that if we were discovered by a rider or a huntsman we would overcome him. Viotek showed us where Göring's palace was among the lakes. He often visited the place with his followers. They would go hunting and we had to be careful not to be seen by them. They had parties and wild orgies in the palace. Vasiel now told us that the farmer for whom he worked also told him about Goring in great confidence. However, he did not tell him about the naked women. We planned our journey to Poland in great detail and used our stock of eggs and smoked ham which we had taken from the farmer very sparingly. We also got a little food secretly from the French captives who worked in the vicinity. I was in high spirits. Like my friends I had an aim and purpose in life. I felt encouraged by my friends and their affection to me. The fact that the food was limited and the mist brought on the darkness early and the rain would not dampen my spirits. When I remembered my years of slavery, my fearful nightly dreams over the years, I felt how wonderful it was to be free without pressure. When at times the rain stopped and a fresh wind blew and dried our clothes and we saw a little sunlight I felt the joy of living that was to be found in life. I closed my eyes and prayed to the G-d of Goodness, "Fall rain, show your face often sun, and be blessed." The rain fell on my face and I drank the drops with the spirit of hope that was

within me. I wanted to live. A feeling of self love took possession of me. I retreated from the qualms of conscience when I thought of my past and the past of my brethren in their common graves, and of the suffering they had lived through. I knew not what suffering awaited me in the course of my life which would perhaps be short enough. I was sad when I heard the monotonous sound of the cuckoo. I remembered this sound from my childhood. I felt something of the mystery of life in it, as the village people believed it had fore-knowledge of the length of a man's life. I was pleasant to listen to the song of the same cuckoo in the same world. Here and there the cuckoo had misled me regarding expectations of a long and pleasant life. Of the life of a man, of autumn and the falling of the leaves, of the deadening of those leaves, he did not tell me anything. Vasiel, man of the village heard and recognised the sound of the birds from dawn.until late at night. He longed for their song. Every dound had a particular meaning if it was on the farm or in the fields. Their song touched his heart. Many associations stirred his roused soul. The forest and the lake brought back painful memories. He was sensitive and had a deep knowledge of life. He had fiery urges and was full of yearning. Captivity had broken him and he had become restrained and apathetic.

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A HUMANE LIGHT SHINES THROUGH THE DUNGHILL

"The cuckoo", called Vasiel, "How many years do I still have to live?" The cuckoo did not answer. Again he asked but she did not reply. After a few minutes she cried out cuckoo once and was silent. "Theophile, if I die put a cross on my grave, not Prussian Catholic but Provoslavic." he said this sadly and with doubtful seriousness.

"And if I die," I said, "don't put a cross on my grave as I was not brought up to believe in it. My grave will be like all those of my bretheren, prey forthe wild animals or perhaps I am intended for the production of soup." Again the cuckoo began to cry out, so many times it was unable to count them. It re-echoed in the dark forest and her call vibrated the heart strings. Vasiel's face lit up, "Friends," said Viotek, "there is no meaning in her call, and you Theophile, if we are killed, ravens will pick at us without differentiating between the believer in the cross or the six pointed star (a hint to me after he knew of my national origin), or the one who believes in the five pointed star (the Soviet Star). After the cuckoo had answered Vasiel so liberally his sadness lifted though he did not tend to be superstitious - and he wanted to converse and tell stories. Afterwards he asked Viotek in the course of getting to know him: "Tell me, Viotek, as a Catholic have you ever confessed to a priest?" "My sins I know, and I am not obliged to give an account to the Priest, even though in my childhood I was brought up in the religion, I know it is against G-d's commandments - before every'action'I cross myself. Before I went into the farm kitchen I crossed myself, so that I should succeed in my action. It is a habit with me, in these actions even though my plans are carefully worked out. The fact that I cross myself gives me courage." "I seldom cross

myself," said Vasiel, "understand every Christian and every man has his own G-d and he lives with him and he expresses his wishes before him. I don't unite with the G-d of the Germans or with the murderer of the Provoslavs, the Vlasovites. I remember when I saw how the SS man, Hans, the son of the farmer, crossed himself. I was astounded. No, I don't believe in the G-d of the Germans. According to my honest feeling the G-d that is in my heart is pure and innocent and just, just as I am. To him I sometimes give a deep sigh and say 'G-d have mercy.' I don't know whether he hears me but I have a feeling of relief when I am oppressed." He turned to me: "What do you think, Theophile?" "Actually my idea is close to yours but I am an exception also in my prayers. Indeed I have only one prayer in my heart and it is that the salt tears of those innocent victims, those tortured women and children would flood the German fields, their lakes and their rivers so that the Germans should drown in them, they should raise their hands to the Almighty, they should cry for help, they should repent of their deeds and there should be no salvation."

For a time there was silence. Vasiel had never heard me express myself so openly in this way. Viotek lowered his eyes and meditated for a minute. Quietly he said: "Your prayer is everyone's prayer." He did not speak again. For a long time he was lost in thoughts. In the end he said: "You don't know much about me. Before the war I didn't live a normal life. It was out of the ordinary, against G-d's commandments and the laws of society. I was not one of the murderers; I lived in a society that had special laws. There was no national nor race discrimination but we did not tolerate traitors. We knew how to get rid of people like that. I confess before my closest friends as I would before a priest. Now that I think of my past, I have feelings of revulsion." When he changed the subject he began to speak more optimistically. "Friends, we all fought for Poland and because of her we are suffering. I hope that at some time we will get compensation for our suffering

and for the losses that our families have suffered. In the meantime we will make the effort to reach our motherland." It is seldom that a person manages to uncover the soft, sweet kernel that is within him under the hard tough outer shell but this time one saw the soft shining humane light. Perhaps the followers of Beit Shammai would not agree with me but I had uncovered the kernel and it was soft and sweet. He had lived in a world unknown to us.

Again Viotek kept himself busy with ropes and the sharpening of knives when he was not doing guard. Vasiel and I understood that he was planning something. Viotek said: "Boys in order to ensure our lives we must be able to discern the Schwabbs even in the mist. To smell him from the distance and know what to do in time so as not to be in trouble." He sharpened his eyes and increased his hearing ability and then a rustle was heard, which was caught by a light wind. He breathed deeply. When things had cleared Viotek said that he was going into the forest alone and would be in the fields. Perhaps something would come up. He returned two hours later in high spirits. He rubbed his hands together, stuttering slightly, he said: "Well, boys, we're going to get food. I found a Polish girl. One of our blood. I'm telling you, a real piece. Big and broad-breasted. She works for a farmer. She was bringing drink for those working at the edge of the forest. I'm telling you, I at once knew her to be Polish. I told her of our difficulty, three Polish captives hiding from the Germans and without food. She promised me that when she brings food to the captives at 3 o'clock, she would prepare us some as well and I was to wait for her at the same place I had met her." The place was about 3 kilometers distant from our hiding place. Vasiel and I were happy about the unusual success that Viotek had had. We all looked forward to the hour but Viotek had no patience and started off earlier but before he went Vasiel said to him: "Boy, watch out. Blood

calls blood. You would fall in love with her. I have been in captivity - I have lost all desire." Viotek kept his promise and returned, sooner than we expected. He came running and breathless. "Boys, let's move away quickly! The bitch! The whore is coming this way with the farmer and two armed guards." He cursed her and swore that if he remained alive he would pay her back. He knew her name and from which Mazur village she came from. That night we travelled 25 kilometers. It was after the first snow had melted. The fields, the paths and all the ways in the fields had turned to mud and clay. At about 3a.m. we found a haystack and dug ourselves in under it. During the day we slept in the haystack and at night we were on our way again. We were trying to get out of the chain of lakes that closed us in! To a certain extent we managed to circumvent villages and estates. We all had colds and fever but we had no option but to get over it. The idea came to us. Perhaps we should not have run away and we would also have slept in the cowshed and gotten our share of the watery soup and bread and would have come to our slow death like the others from lack of strength and hunger. Now we were like dogs without a master or a place to stay. However, between attacks of dispair there was always the feeling of freedom that drew us on. Vasya and I had no delusions. We knew that most of the Poles had surrendered to the Germans and obeyed them. We would have to be very, very wary of them. But perhaps we might evade the Germans and find shelter with the help of an honest Pole who had a conscience. During the day we rested in a well hidden place and at night the darkness protected us. It gathered us under its wing and guarded us like a bird that spreads its wings over its young.

I had a map from one of the German papers. From this we tried to determine where we were. From north to south close to the Lithuanian border there were lakes that cut across the way which were obstacles in our path. We therefore decided to make a sharp turn in a westerly direction to reach the towns of

Litzen and Rustenberg. It would double our distance but we would succeed in getting free of the ring of lakes and forests surroundingus. We would cross Rustenburg and from there the typical Prussian landscape would appear. Hills and fields. From there we would turn southwards to Poland. But as the saying goes "Man proposes and G-d disposes." When we reached the approaches of Litzen we found very few roads and the few that were there were cut through by trenches topped by narrow bridges. On the roads the army and the civilians travelled day and night. Within two nights we bypassed Litzen and came to the approaches of Rustenburg.

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R A S T E N B U R G

The city itself was near dark forests. My first impression was that there were hundreds of captives and forced labourers there busy digging anti-tank trenches. Before the usual bridges that were on the usual declivities and streams deep ditches had been dug and they had put up narrow passes that seemed to be hanging in the sky, and they only allowed people to pass in one direction. There were armed guards at every step who stopped and examined everyone passing. For a long time we watched the movement of civilians pushing loaded carts. These were German civilians running away from the German-Lithuanian border. We discerned that among the rest captives were also examined and allowed to pass into the city. Skirting the city was simply beyond our strength. Giant air-fields stretched out, tens of kilometers, and there were also storehouses and military camps. Actually we saw no other way but to get onto the main road and follow the stream into the city. The three of us had captive identity cards. Viotek, a Polish captive, Vasiel and I, Polish Bylorussian captives. Our position was dangerous. We talked it over a long time and decided to go on. If we were caught and interrogated we would all have the same story. We had worked on an estate on the Lithuanian border and now we were going westwards with the rest of the refugees through Rastenburg. We were not sure whether they would believe us. The argument was logical and fitted the present position. I began to have doubts; if they tortured us wouldn't self love overcome loyalty and friendship and wouldn't my friends be driven to betray me? In spite of knowing Vasiel like a brother and trusting in Viotek one could never be sure whether he would betray me as a Jew; if only to stay alive. Even in Stablack, my comrades in arms had not helped me. How the Polish and Ukranian captives had flattered and made up to the Germans and reported their comrades-in-arms giving them over to the mercy of the SS. Often to no advantage to themselves but only to find favour in the

eyes of the Germans. Even among the Jews themselves there was no brotherly love or unity. The moment the Germans gave one Jew responsibility over the others, this Jew would take and enjoy rights the others were denied. Sometimes the right to rule and the possibility of favours would even upset the balance and estimation of the Jews themselves. Personal weakness of character; and the idea that the value of life and physical existence was the most important thing would influence his behaviour towards others. The fear and suspicion that they might not stand the test made one shudder. I decided that I would stop thinking about it. In the last analysis they were the only ones I trusted and they trusted me. So that afternoon we left our lookout post. To my surprise I saw a French captive and a German civilian working on drainage about 300 meters from us. When the German went to fetch tools I called to the captive from the distance and he at once understood my position. He explained which roads led to Rastenburg, a distance of 15 kilometers and whispered to me that in that city the headquarters of the Eastern front was to be found, and Hitler was in his bunker there day and night. The Gestapo and the police examined the passersby, the farmers and the strangers. With that he finished and gave me and my comrades half his rations. I told my friends everything the Frenchman had told me and we decided to postpone our journey through the city because of weakness. We continued along the fields till we came to a road that connected all the farms to a village. In the evening we decided to enter one of the farms. We lay behind the farm buildings and watched the movements of one of the farmers. At about 9 o'clock in the evening the master, leaning on a stick, came out. He went round the farm to see if everything was in order. We went to him. We explained in Plattdeutch that we were refugees from the Lithuanian border running away like the others. Our sppply of food had run out and we asked for some bread and It was doubtful if he believed our story. In the end he invited us in to warm ourselves. We thought that he was preparing to trap us but the old man went to the stables

and calmly gave the horses feed. We began to trust him and decided to risk it. We followed him to his house in the hope that there were no men and no soldiers. We found the farmer's wife and three other women and children in the warm, clean well-lit house. Two of the young women spoke Hochdeautch and were from Western Germany. The Government had directed them there. "Here it is quiet", the woman said. "The Russian doesn't have the strength of the American." They offered us cigarettes and when they heard that we were Poles, spoke to us in broken Polish, Mazurish. Most of the Germans from South Prussia were assimilated Poles. The one unifying factor that was common to both of them was their Catholicism.

They carried on a lively conversation and we were quite enjoying the warmth and the friendly atmosphere. They told us that the farmer's son was serving in the "Sturm Abteilung." He was a good soldier and had got a medal for bravery but they had not gotten letters for some time and everybody became serious. In anxiety theylady of the house pointed to the pictures on the walls and said "We are all Christians and we are fighting each other." The Westphalian said: "We didn't want war and Hitler didn't want to fight but he was forced to do it." So the farmer continued with the same old story. His grandson who was lying in the next room said: "Mother, do you know what the priest said? He said that the Jews caused the war and that they killed Jesus." The Westphalian women sat on the sofa doing nothing, their short dresses above their knees, their eyes invitingly looking at the captives, and said: "We are not Catholics or believers but it is possible that the bloodthirsty Jews murdered Jesus." We listened to their conversation. The walls were covered with ikons, such as Jesus in the cradle in the stable, and the Holy Mother and the Child with haloes round their heads. Pictures like these were usually found in the homes of religious Catholics of Polish origin. Only in a very few instances did I see it in the homes of German Catholics. Opposite me, about 30 centimeters from where I sat, was a

picture of Jesus on a long cross. His hair was black. He had a black beard. His head pushed to one side. It was nothing new to see all types of ikons, but the pictures of Jesus in the German homes were mostly blond haired. It seemed to them that Jesus was also Aryan. All in all the subject of suffering touched my heart even when I was a child, but when my childhood friends accused me of the murder of Jesus I was filled with horror at the distortion of the truth. During the war and in the camps I heard the same ideas from both young and old Christian soldiers. Just like before the war I had heard these stupid stories from older people. Now I heard it from the young ones. The subject of Christianity brought up many near questions. That night in the home of the German farmer the dark tortured man of Nazareth came very close to me for some reason. I imagined that that same Jew was caught in his house by chance and suffered several times over. The more I looked at him the more I got to know him. Suddenly I shuddered. I remembered a Jew in my village that looked exactly like him. It had been a Jew of nearly thirty years of age, very serious, learning secret Torah and Talmud with the Kabbala. He was not married. He cut himself off completely from worldly things and spent his time in the Shull. He slept on a bench and ate what the good Jewishes brought him. They called him the ascetic. He was pale, thin and tall. He wore a short black beard and always held his head to one side when he looked at anyone. He would walk back and forth and sing softly. His innocent eyes expressed humbleness and modesty. He did not talk much. His whole image expressed inner suffering similar to the crucified one.

Jesus definitely must have listened to the meditation of my heart. Yes, he shuddered. His face became distorted. His heart also overflowed and Jewish blood threatened to burst out. I felt as if he wanted to free himself from the cross and cry out to them. "Be quiet, murderers, what violence have you committed on my Jewish people?" It seems that my friends

were following my eyes, saw what I was looking at and were embarrassed. I stopped looking at the cross and the ikons. We continued to smoke and were given coffee. The house was warm but there was an atmosphere of depression about it. We sighed from time to time at their words. We nodded our heads when they said "Sheiskrieg, nicht gut krieg." We thanked them again and again. I looked at the "Parush". He undoubtedly had been killed and tortured, being completely innocent. Perhaps he had been killed in the name of Jesus. Before he was killed doubtlessthe murderers had thrown holy water on their axes. We went and were swallowed up by the darkness. We dug into the haystack. Before that we tried to go into the cowshed to milk the cows but a dog prevented us from doing this. After midnight we went to the road that led to the city of Rastenburg. Hiding in the field, we stopped about a half a kilometer from the road and watched the traffic. In the afternoon hours we got on to the high road. These were the last days of the autumn and the first days in which snow had fallen. The asphalt road had been damaged by the heavy armament traffic and had holes in it which were now filled with water. We pretended confidence. We went in the direction of the guard who was standing at the entrance of the bridge. Vasiel pulled out tobacco and newspaper and rolled out cigarettes. But we had no matches. "Look there!" Two SS officers with their Death's Head helmets were coming in our direction. They were probably on duty. It was too late to retreat or run away. I said: "Boys, let's go on as if nothing has happened." We walked with the same pretended confidence heads held high. As we approached I saw that they were not taking any notice of us. We stopped about two meters from them and respectfully asked for matches for our cigarettes and one of them gave us a light.willingly. He took out a silver lighter and lit my cigarette. The second asked disinterestedly where we were going and my friends answered as we had planned. We thanked them and continued on our way. We were encouraged by their attitude, and regarded it as a sign of success and we con-

gratulated ourselves on our clever planning. We walked along freely and easily. A pale sun peeped out from behind the clouds and warmed us a little. "Voitchu sang a wandering song and we accompanied him in two voices. Again we went over the questions and answers we would give if we were caught by the Gestapo or the police. I particularly told them not to be afraid if they tried to cause dissension between us on national grounds (The Pole was less liked by the Germans than the Bylorussian.) It was Sunday. The inhabitants were still living quiet ordinary lives and dressed in their Sunday best, were going to Church in their finely lacquered carriages. Others were going to relatives for their midday meal but together with them were streams of refugees from the frontiers seeking refuge in the depth of Prussia. All types of soldiers in the army were moving eastwards. In the distance we saw that captives had built fortifications. We passed across narrow bridges that had just been put across roads. It was hard to determine according to the army or the civilians who were all well dressed, whether the front was close by or far away. We became worried and our confidence wore a little thin. Vasiel suggested that we go to the Baltic Sea if we didn't succeed in getting to Poland. From there it was close to Sweden. We had heard something about it fromother captives. It seemed a good idea but as yet our plans were not clear.

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OUR FLIGHT PLANS HELD BACK A LITTLE

As we approached the bridge we showed the guards our identity cards and went.on. We still had to pass another guard that was on duty at the other end of the bridge. Suddenly to our surprise two black uniformed riders came hurrying in our direction. We were amazed, taken aback. These were Gestapo soldiers. The elder attacked us rudely. Closed our path and shouted "Where do you think you're going? Identity cards!" We explained quietly and with confidence as we had planned, but from then on things began to go badly for us. We could do notihng to change things. We could not even talk to each other. The Gestapo man hurried us on with koshes. We ran for kilometers as the wooden clogs on our feet creaked and squeaked. We were in sight of thousands of travellers, both military and civilian. They directed us to the left onto a dirt road and were stopped at a work-camp, a base for captives and an army headquarters. We were breathing heavily. They stopped opposite captives who were digging a deep ditch under a bridge where water was running. They were waist deep in water. A few of them gave us slices of bread and told us that most of the runaway prisoners up to now had been liquidated. They had placed them on the bank of the ditch and shot them. Some of the runaways had been tortured and no-one knew what had happened to them. They had stood firmly and steadfastly awaiting what was to befall them. If you manage to stay alive till the evening you will be saved. Broken in spirit and body we awaited the sentence of the Gestapo Commander. "Before I finish with you," he said, "you will feel the strong arm of the Germans." Everything had happened so suddenly that we hardly knew what was happening to us. We were desolate that all our beautiful plans for regaining our freedom were shattered. As for myself, I had long been prepared for this. I told myself I had to accept the new reality. If they tortured me I would be like a rock. I was finished with sensitivity and weakness. I would forget my past

and my family. All that had been wiped off the face of the earth. I felt as if I were the only one who had remained alive, and I did not know why I was living. I remembered my friends and family as if in a mist (This happened to me several times in the past year.) It was as if I had never known tenderness and warmth in life, no pleasure or enjoyments, no friendship or joy. I was cut off from everything. It had all vanished with the wind. Deep down I was desperately lonely. I had lived among friends who weren't Jews, standing with them shoulder to shoulder in trust and faithfulness and now if they discovered my true identity I would not shame them nor myself, as I had not done so up to now. I would remain steadfast to the values I had lived by and been taught to live by. I would not shame myself or them now. These thoughts encouraged and comforted me. These feelings supported me. I was like a religious man who believed there was a better world awaiting him after death. So I felt steadfast without fear or anxiety. We did not ask for mercy. We waited silently for what was to happen. "Louse!" shrieked the Gestapo man and chased us to the offices. We were pushed into a long grey corridor on the side on which the office rooms were. The Gestapo men were all elderly. Captives were pushed in and taken out. Guards, sergeants etc., passed us by. There were shrieks, curses and kicks. On the other side of the wall there was a supervising eye. The Fuhrer, his moustache was black, the hair combed to the side and stuck to the forehead. His face was stern without a smile. The second picture under his had a thin face with protruding bones. He ate at himself and at others - Goebels. The pictures created an atmosphere of tension discipline, fear and threat. We fell down from sheer exhaustion, doubled up we sat in the corridor. The office workers pointed at us laughingly, showing us to the higher officials. One of these jumped angrily (he was wearing high boots), kicked both my friend and I in the teeth. When we got up, he was settling his jacket and trousers in order. The office guards laughed. The high official also laughed.contemptuously, his face returning to its normal colour. He told them a joke about a Pole which caused

enjoyable laughter. They had coffee and cake while we cleaned off the blood his kicks had caused us. After an hour an officer entered accompanied by a younger man wearing a fur hat (In Russian - a papacka.) It was decorated with a swastika. He was wearing a short Soviet winter coat over his jacket to which a whip was attached. His jacket had a sam-browne belt attached to it. On his chest he wore a German medal of distinction. This was a cossack from the "Don" area. His job was to discover Bolsheviks or those running away to Bolsheviks. The officer asked us whether we wanted to run away to the Russians. We answered in the negative and explained as we had planned. He ordered us to be taken to the yard for interrogation. There they put us with three more runaways. The cossack, after not managing to curse in German, began to curse in Ukkanian. He ordered us to run in a circle of which he was in the middle. Whoever fell down got the taste of his whip. His lashes hit the whole body. Whoever fell was spurred on again by the whip. The cossack sweated and panted at his work. He took off his papaka and his jacket and remained in the embroidered blouse. He whipped us more and more until we collapsed. The officer ordered his aide to put us into his office in the yard. It had once been used as a place for tools and building materials. In the corner were dirty heaps of straw which was used by captives in the same condition as we were. The officer sat at a neat and tidy desk. The cossack stood beside him ready to carry out his orders. The officer called me, the first, and asked if I admitted to wanting to escape to the Bolsheviks. I denied it. He ordered him to give me 25 lashes. The cossack carried this out thoroughly and enthusiastically. He pulled down my trousers by force, I became afraid ..... but he had no inkling that I was a Jew. He bent me over a high bench and uncovered the broadest area of my backside. I decided to set an example. I would not cry or beg for mercy. The thongs ate into my flesh, my back and the soles of my feet. My body shrank into itself and was distorted

by pain. In the end my breath stopped and I fainted. I came to within a short while on the straw completely wounded. They hit Vasiel and cut into his clothes. He turned on them, saying: "I am a Bylorussian and you are a Russian. Have mercy on me, comrade. I am not a Toranish! and not a Russian! (He meant he wasn't an anti-Vlasovite Russian (He was a Gossack.) When Viotek's turn came the cossack was tired. The German took on the job. With animal strength and anger he hit him 25 times. Viotek was completely broken and in a weak voice said that he was a Pole who had been in captivity for five years. The officer answered: "You wanted Danzig to rape German girls, now you are running to the Bolsheviks," and gave him more lashes. In the end he threw him onto the straw. We comforted him. He was physically broken, but he still had some spirit, he was not depressed. The German got up from his seat and said: "You will not see the morning light," He locked us in. We were shocked. I was afraid, as I said before, that my friends would try to save their skins by putting the blame on me, the Jew, who incited them to run away, but this did not happen, our brotherly relationship stood fast. It never entered their minds to betray me.

We were closed in for hours and no German came to see if we were alive or dead. We were hungry and thirsty and our bodies burned from the wounds. In the evening a German did appear. He was not known to us. He threw us ontoothe hay-stack where all the prisoners are kept. There was absolute darkness there. The rustle of the straw made by people moving was all pervading. They threw us shirts, taken apparently from those who had been shot. In the darkness some captives gave us slices of bread. We tore strips off the shirts and bound our wounds with them. At midnight we were told in suppressed joy and in whispers: "All the people and the guards from the head-quarters have vanished"but through the cracks they saw new people in the headquarters, however much fewer than before.

It appeared that with the changing of the headquarters personell, the people used the opportunity to escape. Not far away was a railway stop. Carriages passed in semi darkness noisily accompanied by the whistling of the locomotives. The prisoners cared for us well, gave us water to drink and changed our bandages - putting fresh strips of material on our wounds. We heard another rustle in the hay. Thousands of lice were descending on us. This was not new to me but to lie like that covered with lice was horrible. I was revolted and nauseous, but as usual one can even get used to a condition like that. There were green peas and legumes in the straw and I ate and satisfied my hunger like everyone else. Again there were rumours that the Soviets were approaching and the Germand could set the stack alight with all the people in it. However, we got to know later that the Germans were 150 kilometers away. It was clear that the earth was burning under the Germans' feet and often and without warning they would change the guard units and send them off to the front, bringing others in their place. This time the Russians broke through the Northern front and the older guardsmen were sent to the front. My friends and I did not get over the horrors of the night before and the threat of death that had been hanging over us. In the early morning we were told that we were to leave the place. The three of us embraced and Vashka with tears in his eyes said: "Brothers, we are breathing - we live!"

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W E T R A V E L W E S T W A R D S

We were on parade at 4 a.m. There was no sign of the former personell. No face of officer or soldier or Cossack who had been there the night before. Together with them all the office girls, members of the Hitlerjugend had disappeared. Our personal cards on which the officers had written details as well as the cards of the other prisoners were destroyed or missing. The papers and files were scattered all over the place. They spoke very curtly and to the point. We could feel the haste and tension. The SS "order makers" were not present at the assembly. There was only one officer, a few sergeants and soldiers armed with automatic rifles. A brief command. The whole camp was to be taken elsewhere to dig ditches in another area. After half an hours quick trot we came to a small station hidden in the darkness. We were pushed into waiting trucks and were closed in with bolts and locks. The guards watching intently so that we should not run away. The train hurried in a North Westerly direction. We did not know where the train was taking us to but I had the feeling that the same strong arm was getting mixed up and into a vicious circle from which there was no way out. The train crossed the 1939 border between Poland and Germany. There was no end to the rumours. Some said it was Gdansk to build a defence around the city. One of the Polish civilians burst out with Lublin-Maidanek (Everyone in the truck knew what Maidenek was) but among many the word Poland aroused longing. I was one of them. The train ate up miles in the Mazur area. I had mixed feelings. This was the land of whose life I had absorbed a great deal and for whom I had fought and come to what I was. From the cracks in the truck I could see the scenery. In these areas I had fought. I could not see the differences that had taken place. The

roads and villages were clean and neat. The Germans had lawfully annexed this area and brought in German order. They had sent out the Polish population and those who remained were to be assimilated and to forget their origin. In all places there were signs and notices in German. There was no word of Polish.

It was the beginning of the winter of 1944. Snowflakes fell and covered everything in white. We stood for hours, leaning against the wall of the station in the town "Soldauku" (Djaldova before the War). We waited for the train. According to the guards we were supposed to go to another place in Poland. We begged to be allowed to go inside the building but we were told that it was for "Herrin" and not for carriers of lice, like us. The cold bit into us and we jumped from one foot to the other or jumped on both legs but we were not allowed to sit down or go away from the spot. I blew on to my fingers to keep them warm. I hit my hands against my body to warm it up. I had bound rags round my feet on which I wore slumsy clogs. Not far from us trains from the North, the East and West arrived and also travelled in the opposite direction. The locomotive panted and whistled in the darkness. They stopped and civilians in warm clothes descended. Soldiers of all ranks got on and off as they had done every winter for generations already (All this I knew much later when the Soviets had already conquered Praga, a suburb of Wawsaw and were knocking at the gates of East Prussia). Some of the captives fell on the snow and fell asleep. The Germans woke them with kicks. Some parts of their bodies were frostbitten. My friends and I decided not to give in to the bitter cold but I felt as if I could not hold out, what was to be done? Fresh snow continued to fall and spread out till half way up to the horizon and the reflected light shone like thousands of burning coals in the frost of the night. It seemed to create a soft jewelled carpet sometimes shiny, sometimes feathery. I

wanted to sit down. I would not let the Germans see me. Just once more in my life I would feel this fragile wonder. My legs were heavy, my eyelids stuck to one another. I just wanted to sit for a few moments I told my friends. My legs doubled under me as I leaned against the wall and I fell on the ground. My friends whispered: "Don't fall asleep." "No, I won't fall asleep." I thought, I will just bury myself in the everlasting cosmic peacefulness for a few seconds. It seemed to me to be the Paradise of Salvation. My face fell on the snow. Scraps of dreams overwhelmed me. The snow fell on my temples, on my face and softly carressed me. Someone touched my face, my lips, and my eyes and it was pleasant. My friends spoke to me but I did not hear their words. Nocturne sounds seemed to come from a house and filled my soul with dreams and peace. The snow came down and I stood alone on the edge of the great city, on the corner of the busy streets. The horses bells rang as they ran, pulling the sleighs. They came and went, I was wrapped in their tinkling musicality and covered by the snow flakes. I couldn't move an arm or a leg. Now I was sitting on the snow. I stretched out my legs in pleasure, and the snowflakes carried by the wind fell caressingly on my cheeks, nose and chin. It felt good. "Sleep, sleep, it is late in the night already. Everybody in the house is asleep already covered with the white coverings of Shabbat." Little stars fell on my eyelids and closed them. We will all be saved, we will get our rest; real happiness. Don't be afraid, it isn't death. The light that is before us is the shining compensation. All this took up a few minutes. There was a kick and a curse. "Aufstehen!" You will still stand for hours till a train will be found for you. In the waiting room the "Herrn" and officers are also waiting! You lice infested swine!" They told me that I was as white as the snow beneath me. My friends rubbed my face and my temples with snow under it, steam rose from my skin.

After waiting hours in the bitter cold we got the command to enter the trucks. We were more than 200 altogether, captives and forced labourers. The train moved slowly between the towns of Pranish and Mlava in Poland. Vasiel was tense and asked: "Where is this train taking us to? To extermination?" Viotek said: "It is too soon to tell yet. I know all the villages and the towns in the area. If I feel that they are taking us to Lublin, I will give a sign. We will cut the bars with our teeth and jump from the train at full speed, even into the fire of the guards."

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ON POLISH SOIL AT THE END OF 1944

The flat planes of Poland stretched before us. The same land soaked in blood and tears; every inch of the land crying out murder and extinction. On this land there used to be villages. The farms had the same form and style. The winter months of the year 1944 were relatively mild compared to the preceding years. After the melting of the first snows one saw farmers planting and working on their farms, the women and children helping them with different jobs. In a big village we lay in rows on straw from the haystacks. The Germans were streaming hundreds of forced labourers into Poland, Russians, French and many Polish civilians. The people did not complain of hunger and cold. There was terrible apathy and weariness. Their only wish was to lie down and rest. When the Germans shouted "aufstehen!" at dawn in the mornings about a quarter of the people did not get up. Next to me lay a man who was completely apathetic. I brought him water and he stopped complaining. In the hay he lay with protruding eyeballs like that of a frog. His eyes did not move. We tried to rouse him but the expression of his face did not change. There were three others in our row with petrified faces and no life. The people quickly took off their clothes. The German Red Cross was called because they feared an epidemic. The captives dug graves and the Germans threw in the corpses. They threw on lime and covered them with clay and water. That day we also got no food. The German pressure on us was heavy. The three of us did not depend on the Germans and tried to contact the Polish farmer. Viotek was our spokesman. He tried to make contact with them with his smooth tongue. However, they were suspicious of him. His stories of captivity had no effect on them. He spoke about the fortress of Modlin and the fighting there, about his suffering for the sake of the Motherland. My story of the participation of the First Division and its obstinate fighting for over two weeks,

also made no impression on them. The idea that I might be a Jew did not enter their imaginations, let alone their minds. One must remember that hundreds of captives crossed Polish soil at that time. Some were blond haired Slavs, others dark-skinned, dark haired people. Hungarians, Armenians, Italians, Uzbecks - Cossacks of the Don area and Georgians from the Caucuses. The Poles had only known Jews as being dark haired and dark skinned before the war. Now in the time of the war they never saw Jews. The Partisans never reached these areas and they had no idea that Jews lived and fought in the forests. So, because of all the nationalities that had crossed Poland I did not stand out in any way. I had confidence to speak freely with anyone I chose to, of course, with maximum carefulness. Viotek was disappointed, "These are my people, the Schwabs and the traitors have destroyed their spirit." I advised my comrades, "We are Polish citizens - if we wanted to fight the mysterious illness that killed people, we would turn to the head of the village and ask him for aid." In the late hours of the evening when we returned from work and passed the house of the village head, the "Soltis", we evaded the guards and entered his home. Viotek and I were spokesmen. We were angry and complained. We were of the Polish people and had fought for her. We maintained that we hated the enemy and time would bring real changes with the approaching retreat of the Germans. Viotek further woke him from his five years of apathy and gave him a lesson in patriotism. He asked for vegetable soup and a slice of bread every evening. After talking it over the Soltis agreed. So every evening we ate barley and potato soup. I who spoke a very pure Polish without slang made a very good impression on him and because I looked so thin and weak, suggested that I spend the night there. I agreed on condition that my friends slept with me. He asked the head guard to let us stay at his house. The guard was an old reserve soldier. He was afraid that we were the carriers of some disease. He waved his stick from afar, indicating that we should not come near him. As I will still tell you,

the Soltis was accepted by the Germans. The guard agreed and warned that if one of us was missing from our work, the Soltis would be responsible. Now when the epidemic was rife we fought for two meals a day. One which the Germans gave us that consisted of 150 grams of bread a day and a spoon of marmaldde. on a cube of margarine, and sometimes, hot, watery soup. These rations had to suffice from 4 a.m. till 9 p.m. We got this after fighting, being beaten, and having curses rained on our heads and ate this crumb by crumb. The second meal in the evening we got in the Soltis's yard sitting behind the haystack. It was a steaming cup of potato soup and a glass of milk. We slept in the corridor on the floor. Before we went to sleep we planned the order of the following day. How to reach the assembly early and be careful that the German guard didn't shoot us. How to eat two mouthfuls of the ration every two hours so that it lasted till the afternoon. In those hours I took off my wet clogs and clothes. My friends did the same. It was warm and we slept at the Soltis's house. The fact that we slept there and got double rations prevented all kinds of disease. The house of the Soltis was like the homes of all well to do Poles, even before the war. During the German conquest he doubled his possession from loot and in various other ways. The first Soltis' had been exiled to Germany as a forced labourer. This farmer, who had been appointed as Soltis by the Germans, served them devotedly and exploited every opportunity to get property and possessions which he hid in wells near the farm. In the evenings his friends would come over and talk to him. These were farmers who had co-operated with the Germans and had managed to avoid being sent to Germany to work. We realised that we had to be careful of what we said. The farmer and his friends spoke about politics in whispers. From their conversation we heard that they expected Poland to be what it was like before the war - hatred toward the "Mosculs" and great satisfaction that they had been "cleansed" of the Jews. They were still afraid that some of them would return

to claim their property. The smell of the burning kerosene lamp mixed with the strong smelling mahorka. In a secret place on one of the farms there was a secret distillery and one of the farmers would bring along the home "samogon" a strong alcohol that was distilled from sugar beets. They woke us at midnight to try the samogon. We refused at first but Viotek insisted that we drink. He said it could kill the microbes of the disease if we had it in us. The samogon was not well or sufficiently filtered and made us nauseous, but it soon blunted our sensitivity. It made us forget the place and conditions we were in for a short time. It made us lose our inhibitions and carefulness and both Vasiel and I wanted to speak our minds to them but caution still kept us back. The "liquid" from cups and as usual when one drinks heavily, secrets are revealed. It appeared that their wells and storehouses were full of things, possessions robbed from the Jews when they were taken to the ghettoes, or bought from them very cheaply. More than once they remarked that if the Russians advanced the Jews would come back with them and demand the return of their possessions. Their beds were covered with thick eiderdowns. On them were spreads embroidered in Hebrew letters. The sideboards had glass dishes and silver candlesticks and wine glasses on which the words "Kasher for Pesach" were written. The village representatives were mobilized into T.O.T. units (Apparently the area had been annexed to Germany and they had helped in the butchering of Jews and Provoslavs and sent parcels of loot to their homes. So the nights passed for a week. Once when Viotek had swallowed a few cups of strong semagon he became lively and his spirits rose. He slapped the Soltis on the shoulder in a friendly way and began to whisper together with them. After that he got up from the table and with a serious face and a loud voice began to unburden his heart, telling what had happened over the years. He prophesied that their day of vengeance was coming and that the Schwabb would get it in the neck. The Allies from the West

and the Russians from the East would make a Sodom and Gemorah of their land. As I said before this part of the land had been annexed by Germany, if I am not mistaken, it belonged to Danzig in West Prussia. The plan was to exile the Poles and to settle the pure Germans there, demobilized German soldiers. Some of the Poles would remain as serfs. In the meantime those Poles suspected of nationalism would be exiled to Germany or sent to concentration camps or shot. Women, children and the elderly remained on the farms. There was neglect all around. Previously it was said that the village was infested with all types of informers, detectives and German civilians who were to supervise the agricultural organisation in the German style. Neighbours suspected neighbours. Christians refused to trust Christians. The Polish language was mixed with German words. The Poles tried to Germanize themselves. Many learned German and were proud of it. Polish National honour declined but in spite of that there still remained some suffering farmers who carried the love of their Motherland in their hearts and waited patiently for the New Poland with true and pure values to arise. There were those who quietly quoted Mitzhewitch, perhaps to prove that not everybody was a turncoat.

Usually the farmers worked hard and developed their land but the greater part of their livestock such as pigs, beef and milk they had to hand over to the Germans.

The tax the German farmer paid to the Wehrmacht was nothing in comparison to the taxes paid by the farmers in the countries of occupied Europe and especially in Poland. With that the farmer knew how to hide a quarter of beef for his family and kept sheepskins for himself and his family against the cold of the coming winter. They were Catholics but as far as I could see their religion did not create humane values among them. There were not enough priests in the Churches. New ones were not taught or ordained. A priest who did not co-operate was relieved of his duty or sent to a concentration camp. The more a priest

condemned the Jews the better it was for him. They also condemned the Russian provoslavs from time to time. They were different from the Catholics. If a priest even hinted at condemnation of the conquerors he was got rid of and disappeared.

The holiness of the Pope in the eyes of the Polish population or the Polish captives was somewhat belittled. They deprecated him and told jokes about him and the entire hierarchy. He was looked on as a traitor by the Catholics who believed more deeply then he because they thought him to be a strong supporter of Hitlerism. As the feelings of national honour weakened and disappeared and in place of it came the distilling and imbibing of alcohol, greedy eating, hypocracy and nauseous flattery of the enemy. Partisans never came that way. The Germans could sleep in peace. Nor did the Polish farmers expect them to knock at their doors to ask for a part of their crops. They could drink their semagon with ease. After two weeks the Germans told the villagers that they should not let captives sleep in their houses as they were infected with all kinds of disease. We asked the farmers whom we had managed to get to know to give us a place to sleep in the outbuildings of the farm. They agreed to give us sleeping place but not the three of us together. I found a place in one of the stables. To be able to sleep in a stable after 14 hours of work in the cold was a great advantage. I spread out my bed on a heap of straw in a narrow stable where 3 horses were standing. My bed was about a meter behind the hind legs of the horses. At night the horses would get free of their chains and bite and kick each other and I would wake at times, grab the whip and separate them and take care not to be trampled on by them. Perhaps I managed to get a complete rest for an hour during the night. The same thing happened to my friends in other places. There was a thick mist at night and the dampness penetrated into everything. In the morning it was quiet but in the afternoon everything built up to a violent snowstorm. Only forced labourers were exposed to the storm

and the bitter cold.

The death roll among the captives and forced labourers continued but at a slower pace than before. Echoes of shooting from the air and reverberations from the earth got louder and aroused the usually appathetic captives but the guards continued to harrass them and brought them to reality. These were SS men who came directly from the hospitals without a hand or limping heavily from a leg injury. The machine guns were on their waists and their fingers were near the trigger, they were ready to shoot us down for the slightest wrong movement. These embittered nervous soldiers tried to vent their anger on us, the unfortunate and the helpless. These people never spoke quietly, they always shrieked and shouted, even among themselves they did not speak quietly and reasonably. There was never a smile or laugh to be seen on their faces. They fired at anyone who wanted to go to the privy to relieve himself if he did not ask permission. They fired at anyone who fell in the mud and couldn't get up or at anyone who stopped working for a moment to chafe his hands together to warm them, and so lost a minute of work. They beat those bending over to fix the wrappings and bandages on their legs. These human wolves whose own wounds had not yet healed properly shrieked that we, the scum of the earth of Europe, were responsible for their difficulties. They themselves were under severe mental tension, bordering on explosion, and there was danger that they would kill off all those at their mercy. Under these conditions to go through a day and reach one's bed of straw at night was like winning a lottery. They hurried us to finish the work even before the Soviet tanks arrived.

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WHERE IS VIOTEK?

In war there's no certainty. Hope is not hope. Expectations are usually in vain. The life of man does not always follow the main course but sometimes deviates to the side. The choices are few and none are given leave to choose them. They go along ways that are not clear cut and definite. Along these ways there are pitfalls. Even in those uncertain times friendships are formed. In spite of destruction and lack of tolerance and lack of understanding, and lack of feeling, nevertheless friendships are formed, people help each other and feel completely like brothers towards each other, and understand each other fully in all things. Suddenly everything is cut off and I remain with the question: Whose hand is in this? How did it come about? My friend Vasiel said" "The hand of Hitler and his followers. If it had not been for him and his gang we would not have come to be in the hands of Viotek." Oneone of the early mornings Viotek did not show up at the assembly nor did he come to work. His absence stunned us. The Germans called out his name and he wasn't there. There were people missing every morning by reason of illness or death or some other reason. It seems as if they knew the reason for his absence because they never looked for him but we did not know the meaning of this. We were confused. We were behind in the work we had to do and got kicks and blows. Our hearts were uneasy and we kept quiet. When we returned from work we ran to the head of the village. We asked him to intervene. Perhaps he knew about him.

He looked at us a long time in sorrow and said he did not know and got rid of us. We rushed to the farmer in whose stable he had slept. He also looked at us a long time and in the end hinted: "You should speak less and work for the defence of Germany. Don't think that the Muscals will be any better."Now only the two of us remained and each of us went to bed in his

own stable. My heart ached for the loss of a friend. Viotek had been a child of the streets before the war, but in time of need and danger he had proved to be a faithful brother. When he had been beaten until the blood flowed he could have pointed at me and said, This Jew incited us to run away. Viotek had bitten his lips, gnashed his teeth, held in his stomach, taken the blows and did not surrender. Until the end of our digging in Poland his disappearance was a mystery to us and we kept asking - Where is Viotek? Perhaps he had been handed over to the Gestapo. One night, we were hastily transferred to Tchichanov. We were always moved at night and without warning. Probably this happened because of one of the Russian breakthroughs. Again we were housed in a village and found place in a stable belonging to a widow whose husband had been killed in the battle of Modlin in 1939. The woman of only 28 looked as if she were 50. Withered and flat chested, her face fallen in and wrinkled with a back bent from dragging water and heavy bags. She did the work on the farm with the help of her two children aged seven and nine. She had to give more than half of her crop to the Germans. All the widows or women with missing husbands were suspect in the eyes of the Government. The Soltis and his aides also had no mercy on them and plagued them. At night before the Germans locked us up, the widow and her children would bring us something hot to eat. She would cross herself and wish us good health. In the morning when she came to milk the cows, she would talk to us and comfort us by telling us that the end of the war was approaching and that Poland would be free.

At times she spoke of the butchery of the Jews that had taken place and added: "Even though the Jews killed Jesus, the Jews are people like us." Vasiel and I drew even closer together. We were afraid that something might separate us and we would be alone. Anxiety gripped me at the thought of remaining alone among the hundreds of hungry people, people with frozen feet, noses and ears, whose eyes glistened like those of animals of

prey but were afraid of attacking two people. A person alone who had no connection with a group was lost. With the approach of night faces distorted by hunger and neglect looked for something to eat or for a victim to choke, to take off his clothes. In cases like this it was easier for two to fight rather than one. We struggled for the dry bread and watery soup. We fought against robbers no matter what their ideas had been before - communists, fascists, religious fanatics or ordinary people. Now they were all mean and merciless. Vlasovites thirsty for blood. It was these people who upset the orderliness, when the rations were given out. These collaborators were not used to our way of life. One night we were all pushed into a long stable that had belonged to a one time Polish estate owner. After everyone had found a corner to lie down in we stood in lines to get our rations. The pushing was terrible. The strong trampled the weak. The Vlasovites were particularly heartless towards the other captives. The day before they had grabbed our rations and we had remained a day without food. "Theophile," said Vasiel, "we won't keep quiet any longer. We won't keep the order of the line, but behave the way they do. We will also push rudely and be without a conscience." But Vasiel Gursky does not trample others, or grab the slice of bread of others. He grabbed a spade and stood up. His hungry eyes protruded from his pale face. I had never seen him like this before. He waved the spade above their heads and cursed roundly at them in Russian. "I warn you, if anyone grabs our rations I will hit him over the head at once." He shouted at the Vlasovites. "Son of whores, pigs,you burrowed the whole of Russia with your snouts. Now your friends have sent you here.

"Remember, the time is coming ... the earth is rumbling under you. They will come and clean youout like you pick out your own lice." So we fought every night for a piece of dry bread and a little hot water. We sent out our curses over the scum of humanity.

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N O V E M B E R 1 9 4 4

A Polish winter with snow and frost. One's hands are wrapped in rags, wrapped in a blanket. I was made to run with all the others to the digging site. A thick blanket of snow covered the fields. Above it floated a wintery sun. It looked down sadly and gloomily from its cloudy bed. The clouds seemed to give it a halo. There was no smile or joy in this sun. A grayish light lit up the universe. On the white misty surface thousands of diggers wrapped in blankets scattered over the place in zig-zag confusion. They moved heavily. Over them stood the Germans with their high boots and long dark winter coats. It was buttoned and closed with buckles.

The guards sank into the snow, and wielding their sticks, which, when they came down, hit one of the unfortunate workers. The moaning would grow louder and the heads in self-defence would be pulled in deeper between the shoulders, but the pace of the work was not quickened because of that. The earth was frozen and we dug it up with sharp pointed irons and peeled off the frozen clods. We made fires to warm the earth but it did not help. In spite of the irritation and shrieking of the guards the progress was very slow.

About 100 kilometers from us the Soviets were shooting at the German positions. The earth vibrated, the echoes of the explosions were heard in the air. I knew that something momentous was approaching our area. The guards whips hit us and the bullets whistled through the air above our heads. They shrieked curses at us. The cold cut into us, burnt and prickled painfully into our hands and face. They did not allow us to cover or warm our hands for a second. I felt how parts of my body were growing numb. My toes were frozen and I did not feel them. Soon I would not feel my ears, nose or chin, I rubbed my face with snow until a redness appeared in the blue places but

the wind lashed us and there was no shelter from it. The Germans felt that the time was short. The sword of Damocles was hanging above their heads. If anyone had refused to carry out their instructions they would have butchered us all on the spot.

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"KOLLEGO" (FRIEND) GOD GAVE MAN THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD

A year of neverending adventures of hard labour. One looked neglected, tattered and torn. The body covered with sores, a body of skin and bone, and yet in this body of skin and bone - and would find a sensitive soul that revolted against the misery in silence. In the end the overwhelming fear made me accept it. In apathy - perhaps in necessity - perhaps knowingly, one accepts all the misery that there is in life. One urge remains. The urge to fill one's stomach with food. That is what remains of all your ideas and philosophising to be able to swallow any rotten food that comes to hand. Once a Polish Christian told me honestly." Friend, G-d gave man the ability to choose between good and bad," and added, "In order for man to be good he would have to learn to overcome the pressure that hunger puts on him. He must repress his hunger and he would stop criticising the bad that is within man, to shame the divine spirits. Then we will believe that G-d in his own image of heaven."

This man was honest with a deep religious belief. When hunger tortured him he looked for a crumb or a skin but did not find it.

He was in dispair without strength. The shovel fell out of his hands and he collapsed. In the end he was broken. He gripped his head in his hands and broke into heart rending sobs: "I am hungry," he said. His shoulders shuddered and shook with the crying. The German thought he had gone mad. He rubbed his hands and heartlessly brought down his stick on him. "The Fuhrer long ago said that it was useless to expect anything from such lazy people who have no culture!" he shrieked.

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I did not only see things like this. I also experienced it. I had been immersed in the dunghill of mans misery and business. And I had also lived through his frustration and dispair. There was no outcome or protec tion for him and no-one to give him a helping hand. Neither G-d nor man, the worst of it was that I was aware of it and this awareness, this knowledge, remained with me, and this made me suffer even more.

In spite of everything, when Vasiel Gursky and I got together, hidden in the bushes and sunken deeply within our own sad thoughts, perhaps each one with his G-d, I felt the urge of brotherly love that had been built up and preserved between us as the only way out, the only salvation.

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BACK TO PRUSSIA

Before we managed to reach the digging site, the order came to get ready for the train. From all those who had reached Poland only a half of the number returned. The others died of hunger, or illness or had been shot while trying to escape or had succeeded in escaping. We were hurriedly pushed into passenger carriages which were supposed to have been for forced workers alone. The train quickly left the Polish soil (It was that the Soviet army had entered Prussia from the Lithuanian border, but it was difficult to verify this.) It sped out like an arrow from its bow, until it reached Allenstein station, a place I knew from the years before. Nothing had changed, only this time there were fewer farmers and businessmen travelling. On the other hand, one could see different families sitting on their suitcases going Westwards without any panic. The Wehrmacht did not get off at the station, only the SS officers and the Gestapo got off. They were fat and blond, the chosen of the people but now relations between them and the public were cool and business-like. They were perfectly dressed, everything spick and span. They did not look like butchers, whose aprons were spotted with blood. No, these people butchered with gloves on so that one could see no blood-stains. This time however, they were quiet and sunken within themselves. They gave the Hitler salute less frequently, especially among the estate owners who hardly greeted each other.

With that they were tense and secretive. Life went on exactly as it had always done. This amazed the captives. It was only a hundred kilometers from there Europe was being bombarded and there was no station that had not been damaged and this station with its hundreds of Soviet planes flew over Prussia and it was even said that there were allies planes as well and yet no bomb had fallen on this big junction.

The mist was so thick that the torches of the guards could not penetrate it. We crawled away under the very noses of the guards. We knew that they could not shoot horizontally in their homeland, only in the air. We ran fast for a long time. We had a feeling of being chased. All our senses told us that. We jumped and ran like hares from hell to hell. In Prussia the snow was not so thick as in Poland in this season. In the last few days there had been a thick mist. The snow that was on the hills melted and black fields were uncovered. We both knew we were in the area of Riesel and it was good that we had saved our identity cards which could be used to save us. We decided to turn to the local farmers.

The shadow of the woods was far and misled us. In the open field stood a haystack with cattle feed. We burrowed ourselves deeply into it. I had come to the end of my strength. A terrible sense of lonliness. I could not fight any longer. I had no physical or phsycis strength. Memories of days gone by intruded upon me and brought me to the fixed idea that I was at the end of all my strength.and suffering. I decided not to give up on this adventure even if the police discovered me. My friend was also sunk in deep dispair and it created a rift and anger between us. The silence was unbearable. I fell asleep and the cold wore me out with vain and useless dreams. My friend woke me and spoke in a whisper. I sensed human warmth and it drove away all misunderstanding between us. I felt how good it was to have a person speaking to me. I needed him and he me. I answered his question and we were close to each otheragain. We lay there for a few days. At night we went out hunting in the farms. Usually we returned weary and dispairing with very little to show for our efforts. We missed Viotek and needed him. We did not have his professional experience and most of the time we lay and gnawed at the carrots which we managed to collect. So we wandered around. We lay on soaked ground or among bushes in the forests. Actually these

430? were not the thick forests of the North or among the lakes in Eastern Poland. The forests in this area were long and thinned out and were mostly used for heating houses by the inhabitants of the area.. 700

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BACK TO THE ESTATES OF THE FARMERS

We did not want to return to the farms where we had worked and we feared that our escape would be known by the police. We thought about the matter and turned it over in our minds about a thousand times. It was clear to us that these woods could not be used as a hiding place from the eyes of the Germans. We were still hesitating when we discovered a foresters hut in good condition hidden among the pines and guarded by two hunting dogs. The forester had been mobilized and his wife and children stayed in the hut. When she saw us she shouted: "Strangers are forbidden to enter." We showed her our identification certificates and asked her to drive us to the village of Komminen. She knew the owners of the estates but she nevertheless refused. In the end her 12 year old son harnessed a horse to the sleigh and brought us to Komminen. When the people of the village saw us they were amazed. How was it possible to escape from that hell and return to the village (It seemed that they knew all about what was happening between their people and the strangers at the digging sites, they knew about the beatings, the hunger and death and kept quiet.) It seemed that they also knew about my origin. At any rate they did not curse the Jews in my presence. They were afraid of their skins and busy with themselves. This was the first time that they began to think of their future and their fate.

The regime had forced them to take on extra Vlasovites, Lithuanians and Russians as compensation for having served the Germans well in the past. So the refugees and Vlasovites knew that I was Jewish but kept quiet. They feared that if they touched me or the other Jew the captives of the whole village would take revenge.when the Russians came. I found Andrei and Bolek and they warned me not to have anything to do with the ex-Vlasovites

and I took their advice. I was without shoes with broken clogs and with no underclothing. My mates on this farm were also without clothes. After the refugees had swamped in, the way and order of life had been disturbed and the masters did not know what to do. We took advantage of the situation and went up to theattic and after looking round we found warm underclothing and I also took a pair of high boots for myself. It was years since I had worn a pair of leather shoes. I also took a shirt and underpants in good condition. I found cases of books bound in heavy leather. They were strong but dusty. Apparently no-one had touched them for years. There were the works of Dostoyefsky translated into German. Incidentially, Dostoyefsky's works would be found in many of the German houses. Everyone from the masters to the lowest servant claimed to be "experts" on the understanding of the Russian soul and could explain their drunkeness, their good hearts, their misery and the eppressiveness of their souls. With that the Germans were sorry for the poverty stricken exploited Russians who would in the end be saved by the Germans. My friend cut off my long hair which was very ditty. I rubbed my body with kerosene every day and my skin burned. I washed naked to the waist every day. I put on a fresh shirt and I got hold of some trousers and a clean army coat. The previous one had gotten rotten and fallen to pieces, but they as yet did not let me live in the room so as not to bring in lice.

After all my terrible adventures my greatest pleasure was to lie on the clover in the warm stables closed in from wind and frost. I fell asleep and deep quiet dreams of thousands of sparkling stars gave me rest and peace.

I got to know that the crippled old servant, Kuba, had been taken to an old aged home which the nuns cared for. He lived only a short time and died. The people of the village wondered at this: "Is it possible?" they asked themselves. Although he was crippled he was healthy and was useful on the farm. Yet

when they transferred him for a short time, he died soon after. "Ja", the Party people of the village said, "the National Socialist Regime does not like those who eat bread without working for it." From then on the people of the village obeyed the Party implicitly without a murmer of protest. After his death the Herr and Fraulein rode to the Church to sanctify his spirit.

Feller, the steward and the head milkman was taken into the army, in spite of his age and his chronic cough, which he got when fighting the French in the trenches at Verdien in World War I. Now he was given the brown T.O.T. uniform and he guarded forced labourers digging trenches. He lost hope of ever getting a freeholding of land and also lost his savings, the marks that the Generous Fuhrer had given him every month. His family was worried because he did not ~~let~~ them know how he was. His son Yusuf who was 16 was also mobilized. At that time Hitler set his hopes on these young people. That was the last year and the youngest who were mobilized. These youngsters had to stop the invasion of the Russians. There were no Germansmen on the farm except the two old masters and the wives of the servants and their children, and the lazy women and their children from Westphalia. This was the situation of the German farmer before the Soviets came. The Fraulein had lost her pride. She did not boast any more. She looked on all the refugees with disgust. "Das Gesindel" (the scum of the earth). The master with his high boots went round the farm as if nothing had happened. He planned the division of the land for the next season even though the snow still covered the fields. When the farmer Raiman came back from his walk over the hills and valleys of the farm he came to me, when I and my mate were working in the mud, with the drainage. He was thoughtful and very serious. He at once recognised the high boots of his son who had been killed in the war. He looked at the boots for a long time and then at me, but he made no comment. It was clear that he had

to be quiet otherwise his authority on the entire farm would have disappeared. He spoke very quietly to both of us. The Russians have invaded Prussia and are fighting around somewhere, he did not know where. In the end he felt encouraged and said, "Ja, the slavs and Russians have tried to conquer Prussia several times and have been thrown out. Who knows, perhaps the miracle will happen again." In the end he asked me what the position of the Germans was on the Polish Lithuanian border (That was why he had come to me.) I told him exactly what I had seen. "The estate owners have left their farms for some time already. They fled through the Danzig corridor to West Prussia. The ordinary farmers and their families are moving westward in carts loaded with food." In the end, unable to control himself, he asked, "How did it happen that you and Vasiel who works for Zeth were released?" This time I did not lie but answered truthfully. "We were not released. We ran away. The guards and the SS men were very cruel. They treated us like the beasts of the field. They starved us to death. Many were shot or died of hunger. They beat us over the head for no reason at all. " He dropped his eyes. He did not react or answer and did not ask any further questions. He straightened, looked across the fields which he had inherited from his fathers, who had worked them year after year for perhaps hundreds of years. He was angered. He went away with a head bowed because he wanted to ask another question which he hesitated about. He scratched the back of his head, returned, and said in a decisive voice: "No, I won't go from here. I will stay here no matter what," and he turned and left us.

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THE REPRISAL

(ISIAH I Verse 24) "I will ease me of my adversaries and avenge me of mine enemies." My Christian friends always quoted the words of Mathew from the New Testament..... "And here comes the day of Judgement on which the wicked will be disgraced" ... "Moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment that wickedness was there and the place of righteousness that iniquity was there"(Kohellet 3 Verse 16) Now let us see what message the black threatening clouds bring. About 3 kilometers from the farm on the main road to Konigsberg a long cavalcade of German refugees moved along in long wagons loaded with families of the servant class. At the head of the four wagons a fine carriage was being driven, it was painted in shiny lacquer and with a high hood for excursions. Sitting in the carriage covered with furs, the family of landowners travelled. They were like the estate owners of the area or from the areas along the Lithuanian border. Some of them were of Russian origin from the time of the Cxars and had been assimilated into the German social fabric in the course of generations, and were German in every way. Their children and grandchildren had been in the Wehrmacht and had served in the SS. Here, far away from the border, they travelled in exemplary order. Without panic. They still had the hope that Prussia would remain unconquered. In 1914-18 the Russians had reached as far as Tennenberg and there they were defeated. They sank into the swamps and sand of the Mazur area with their cannon and horses. They did not believe that the Russians would penetrate farther into Russia more than they had done 30 years ago. Parallel to them the Wehrmacht also moved in a Northerly direction. They were motorized infantry; guns and tanks. In front of the cavalcade of motorized vehicles groups of SS motorbikes penetrated the cavalcades and came out right and left. Thus they were in all the places giving abrupt orders converning the movement of the cavalcade so that no wagon or carriage should go off the path or that

there would be piling up or congestion. But the vibrating earth and thundering came even closer. The echoes from the South East and the West from Bishopsburg. According to the Germand the Russians hadn't succeeded in breaking through to this area. The Wehrmacht stopped their advance and slowed them down. The Germans guarded their greater forces in retreated until they were able to dig themselves in again. The Raisel area had not been fortified with communication or anti-tank channels. It appeared that they never expected the Russians ever to reach that area. Now the Wehrmacht had turned Northwards to the defence of Konigsberg. The eyes of the SS examined everything. Suddenly they came to the farms and ordered the captives to assemble in one room and not to leave it. They assembled, they collected us in one of the huts belongingnto a farmer and closed us in. We were worried. What did they think of doing with us? The ex-Vlasovites were freer and stayed in the huts of the farms. As night fell the artillery fire increased. The Soviets were already approaching the North of Bishopsburg and had spread out across the district area of Raisel about seven kolometers away from us. The Germans set up their defence line in the city and it seemed according to all the signs and conditions, that the Soviets were having difficulty in conquering the city. The bombardment reached its climax. It was burning on all sides. Flames wrapped in thick dark fumes burst upwards with a terrible intensity. The fire spread out in all directions. The soot from the flames fell on the farms great distances.away. One could hear the sound of buildings collapsing. This time there was real panic among the refugees. The Russians kept on pressing, giving them no respite. One could hear the shouts of soldiers and the neighing of panic stricken horses, and the shrieking of women. The road was too narrow to hold them all. The defence of the Wehrmacht and SS did not help those who tried to keep order and stop the panic stricken flight. The panic did not only affect the civilians but also the soldatan and they tried to espape from

the shelter encirclement and tried to find/in the haystacks 437
on the fields along the sides of the river. Suddenly the guards who looked after our hut vanished and at the same time it became clear that we were within range of the Russian machine guns and many of the captives and forced labourers were hurt by the fire from the guns. Ehey had been fired across the farms. We didn't know what to do. There were rumours going round that the Soviets were openly hostile to the captives and had fired on us on purpose. We waited for the time to pass. The following dawn masses of thick smoke burst forth and covered the sky. In our area mortars did not fall and we did not see any fires burning. The Soviets wanted to keep the stores of cereals, cows, pigs and chickens for theirown use. They wanted to save the unused food dupplies for themselves. The days that I was close to the front I did not hear that the Soviets had ever bombed refugees or burned villages - they only did this where the Germans resisted them openly. The giant Soviet tanks hurried along the big main road. They pushed Northwards with all their might. They swept aside the wagons and carriages of the Germans on the roads. They crushed them and threw them aside into the ditches in the same way a street cleaner cleans rubbish off the road. The carriages were upturned in the ditches, their wheels pointing upwards. The horses lay on their backs held and imprisoned by their harnesses. They struggled, kicked their legs helplessly in the air and tried to free themselves from their harnesses. Some of the Vanguard would slip away from their units and use the opportunity to visit the farm houses where as yet no Soviet soldier had set foot. They went through fields, over hills and through water, firing at whoever they encountered. in the fields. Bodies of those who had tried to run away were left lying in the open fields. Here and there they found a German soldier or SS man who had been cut off from his unit when trying to get out of the ring the enemy had managed to make around them during the advance. There they found their deaths. Soviet soldiers who had been killed in the same battle lay near

them. Everything was spread out on top of the hills and in the villages and was covered by the melting snow. Finally, we lived to see the arrival of the first Soviet soldiers. They were dirty and sloppy and untidy. They never had the spic and span look of the Germans. Their uniforms weren't ironed. Their high boots were worn, broken and dirty. They wore short, dirty tight grey winter coats. They had folded caps on their heads which they could untie to cover ears, chin and parts of the face when needed as protection against the cold. Hidden and sewn in the front of the cap was the hammer and sickle emblem. They were, however, not clearly seen. They wore a bandoliers of bullets round the waist and across one shoulder and carried their machine guns in their hands. He sank knee deep into the melting snow as he went along. He took no notice of anything and did not watch for anything that could surprise him on the way. He ran along cursing and swearing. By sheer luck he managed to reach us unharmed as the Germans fired on them from their hiding places.

As yet we were all concentrated in one room awaiting our guests whom we had expected so long and ardently. Suddenly they broke into our place of confinement. They were two Soviets who had reached us from different directions. One with slanted oriental eyes probably an Uzbek, and with a dark complexion. The other was blond-haired and white faced. We welcomed them with a cheer. One of our group, a Bylorussian, called Victor, said: "Comrades and Soviet soldiers, you are the Russian and we the Bylorussian of the same slav origin. The blood of the great Russian nation flows in our veins. We have anxiously awaited the day that you would come and liberate us from Fascist slavery." He wanted to embrace and kiss them and we all after him. But the two soldiers were completely indifferent and impervious to our advances and welcome. It is doubtful whether they understood the meaning of the speech or our cheering.

They stood swaying on their drunken legs. They hiccoughed from time to time and alternately belched. Their eyes were bleary and misty. Their automatic rifles aimed at us. After the speech one of them fired a burst of bullets downwards and shouted: "Traitors!" Vasiel Gursky burst out: "Brothers, we have been waiting for you for five years!" But the Russians kept their distance. "Traitors, turn out your pockets and empty them of gold and watches. Those who do not hand over will die! "We were afraid that they would finish us off in a short time. We had never dreamt of getting such a reaction. We were depressed. However, it was possible to understand that this long war had brought about not only hatred of the German enemy but as in their case, had also bred suspicion against their own race who in their hundreds had aided the Germans in their murder and looting and were sometimes even worse than the Germans themselves. We were all deeply hurt by this unsatisfactory first meeting with the soldiers of the Soviet Army. Kudashov was especially pained. From his childhood he had lived in poverty. He had awaited the coming of the Soviets to establish a regime of social justice, a fair and honest society giving the Bylorussians equal rights and saving them from their masters (the Pani). My friend Vasiel who had always felt the injustice and wrong done to the others sighed. "Horpodi (my G-d)". His belief in the Red Flag as the carrier of Justice was shattered. Thus he remembered the letters he got before the outbreak of the Russo-German War of 1941, when the half sentences and hints had tried to explain the true position. Now reality, clear and brutal slapped us all in the face. We did not see our future in the rosy light we had pictured it. Every minute could bring us catastrophe at the hands of these soldiers who did not seem to be responsible for their actions. In the end one of the soldiers turned to me, the barrel of his gun directly on my face. He shouted: "Give me your boots at once. Be quick about it!" I answered, (during the entire war I had never yet been so close to death). "I have not worn leather

shoes for years. Only the wooden clogs. The blisters on my feet have not yet properly healed from them." "And I suffered in prison", he retorted, "when Comrade Stalin went out to fight Fascism, I was the first to volunteer, to go and get killed for him, even with torn and broken boots." (Later I got to know that many of the Vanguards had been juvenile delinquints who had been sentenced to prison terms and released on condition they volunteered. "Take off those boots," he shouted and shot at the roof. My friends were amazed, and one of them shouted at me: "Theophile, give him the boots!"I'll give you mine." I took off my boots and he, taking off his, threw them before me, but I preferred to wear my old wooden clogs. So the boots Bruno, the farmer's adopted son, had worn, came to me and after I had enjoyed them for a few days, they were taken from me by force by the first Soviet soldier that I had encountered. My comrades tried to appease them. They drew out a bottle of 'Djass' from under the bed and said: "Drink Tovaresch soldier." He took the bottle and after gulping down a good few mouthfuls passed it to his friend. The second gulped spluttered and coughed, and in the end smashed the bottle against the wall. The shattered pieces hitting back at us. At once the two left us and staggered drunkenly in zig-zag fashion towards the house of the farmer. Before we follow the two Russian soldiers I have something to say. How much of the sensual pleasure is man able to enjoy. His eyes watch the scene not only from the horizon but from beyond it. There is a world full of desire. The stimuli of the senses are so strong that it makes you keep the finger on the trigger so that it can force others to give you what you desire. It is a face that the eye can absorb far more than the stomach. The eye can desire far more than the urge of sex is capable of satisfying. No matter how strong the urge it can also be weakened and drained. In cases like this the eyes cause both illusion and frustration and man depressed by disappointment and choked by nausea finds that

his sexual urge is not brought to fulfilment. The opportunity cannot be used, the finger is pressed on the trigger and he destroys his victim. When jealousy and failure gnaw at his vitals and his masculinity is humiliated he compensates his honour with vengeance. One can express vengeance in various ways. When the stomach is full to beyond capacity and the many sensualities which give pleasure have been satiated, He has reached the climax and fulfilment of his desire he then experiences disappointment and frustration. Then the urge to cruelty, violence and destruction spring forth from the depth of his being. He will then kill and make a victim of the being who a minute before gave pleasure to his senses. There is archaic vengeance (a far deeper thing). If there is any real justification to murder and vengeance, it is the anger and indignation which the avenger carries within himself. If he gets the opportunity he expected, he murders and destroys his enemy and everything that comes to hand without any consideration. He continues with this vengeance until he feels its final fulfilment. He sees the blood flowing and is satisfied. So his account is paid. The coming generations will remember it and be hesitant before murdering helpless men, women and children who had done no wrong or committed injustice. Jusiek had long ago told me openly and honestly: "Theophile, during the time of my captivity I got letters from my parents in which they hinted at, they were afraid to write openly, about what had happened to my brothers and their children. I now know everything the Germans and their collaborators, the Ukranians did to them. From that time on my soul longs for one thing only. I wish to see the servants and the masters blood flowing. I wish to grant neither forgiveness nor mercy. This is a Pole speaking. From early childhood I have been brought up in the Catholic faith." I stopped him. "And where is 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' and 'don't do unto others that which is hateful to you' and the Catholic prayer, the

which both the farmer and the servants and the Catholic SS

say when they come home on leave: 'Our father who art in heaven may your name be hallowed. Give us our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and don't lead us into temptation." Jusiek amiled and looked at me in the eyes and said, "Those are routine prayers. The prayer doesn't pay any attention to them. They are not realistic. The work of their hands negates the prayer. God has also gotten used to their hypocracy, if ever he pays attention to them. The work of their hands negates the prayer." After thinking a little he added: "Theophile, I read your thoughts. I am sure you are laughing at me. Perhaps you are trying to test me as a Catholic. It hurts you to see the distortions of those words. You don't have to reveal your heart. Your grudge is justifiable. I know what they did to your people, what you wish them I also wish them. May their vengeance be on their own heads. May they be well and truly repaid for your family and for my murdered brothers' families."

Now we will follow the two soldiers. When they went into the farmer's house they commanded everyone to raise their hands and they forcibly removed the old peoples' watches. They were heirlooms with golden chains that had been looped over their waistcoats across their corpulent well-fed stomachs. Then they took the wedding rings from the women's fingers roughly, even scraping the skin while doing so. Then they dragged the women to the beds and raped them. One was forty years older and one seven years younger than the two soldiers aged about seventeen and nineteen respectively. Before they got to the beds they began to vomit their drink and this stream of vomit followed their trail. They struck the heads of the whimpering women and ran outside to get fresh air, leaving their dirt all along the way.

They ran along to the next farm. On the way they fired at everyone, irrespective of whether they were in uniform or civilian garb. Some ex-Vlasovites and French captives were wounded.

The Russians were angry with them. The former for being traitors to the Russian cause, the latter because they belonged to Fascist organisations. Many captives were hurt and wounded as a result of this. The Soviets slipped in the mud and the snow, rolled over and got up scattering the golden rings and watches which had fallen from their overloaded pockets. As the saying goes: The more you grab, the less you get. We thought and discussed our future plans as we saw with whom we were dealing. We decided to spend the night in the place we were in and assemble the following day to start our journey back to Poland as quickly as possible.

In the afternoon hours there were tremendous explosions from the town of Raisel. They were almost like volcanic eruptions with great black clouds of smoke billowing upwards. The snow was completely melted. Then the cold gripped us and a cold burning frost spread out. The sky and the horizon darkened. Thick soft snow came down. As the cold increased the soft feathery snow-flakes were whirled around by a strong wind. In a few hours the fields were covered and the roads and paths were wiped out. The storm was all powerful in the area. The winter had returned, the wind lashed right and left. Through this blinding storm one could discern a few fine sleighs harnessed to a pair of horses decorated with a halo of bells. They seemed to slide into the farms. One of these sleighs came to the Raiman Estate where I worked. After a few minutes the farmer himself came to our attic room. He was worried and asked one of us to come down and act as interpreter, because he did not understand what the Russians wanted from him. Everyone pointed to me and the farmer agreed. Outside stood a beautiful sleigh in which there were luxurious furs to cover the legs, and there were long wide coats with high collars. The driver was one of the important citizens of the area.

In the large dining-room a feast was laid out. The crystal chandaliers glittered and twinkled. The stuffed deer, and the hunting guns that had been on the walls for generations had vanished completely. In the middle of the room stood a table covered

with a white cloth. On it stood bottles of schnapps with beautifully fashioned drinking gbblets with high delicate stems. The plates were heaped high with steaming sausages, smoked meat and kuchen. The householders sat on three sides of the table as if they were at a holy feast. At the head of the table sat the masters, the Heer and the Fraulein. They were obviously afraid and doubtful smiles played on their lips. They sat on high-backed chairs, the wooden arms of which were chisselled out decoratively with the heads of animals. Beside them sat the Westphalian women and their children. On the bookshelf the collected works of Dostoyevsky held pride of place. They were obviously trying to flatter and impress the Russians with the food which the Russian did not have and with the generous reception which was customary among the slav nations. In this way they hoped to gain favour and make them more amenable. The radio had already stopped broadcasting for two days. They had always listened to it and gained hope from Goebel's bluff. Goebels had not told them that the Soviets were already the masters of the land between East Prussia and the West. Prussia was completely cut off from the West. The only way of escape for them was the Baltic Sea. Nevertheless they had some hope left and as a last resort they could remain with the Russians even though they were known to be hard-hearted and merciless. That was why that luxurious meal had been set out. But they were wrong. In spite of the festive air in the room and the plentifully offered food, the Soviet officers stood against the wall with stern forbidding expressions, the automatic revolvers trained on the people sitting there. They took nothing; they tasted nothing. The goblets sparkling and filled with wine stood there waiting to be drunk. The Landlord Rainer with a goblet of wine in his hand got up and invited them to the table to partake of the food. I translated to them word for word. The officers were silent. The Westphalian women whom I got to know only a week before were wives of SS and SD officers and Gestapo personell, now

tried to employ their talents of coquetry, but the severe unrelenting faces of the Russian officers did not soften, they remained the same.

The tension in the room was heavy. One could cut it with a knife. I sensed that something would soon explode. After a short silence the officer commanded the farmer to hand over his arms, and any German soldiers or SS personell who were hiding with him. The farmer denied that he had arms or that he was hiding anyone and suggested helping to look for them. The officers whispered together and separated to look for them. The soldiers had preceded their officers in everything. They found the Soviet soldiers on the beds with women servants and they had probably taken everything of value. Things were spread out everywhere in disorder. Vases decorated with flowers or pictures of young damsels and knights, expensive furs belonging to the masterlay about in disorder everywhere. The Soviet officers returned to the dining-room a little disappointed from their unsuccessful search. They looked at the glittering light, the warmth, the plentiful food in the expensive dishes and the cleanliness of the room, sensed that could be in every corner of the room. They were deep in thought, everything shocked them and they were angered by the exploitation of the Germans during the war. They had been enjoying every luxury when the Russians were dying of hunger and cold. Angrily they remarked among themselves," These men and whores are eating our bread and drinking our blood. A thing like this is unbelievable." After they had controlled their emotions a little they became silent. This lasted for some time. Silence. One of them broke out in anger, and cursed those sitting at the table and shouted in their faces: "You began the war, exploited us to the fullest, and lived in this hothouse of luxury, well-fed and at ease as if you were enjoying an expensive holiday while your sons and husbands were eating our bread and raping our girls and burning down our homes. We dreamt of stilling our hunger with potatoes

whileeyou were guzzling pork chops and schnapps. Our women and children and our aged parents were going hungry while you were sporting yourselves like this!" I translated word for word. The master went pale and started shaking. The Westphalians sat huddled in fear expecting to be dragged off and raped. They too started shaking and answered in unison: "We did not want war. We did not know about this. Hitler and his gang are the people responsible for all this!" This angered the young officers even more and one of them shouted, banging his fists on the table the while so that the bottles reverberated and the wine spilt from the fine cut glass goblets. "It was your sons and husbands who concentrated entire families in bath houses, among them my own mother and sister, and burnt them alive." Again they protested in unison. "We did not know about this. We are not guilty." "You knew everything, parasites, liars, canibals!" I hurried to translate from German to Russian and from Russian to German. One of them, blond, apparently knew German and even before I managed to translate had already answered her accompanying his words with curses. "You collected hundreds of people and burnt them and you made soap from their bodies to wash your hands with, canibals, wild animals, blood drinkers!" The Germans kept on wailing, claiming innocence. "We did not hear or see or know about things like this, Hitler was to blame for everything." The atmosphere in the room reached high tension. All three were shouting and I after them in German. I used lashing words expressing everything that had been pent up within me for the last five years. One of the Soviets grabbed the table-cloth and with a gesture sent everything on the table flying. The wine spilt, the glasses were shattered. An uncontrolled spirit of vengeance gripped the Russians and myself. They rained down curses on them and they, wailing hysterically, disclaimed responsibility. The Fraulein said, "Theophile, stop your tirade!" The women continued their wailing and crying. The farmer sat in stony silence without a word to say. In the excitement there was a dampness to be

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discerned in the Russians' eyes and in mine as the German atrocities were being recounted. The Russians ended: "You are nearing your end! You wished for war and got it! Now the reprisal is on its way." I translated exactly and they got up to go to their rooms. At that moment, the Soviet soldiers burst in. They grabbed the Westphalian women by the hair and dragged them out. Still wailing they shouted: "You don't have to drag us by the hair! We will go willingly!"

The officers came up to the attic where my friends and some others were sitting. They said: "You German captives must get out of here as soon as possible. Not one of you is to stay! If you do, you will be treated like the Germans and those Vlasovites among you - if there are any - will be pulled out from among you. They won't be allowed to live, neither on German soil and surely not on Russian. They will be punished to the full extent of the law even more severely than the Germans." Then they told me to join them on a tour of inspection of the various places in the area. I thought about it for a moment and then on the grounds of security asked for one of my friends to accompany me, and they agreed. So Mishka and I and the three Soviet officers set out in the luxurious sleigh driven and owned by the estate owner.

The snow continued falling and as night fell on the snow covered expanse of the fields we came to the main road leading to Allenstein, and realised that we would not be able to cross it. The road was occupied by Soviet tanks and lorries full of soldiers. It was like the swift heavy flow of a river about to burst its banks. The carts of the refugees were lying upside down in ditches with their wheels turning uselessly in the air. The people and horses were imprisoned and trying to get free. The horses, many of whom had been hurt, were neighing pitifully to be put out of their misery. The soft white snow fell silently covering them all.

The officers commanded the driver to turn left across the field. There on the top of the hill stood the residence and outhouses of one of the richest estate owners of the area. Lights twinkled from the small leaded windows of the long low buildings surrounding the main house, which incongruously stood in darkness. As we approached we saw that the big houses was surrounded by pines and chestnuts weighed down heavily by the white snow. The owner was lying there dying, having been shot a short while before. Not far from him lay the body of a German soldier. The officers broke into the house and lit the wall torches. Naked women lay on the floor, blood flowing from their mouths and from their genitals. In the second room lay a young girl, alive, but with hardly any clothes on. She was completely apathetic, taking not the slightest notice of us. The officers went into the various rooms, no doubt looking for jewels and valuables and to see if there were any other Germans hiding there. Outside our landowner-driver got down from his seat and began jumping up and down tryigg to keep warm, smoking a cigarette the while. The Soviets found cigars and sausages and a bottle of rum and shared it with us. I did not have any. The food revolted me. In the servants quarters anarchy reigned. The Soviet soldiers were there. They were dirty and with machine guns in their hands, they threw "old women" down. Thus they designate the 30 year old women. They raped the younger ones. In one bed lay a mother and a child who clung to her mother's back. A drunken soldier got into the bed and the mother dragged him onto her, seaking in this way to protect her child. The soldier hit the mother, threw her from the bed, raping the child. In the end he hit the child on the head with the butt of his gun and got out of bed, leaving the child crying in pain. The officers shouted at the soldiers, arrested a few of them and interrogated them, asking information about their units, before handing them over to the military police. Others satisfied with the proof of their male potency, buttoned up their trousers

belted their amunition and rushed Northwards, aiming to catch up with their units and their own, as yet, unknown fate.

The women got up stunned and shocked from the beds. They were faint and staggered unsteadily on their feet. With that they were pleased they were not really badly hurt. Others, however, wept bitterly. Their consolation however, was short-lived. Other soldiers burst into the house and attacked them again. So it continued. As each new wave of soliery came on they were again and again subjected to rape. It did not stop.

Suddenly we heard a burst of shooting. Then the crying of children and the wailing of the women. The officers with unsheathed automatics jumped out. In one of the apartments of the house the bodies of four children lay twitching in their own blood. The mother fainted. It happened thus: A Russian soldier separated four boys aged from eleven to four, from their mother and the girls. He put them up against the wall and said: "We will kill off the men in their infancy so that the Germans don't start making war again. Then we can sit peacefully at home and not be forced to go to war again in twenty years time. A thing the Germans do to us every twenty years." He then machinegunned them. The woman screaming and out of her mind threw herself on the corpses of her children. She got up and still screaming kept banging her head against the wall and pulled the hair from her head. She was the wife of a servant and they had been a family of many children. She cried ceaselessly but in such a way as if the cries were not coming from her own throat. She was beside herself with sorrow. Looking up with red eyes she kept crying: "Gott!! Gott!!" She lit candles and maoned and keened till she became voiceless. Again and again she looked at the corpses, the ceiling, the walls. She bent over a prayerbook, paged through it, page after page, and burst out crying again: "Gott hilf mir, den so was geht mir bis an die sule." In the end she bent over the book, her shoulders hunched forward, tears flowing onto the prayerbook. I did not take my

eyes off the bereaved mother, or the dead children and everything that happened in that house;I did not weep a single tear, but neither did I get any satisfaction from this catastrophe of my Bitter enemy. I was not comforted by the thought of an "eye for an eye."

The question arose within me, and did not leave me. "What had the children been guilty of?" It was not important that they had been the sons of Belial or the sons of a good man. They had, as yet, not been party to any crime. I was so immersed in my thoughts and meditations, I could not break away. I was taken back in my minds eye to my own village. There I saw a Jewish woman moaning and keening and bending over a prayerbook, whole leaves were yellow with age, wetting them with her ceaseless flow of tears, wringing her hand and crying bitterly and using the same words. "G-d help me as I can stand no more!" I saw the mothers as they had been at the outbreak of the war. Carrying their children in their arms, the Germans chasing them along, hitting them with heavy sticks. It was generally known how the Germans, fathers of families themselves, threw the Jewish babies up in the air and caught them on their bayonets. Yes, the earth had covered them long ago. Long grass had already covered the pits. Sorrow, bit into my soul.

My friend Misha stood beside me. His face with a crumpled up, distorted expression of distaste, deep in thought. (He was a Pole, somewhat religious but eternally optimistic. In 1941 he had been brought to Germany as a forced labourer. His ideas on Jews had irritated me more times than once, but in spite of this I liked him. He was understanding, outspoken and honest. He could think for himself and come to an honest conclusion and was not easily influenced by German propaganda. He did not hide his opinions which were sometimes very outspoken and dangerous.) He had watched everything with me without saying a word.

Finally he add: "But this is war! These scum of the earth

began it and they taught hew other nations to be cruel. Now they are reaping what they sowed. Understand one thing. Vengeance draws forth vengeance. You can say what you like about the Poles or about the Slavs in general, but they won't treat others the way the Germans treated them. But I am sure they will remember. Father to son to grandson will tell what war can cause." He looked at the mother and at the corpses. He seemed to hesitate in his thoughts, and to justify his words, he emphasized something in whispers: "It is not for us to cry and sorrow. It could be that the father of the children wrought havoc among the Poles." Then dropping his voice, said: "Perhaps he even murdered Jews and smashed in the heads of babies against the walls. 'Kollega". I have been such atrocities with my own eyes. I will tell you more. Those children weren't completely innocent. They had begun to absorb race hatred when sucking in their mother's milk and that same wailing, mourning mother had already poisoned their souls." They had learned to hate every stranger", -again he dropped his voice,"- and the word Jew had already become anathema to them. What she sowed, she is reaping." "Yes," I thought, "she sang her babies to sleep with the Horst Wessel song." Our eyes met, we looked at each other for a long time. We lit cigarettes and went out. Mishka looked back and crossed himself. Philosophically he added: "It seems sometimes that things that happen in war time are hard to explain and analyse in cold logic. Perhaps it is the will of G-d, but I doubt that Will. Of one thing I am sure, they are the work of wicken men. Of that there can be no doubt. Kollega! The vengeance of an eye for an eye is necessary as a reaction of what they have done. No-one will pat them on the back and say, 'You have been bad boys. From now on you are forgiven, be good, go to Church, pray and confess to the priest. Jesus will tell you, you are forgiven.' No, my boys, I tell you! Let their blood flow! There is no forgiveness!"

The night frost bit into my hands and face. The rumbling of

machine guns and tanks and the shrieking of people cut through the quiet of the winter night and from time to time bullets whistled past us. (The village was spread out over an area of about 3 kilometers and on either side were the two central roads on which, at that moment, the great Soviet Army was moving without a minute's respite and chasing the Wehrmacht Northwards.)

The Soviet officers were satisfied with the inspection. They got into the sleigh covered themselves with the furs and when they returned to their headquarters, they ordered the driver to take us back to the farm we had come from. Their task had been to comb the area for hidden SS men. As far as I knew their journey had been worthwhile. They had collected a bit of jewellery from the rich farm houses in the surroundings. They jumped from the sleigh and called after us: "To-morrow you people are to get out of here!" They went back to the house of the estate owner, where they had set up their headquarters. We lived through a tense night. We had exact information that there were SS men and German soldiers in the haystacks and granaries. These were people who had remained alive after their units had been broken up and destroyed by the Soviets. They were given food by the farmers in the neighbourhood. We were well aware of the fact that they wanted to take revenge on us.

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WE START OUT ON OUR JOURNEY BACK

The next morning our friends all came together at our place with knap-sacks on their backs. Some of them waited for us in carts on the slope of the road opposite the estate. We wanted the cavalcade to be complete, we wanted to travel as a group. A drunk Soviet soldier would hesitate to attack a group whereas a single person would have been sure and easy prey for any rapacious passer by. He would know that this was a group of released captives on their way back to their homeland. Bolek fixed up a long cart, padded it with straw and took out the two great Belgian horses from the stables. The farmer did not want to let us have these fine horses which were his favourites. Apparently the German soldiers who were hiding had encouraged him during the night. He was still under the mistaken impression that the Germans had power. Then Bolek shouted at him: "I have worked for you for years without pay. These horses are my recompense. You took away my father's farm. I have to bring these horses back to the Polish Mazur which is my home." When the landlord Raiman saw the cavalcade of Soviet lorries approaching his farm he knew that he was helpless. He no longer resisted Bolek and even helped him harness the horses to the wagon. The farmer stood alone on his farm and waved us farewell, but we did not return his greeting. We joined the cavalcade of carts which were waiting for us and everyone wanted to get out of Prussia as quickly as possible. We got onto the Konigsberg-Bishopsberg Road. The road had been badly damaged after two armies had rolled over it and there were also potholes from mortars. In the holes there were puddles of water from melted snow. We travelled South East in the direction of Raisel. It was an ancient city, a regional centre which the Germans were proud of as they had been proud of all the cities of Prussia. It was said that the city had belonged to the Poles in the 15th Century and had been taken over by the Prussians in

the 18th Century. The Church was built in the Gothic style. Now the city was wrapped in smoke. Smoke and flames were belching and lighting up the darkness and the forbidding atmosphere of the feudal city symbolising the narrow bigotted values that had helped to give birth to the Monster of Nazism.that was now in the process of being destroyed. The stench from corpses rose with the thick smoke. We travelled along the side streets.

There we had to contend with the dangerous congestion resulting from the fires blocking the roads. Only after a very long time did we find our way through. All the roads from Lithuania and Eastern Poland that were going North were taken up by the unending flow of the Soviet vehicles. At the same time carts loaded with food such as beef and pork and cages of live chicken in them, were lying in the fields and the ditches. Thousands of cyclists and wounded people were moving slowly along, struggling with the snow. Our cavalcade was travelling in the direction of Bishopsburg. It was a fortified town (Burg). Here a great fortress had been built by the Bishops in the 14th Century and round it the city had developed. At that time the inhabitants had been called serfs or servants and even during the National Socialist era this humiliating appellation had remained. They still called the servants "serfs", although the Ministry of Labour called them land workers, but their work conditions and status had not changed very drastically. Because of the law, that favoured the landowner, he retained the upper hand during the fascist era.

In the 15th Century a Church was built at Bishopsberg, also in the Gothic style. Now during the bombing the beautiful stone building had collapsed. The beautiful Church was burnt out. Thick smoke still rose from the thick burning walls of buildings. Now and again the thunder of a collapse was heard. The fire broke free from the fall of stone and flared up again. Fire spread and burned up the saw mills and then the wheat mill. The roads were blocked by

the fall of masonry and stones and it was dangerous to go through. Tanks and destroyed lorries closed the roadways. The burnt bodies of soldiers were trapped in the tanks and scatteded in the roadway. In spite of the frost the streets stank with the stench of disintegrating bodies. These were soldiers from the Red Army and from the Wehrmacht they also included those of refugees and captives and forced labourers. This we could see by the clothes they wore. At the cross-roads stood Russianssoldiers directing the cavalcades of soldiers on their way to the East.

One did not see a living German civilian in the smoky ruins.It was hard to ask where all the thousands of Germans who had been there before were now. Had they managed to run away? It did not seem possible. Perhaps they had been trapped in the burning buildings.

The Soviet Army spread out quickly and left a mass of destroyed buttresses and bunkers in its wake.

From Bishopsberg our cavalcade turned South West - We travelled slowly. They stopped us at every crossroad and looked for German refugees amongst us. It happened that the captives had taken young German girls with them with the consent of their parents. It was to save them from rape and death. This the Russians got to know and took them out of the cavalcades of the former captives. They also commanded us to hand over jewellery which according to them, belonged to the state treasury. If not, we were threatened with punishment of death. That also happened when one had to deal with drunk soldiers. However, they took the gold for themselves no matter if they were Commissars or NKVD men, or even soldiers. This happened to us, a soldier stopped our wagon, took one of our horses, and gave us a weak one in its place. Bolek resisted with all his might. The soldier trained his gun on him, pushed him away. The Soviets were hostile and often threatened the Polish and Russian captives with death. We therefore wanted to leave Prussia as soon as we possibly could. A few kilometers away

another soldier stopped us and took off the second Belgian horse and gave us his lame horse inits place. So we had to get down to help the horses pull the wagon. In the end both the horses were useless. Bolek was greatly embittered. He had dreamed of taking the landlord's horses to his father's farm. He had slaved for it but his dream never came true. It was possible to understand the feelings and suspicions of the soldiers because of the many traitors among the Soviet ranks from Generals to simple soldiers. In spite of it all as much as I got to know them, the soldier of the sensitive Russian people can change from the stern disciplinarian to the understanding moderate, even when he is drunk. It is the opposite with the inflexible Germans. He is obtuse and dull and nothing can move him. These were the days at the end of January, 1945. We had already been on the raod for two days, on the way to the North-West border of the Byelor Russian Soviet Border with all manner of delays, examinations, and seraches of belongings and scrutiny of identity certificates. We were examined by the NKVD the Military Police and simply by embittered soldiers. All were hostile. The battles had already been over for some time. The Soviet Army had already reached mid-Prussia and as yet the corpses of the soldiers were lying around still unburied. They lay with their guns in their hands just as they were when they were given the order to spread out to capture the giant bunkers of the Germans. These bunkers of the Germans were half above the ground and the greater part below, only the cupolas jutting out. The Russians had lost a lot of men breaking them open and overcoming them. The first wave of infantry would spread out shouting "For the Fatherland! For Stalin! Hurrah!" They would be mercilessly moved down by the Germans inside. It was only after the change of the third wave of infantry that they finally succeeded in cracking open the bunker and gaining the victory. This was the way they built up the road to victory and freedom. It was at the terrible cost of the sacrifice of lives of men. The Soviets did not have time to collect the bodies of their fighters. They pressed on ceaselessly and the Wehrmacht was trapped and encircled by pincer movements from which

there was no hope of release or escape. The SS men were obliged to jump from their hiding places, and firing heavily, break through the cavalcades of the refugees and the lines of the Soviet Army to have a way of escape to the lakes. But they did not succeed. Most of them were shot. SS bodies were strewn all along the way, with their heads down. Near the inns were the corpses of women lying with their dresses pulled up over their heads. These were already swollen because of the frost.

More than once we found the owners of the shops lying dead and frozen in the drawers behind the counters. Had they been playing games? Had the soldiers pushed them into the drawers with the grain as a joke, or perhaps they had crawled in there to hide from the Russians.

Thousands of T.O.T. members, elderly citizens, foremen, who had commanded hundreds of forced labourers and had cruelly exploited them in the building of the bunkers were now lying dead and their bodies were strewn in groups after they had been hit by mortars, or shot at, at short range. Our food supply had run out and in cases like this we foraged for food from the upturned wagons by the side of the road. There we found bread and smoked meat. My friends and I found a treasure chest with jewels in a locked box in a wagon. The chest was beautifully chisseled out and lined with satin covered cushioning. Every item had its place. Strings of pearls, diamond brooches, shimmering rings and gold chains. My friends divided it up amongst each other. I did not take anything. Firstly, I had a feeling that there was no-one to take it to. Secondly, I felt sure it would be taken by the Russian soldiers at the next check-point when we were searched and this is exactly what happened.

A good friend of mine was travelling in the wagon behind. Zachariah was a man of about 50. Sturdy and well built and strong in spite of the hardships endured. I had got to know him before I left for the front. He worked on a farm in the village next to ours. He began to visit me. He was clever and shrewd, rich in personal experience with a lively sense of humour and was able to

express himself well. People would always listen to his stories. His mother tongue was Ukranian but he knew many of the languages of the minority groups fluently. He knew their ways, their habits and customs. Above all, he was very careful what he said. In spite of our friendship we were careful and even suspicious of him. We all, especially I, wanted to know who he was and what he had done in Russianand Ukrania in the period of the Nazi conquest. We usually let him talk. We knew that he lied far more than he revealed. When we first got to know each other he said that he had served in the special police and also in a special unit. A few weeks before the coming of the Russians he got to know of my origin and he particularly sought my friendship hoping that I could help him when dealing with the NKVD.

On one of his visits during a heavy Russian bombardment when everything was rattling and shaking, he was particularly nervous and revealed his story. He had been a prisoner until 1941 and exiled in Siberia. There he was imprisoned in a labour camp. He had reached the status of foreman among the prisoners. He had made friends with the camp commanders, who appointed him cook. From then on he was never hungry. After a long period as cook he became chief food storeman for the prison camp on the Volga. He kept this job for a number of years, sailing back and forth on the river. He would stop at cities and towns and order tools, clothes and foodstuffs in large quantities. He had great organizing ability and won the trust of the commanders. He lacked nothing; food, drink, warm clothes, smokes and women. Women prisoners, and some who weren't even prisoners. He made money and waited for his release. He missed his freedom and he longed for his family life and life without supervision. He always hated the armed guard at his side. When the Germans invaded his region he escaped in the resulting chaos, and went over to the German side. Hinting to me especially, he said that he had had Jewish friends amongst the prisoners and helped them even when he had

been in the special unit under the Germans, he had helped the Jews. I understood what he wanted from me. He wanted my aid and protection. He thought that when the Soviets arrived I would have special rights, and I would intercede for him if he was arrested (As far as I knew he had been one of the most faithful servants to the Germans and had ruled over the Russian and Jewish population with the utmost cruelty.) Now on our way, we came to realise that we were all in the hands of the NKVD and the Militia. They were hostile to us, not only to us, the Polish captives, but also the Russians who had fallen into German hands. They wereeven more hostile to them. However, any attempt on my part of revealing my origin would have brought me catastrophe. I would have been ruthlessly interrogated. How was it possible that a Jew could have survived German captivity? So Zachariah could hope for nothing from me.

Near the Bylorussian border on old Polish border the entire area was heavily mined. We had to traverse narrow paths very carefully walking one behind the other. Any straying from the path might have caused certain death. In this way the crossing of the border was strictly controlled. It prevented the Vlasovites or any other suspected person from evading entry into Russia or Poland.

If I am not mistaken it was on the German side at the crossroad close to Ossovitz. They stopped the crowds to examine their identity cards. They stared penetratingly at every pedestrian or passenger.

They had organized a campaign against the Vlasovites of Western and Eastern Ukraina. They were looking for Don Cossacks. The commissars who were doing this work had had a lot of experience in it previously. They would point to the suspect and command him to approach. After a few questions they would begin to lash and beat him with their special canes. (Sometimes innocent Russian forced labourers would fall into their hands and be unjustly punished.) Zachariah walked along about five meters

behind me. Opposite us a detective presented himself. He was wearing a long grey rubaska over his trousers. The rubashka was buttoned up to his throat. He wore an ammunition belt with a revolver round his waist. He had a long cane in his hand. Without saying much he grabbed Zachariah by the back of his neck. (It was hard to know whether he knew him or had been trained to pick out suspects of that type.) He threw him down onto the snow and began to lash at him ceaselessly. After that he took him away with other suspects to the guard station and there they were all interrogated and classified. Most of them were immediately sentenced. They put them against a wall and shot them.

It was easy to see that there had been terrible battles in that area.

For a distance of ten kilometers you could not see a house that was worth saving. There were only ruins and sooty chimneys to be seen. Everything was burnt. Haystacks, cowsheds, beef and food. What had not been destroyed by the battles was deliberately destroyed by the German soldiers and the SS who carried on a partisan style war.; By destroying corn stores, pigs and cows. They did not want to leave any food for the Russians. A scorched earth policy.

On the Bylorussian-Prussian border there were farms with their buildings. In these cases we went off the road into the deserted farmer's house and looked for food. In these places we found horrible hair-raising scenes. The Soviet soldiers would go into the attics of the houses to rest or sleep for a while. In the night the SS men aided by the Vlasovites would come and shoot them. In other places it was evident that there had been a hand to hand fight.

In this way I saw Soviet soldiers lying dead beside their weapons and saw no signs of blood. Rumour had it that they had

been poisoned by the well water. Later we got instructions from the Soviet soldiers not to eat the food or drink the water in these houses. We kept away from the houses.

After a time we saw the farms go up in flames and behind a thick curtain of smoke we saw armed Germans running across the forests and swamps.

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ALONE ALONG MOURNFUL WAYS

I breathed a sigh of relief. At last I was free of the land of horror and depression. The iron hand of cruelty, the symbols of which the swastika and the skull and cross bones and the crosses of the church in which the Lord Jesus, son of the Jews, was to be found. They burnt incense to him at the alter. Sometimes even the SS, the SD and the Nazi party men. In the Churches hovered the stupid deadly hatred towards the ancient Jewish people. Now everything was about to fall to collapse and be destroyed behind me.

After five years and four months I again walked on Polish soil, a free man, released from the jaws of wold beasts. I returned to the land where I was born, where I absorbed the rich and many faceted culture of Judaism in my infancy, youth and young adulthood. Together with that, I breathed in the atmosphere and beauty of Poland as Poland. In this country I dreamed dreams. I spent my pristine youth. I created my best hopes of a rosy future. Under splendid skies on clear nights I yearned and dreamed of the hills of the far away Galil. In my imagination I saw the nights of Canaan more clearly than those of Bylorussian. I expressed songs of desire and longing. I lived through and expressed when I went to the youth camps of the Hashomer Hazair. I wandered through the country-side and bathed in the plentiful waters of Bylorussia, Lithuania and Poland. I jumped across stepping stones in the chattering waters of the streams. I loved and sang when Nature woke to new life and the songs of the birds gave the message of new spring and the blue skies again became clear. The air was heavy with the scent of the mayflower. In the summer many blue forget-me-nots looked out from among the crops of ripening corn and I saw the fields in the valleys of Eretz Yisrael. All this

was absorbed into my soul. A youth that bloomed towards happiness and great expectations but whose wings had been clipped with the song "Wenn das Judenblut von merser spritzt." and the chain of generations of my family were cut off.

They had stemmed from proud Jews, sturdy and rooted in the life of the land around. They walked among the Christians deep in their belief and its honesty and justice. They had lived in the Jewish towns and villages. They had walked in the ways of their creator and were tolerant and understanding towards their Christian neighbours and here was I, the last of all those people, who had lived and worked the land. All my dreams were cut off and buried in the common graves with the many members of my family. I looked for those remaining from yesterday. I looked for footprints but weeds, grass and soil had covered them all. Like an unknown stranger I wandered alone and looked for someone . I passed through greater than I had ever experienced in this country. This fate followed every surviving Jew. We continued our journey on Polish soil. We passed heaped ruins. There they said had been the town of Grawo. Not far from us stood huts knocked together from tins and planks. Near one of these huts stood a woman wrapped in a blanket. I remembered something about the town and approached the woman. "Madam, Do any Jews live here?" "No," she answered curtly. "Where are they, perhaps you know?" "Why are you so interested in them," she wanted to know. She asked and looked at me suspiciously as one who was not perfectly within his senses. "You are the first to ask after them". She stood back somewhat afraid. "They tortured the Jews and raped the Jewesses and burned them all alive. She turned and disappeared among the huts. Then I remembered the words of one of the Polish forced labourers who had been witness to this. We crossed Ossovitz on foot one behind the other along a narrow footpath. Both sides had been fenced off by barbed wire because of the danger of mines. Ossovitz had been a fortress built by the Russians in ~~the 19th Century~~. In 1915 there had been a battle there in which

the Russians were defeated by the Germans and the fortress conquered.When independant Poland arose it was given to her but in 1939 it was taken over by the Germans without even a shottbeing fired. Now the heavy walled fortress had been shelled and the walls with their narrow slit openings were about to crumble and collaple. So we turned in the direction of Bialistock. There were long trains running with slogans such as "Death to Fascism" painted on them, or, "We have attained victory". They hurried in a North Westerly direction with many wagons full of soldiers guns and tanks. They first came to Konigsberg and so on to Berlin and also in the opposite direction, where trains carrying wounded men and lots of furniture, domestic utensils, and farm equipment to Russia. Thousands of refugees, mostly Vlasovites, were being carried to Russia. There were Polish refugees with their friends leaving Polish Bylorussia and going to independant Poland, which was established across the Curson line (The Curson line had been the boundary in 1920 but later Poland had extended beyond this. In 1943 the Curzon line was again used as the boundary between Russianand Poland except that the river Bug was included in the boundary line.)

In order to get on to the train wagon we had to jump on it while it was moving. We were happy to be able to grasp the outside handle rail and push our way inside. The carriage was overcrowded. The train continued Eastwards. On the sides, beside the lines, stood ruin after ruin. Stations were destroyed and the rails were twisted intertwined snakes, crushed carriages were lying one on top of the other and changed to heaps of junk. Forests were uprooted for a long way from the sides of the lines. Villages were burnt out and groups of tin shanties and lean to's were taking their place. Rain and snow filled up the ruined stations. People waited for days for a train to come. Impatient people pushed into the overcrowded carriages. People ran the moment they heard an engine whistle. Most of the time it was in vain. The people

blundered. They were homeless and without families. Like them thousands of war criminals whose hands and sould were soaked in blood and who also wanted to move Eastwards. No-one could describe the atrocities they had committed. Now they were living in fear and returning to their homelands in the hope that Stalin's policy would soften and change and their crimes would be forgiven. Many of them had no illusions. They were going Westwards in trains to Poland and from there even further overseas to America.

My friends were men who had had experience in life. They judged the historical events according to the way they had sufferred. They spoke in whispers. Even here in the Soviet zone one had to be careful. There were those who spoke bitingly and sarcastically. They would merely hint and break off their sentences in the middle, hoping to be understood by inference. Howwould the Gevernment look on them. How would they fit into a regime they had never lived in. The meeting with parents and those who had married also reluctantly anticpated the meeting. How would they meet their wives and children. How to fill up the five lost years and pick up the threads again. They hardly mentioned their personal problems, even though there were many. What pressed on them now more than ever. We sat in the train and desultorally discussed various subjects. In the end Pavel Kudashov said: "In my opinion bradki, the greatest happiness for us is that the horror of Hitler and his Herren are being wiped out and defeated and that we have managed to return home alive and well." "Yes," everybody agreed, "for that we have lived and suffered and in this there is no difference of opinion amongst us." Michal said, "I am trying to imagine what our meetings with our wives will be like. We will ask them how many men they changed and in how many beds they slept. It is well for the bachelors. They will begin life without jealousy and problems of those kinds." "You are mistaken", said the bachelors. "Everyone of us has left a girlfriend and everyone

swore to be faithful." Everybody laughed. These last sentences were heard by most people in the carriage. There was an optimistic atmosphere in the carriage. Everybody was talking at the same time and not a thing could be heard. The train's wheels clattered and creaked and the whistle shrieked. Finally we were travelling home after five years of captivity. Could a stranger be able to understand what this meant to people like us? My friends sat silent. Each busy with his own thoughts. They were racked with hesitation and anxiety as they neared their long awaited goal, and the realisation of their five year long dreams and wishes. In spite of my admiration of their understanding and wisdom I had a twinge of envy. At least their families would welcome them with joy. I had no-one. I forsaw how in the near future the feeling of utter desolation and lonliness would overtake me and would not leave me until I had uprooted myself from this blood-soaked land where I was born.

In spite of everything, sadness was mixed with some happiness. Did I value the fact that I was able to witness the downfall of the totalitarian terror with my own eyes? I also became aware of the fact that I had also played my part in his down fall. At the beginning of the war, I did not hide myself among the bushes. Death had not frightened me. As a Jew in the Polish army I did more than was demanded of me. My commanders had been boastful and cowardly, but not I. Here as a young man I was ready to face the future.

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B I A L I S T O K

The train crawled. It passed slowly over every bridge that had been fixed. It stopped at every little station and waited until they had found the undamaged rail and was able to continue to Bialistok. Before the war,half of the population had been Jews. It had been a living and thriving city in every sense of the word. The Jews were mostly small tradesmen with small workshops and were also workers in industry. Now there was a tremendous drive in the city. Traffic was heavy. The Poles and Russian Armies came and went. Refugees filled the city wondering where they should go, Westwards, or Eastwards. I looked at the people walking on the widewalks. Perhaps I would manage to recognize a Jewish face among the many hundreds there ..... No, it was hard to determine. The broad-shouldered Jewish porter of old with the heavy packs on his back, walking along firmly and confidently with the juicy spicy slangy Yiddish in his mouth called from the backstreets, the workshops and factories, was no longer to be seen. I walked along the streets searching for a Jewish face, but there was none to be seen. The little clerk rushing about with his pencil behind his ear, with his thick spectacles on his nose, was no more. I didn't meet the old Jew with the long beard, nor the Jew with the so-called characteridtically eagle-shaped nose, nor the Jewess wearing her warm clothes. Her wide skirt and the short coat with its cottonwool lining sitting in the cold February air on a stool at a haberdashery stall with her feet being kept warm on a small charcoal stool. I did not see Jews and I did not hear Yiddish. Not in juicy curses nor ordinary conversation. There were none and it was as if they had never been. A community of sixty thousand had been wiped off the face of the earth. The remaining population were busy with their everyday chores. Two sturdy looking men wearing short leather

jackets stood on the corner talking Yiddish in low tones, almost a whisper. I spoke to them in a broken Yiddish. I was wearing a long army coat on which was painted a short cross in red paint, the sign of a prisoner of war. They looked at me suspiciously and were quiet. They did not speak immeidately. I understood their hesitancy. Perhaps I was an NKVD personell. There were many there at the time and not only were there Russians and Poles,among them, but also Jews. I told them where I had been living before the war. "There are no Jews there, and no point in looking for them," they told me, and left as quickly as they could.

The Polish army was marching in the streets. A Company without arms was passing. At their head was Redzanek. I knew him at once. We had been in the same Company. We had fought together near Kalushin. He had been a good soldier and a warm sociable person. He had hardly changed. He was short with a round face. Careful quick moving eyes. He had always been active in the Company. A warm easy- going type. I ran across the street to meet him. He at once recognized me, stopped his Company, and embraced me. "How were you saved during the war?" "Don't ask!", I answered, and added, "How did you get on?" "Don't ask", he replied, "and where are you going?" II am looking for my family who were living in Eastern Poland", I said. "There are no Jews there," he said, "the Germans wiped them all out", and he whispered in my ear. "If you cross the border, you won't be able to return very easily, they will make it very difficult for you. Go back to Congress Poland as quickly as you can. I have no time Kollega, I am in the permanent force." I am taking these greenies to the baths as theyused to take us if you remember! Be well," he waved his hand in salute and continued to march his Company along. We did not stay long in Bialistok.

We returned to the station to get a train for Wolkowisk. I did not want to accept other peoples' opinions. I wanted to

return to my parents' home and be convinced by what I saw - they were no longer there. I decided to continue with my friends across Prussia. Again we waited for a train a long while until we had no patience left. Again we used our elbows to push our way on and into the carriage! The journey proceeded at a snail's pace. Four hours the train shunted from one rail to the other. The locomotive whistled. The signalmen waved and signalled with their flags but the train did not move. When it finally left the station it would slow down from time to time for some inexplicable reason. Our distination was Wolkowisk where the border crossing was. This was where the NKWD examined the identity cards, interrogated and arrested suspicious characters. The attitude of the interrogators was by no means pleasant or encouraging. I hesitated. I didn't know what to do. I had already learned enough from other Polish refugees who had left Bylorussia of their own accord because of the attitude of the population who did not welcome Poles. This was, of course, because of the Soviet regime which was being established there. The tendency was that there should not be so many minority groups and they particularly did not want Poles for whom they harboured a traditional dislike. I managed to speak to a few Jews who had succeeded in staying alive by remaining in the forests. These people spoke to me very unwillingly. They were suspicious of me but they told me to go back as I would not find any home there. The Polish refugees spoke straight to the point. They were against the regime and they hated the Jews, especially those who had remained alive. The Jew who remained alive feared for his life and therefore spoke as little as possible. I still did not know what to do. Most of my friends belonged to the Soviet section whether they were Catholics or Provoslavs - a very few belonged to the Polish section. My friend Yusiek had become friendly with a Bylorussian girl who had been taken to Germany as a forced labourer in the last year of the war. Now they decided to get married and she decided to give up her Bylorussian homeland which was under the Soviet regime and go with

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Pinchas Alperowitz who was from the town of Gluboki had had a hard and bitter time of it. More than once he had tried to kill himself. He was a highly cultured and sensitive man, kind hearted and ready to give to give away the last shirt off his back. He eventally found his way to Israel.

to do and where to go. My friends understood my [illegible] ly and spoke openly: "You won't find a home or family on the Soviet side. Make up your mind! We are going Eastwards!"For the last time we looked at each other. Our eyes grew moist. For a moment we stood together silently. Then we embraced. Vasiel Gursky and I embraced without a word. We had gone through so much together. We parted. They went Eastwards to their parents, wives and families in Bylorussia under the Soviet regime and with them went Pola, Alderowitz the Jew. I went with Yusiek and his girlfriend Westwards into Poland. Civilian transportation was bad. Only military transportation was in evidence. Most of the rails, the stations and the bridges were destroyed. To get to Lublin and from there Southwards we travelled in crawling trains or in lorries or getting lifts in farmers' sleighs. Thousands like us, tried with tired and fallen faces, returning from the camps and from the forced labour vanues. Weary saldiers were also wandering about. Often though weak and sick themselves, gave their places to the old and sick, those weaker than themselves, whose bones were jutting out from their fleshless bodies, proof of how long they had suffered starvation (Most of the people in this condition were Jews and death finished them off on these journeys, ironically, when they were at the brink of their happiness.)

As I said, we travelled in army lorries that picked us up on the sides of the roads. These lorries were on their way to the newly conquered territories in Germany with food, guns and ammunition. The lorries were usually open and umprotected. The winds cutting into us as they hurried along the slippery [illegible] travelled back and forth on the width of the

road, 'zig-zagging in accordance with the amount of vodka the driver had imbibed. Nevertheless he speeded along, not caring if he was going uphill or downhill. Many of the travellers without coats suffered from the cold. Their only comfort being the thought that they were on their way home and would soon be there. The soldiers were wrapped in their army coats and would sing almost all the way. Lorries overturned because of sharp turns in the roads and soldiers and civilian camp survivors, men and women of all nations were killed in these accidents. More than once the soldiers gave the refugees food, but the opposite also occurred fairly frequently. During the journey soldiers would take away valuables from the refugees. Things like this also happened on the trains. They would threaten the travellers with guns and take away their valuables. And if it happened that a Jewish refugee resisted, he was robbed and thrown bodily off the moving lorry. There were armed soldiers who raped women on the trains. This all happened in the presence of the other passengers. It began to be an everyday occurence. It happened that men protected the women, saying that they were their wives and most of the time this succeeded in saving them . (Four months later when I worked in the "Bricha," I had to bring refugees from Budapest across to the Austrain border. I had to cope with the same problem. I had a transport of eighty people, young, old, men and women, same were pregnant. The soldiers, most of them Asiatic, Russians, which could be seen from their slanting eyes would threaten to attack the women and I had to intervene, I was often forced to bribe them and sometimes I didn't even succeed.)

Yusiek, his girlfriend and I would jump from the lorry when we saw the armed soldiers were about to attack the women. We could continue walking until we got another lift in a farmer's sleigh. When we reached Lublin station it was so crowded that there wasn't even space to lie down neither among the broken carriages nor among the thousands of people collected together behind the ruined walls of the buildings. In this area, between the Bug and the city of Lodz, millions of people had gathered

together: refugees who had been uprooted from their homes for years were there. They crowded around the station buildings, waiting day and night for a train to take them to their homes. It was an enormous conglomerate of people and languages, many of them giving the impression that they had come from concentration camps. So one found ex-"Katznekim" mixed with Germans, ex-SS men and Vlasovites and Ukranian progromniks mixed with refugees from the camps and they themselves, were trying to appear as refugees. It was enough if the crowd recognised one of their war criminals in their midst. The crowd would judge and sentence them on the spot and by the time the police and the NKVD came to them, they had already been killed. But in spite of this summary justice many of them managed to cross the borders into the English and American zones, and I later saw them in the UNO camps enjoying the rights of the organization. They gave them and the SS men among them a place of shelter in England, in South America and even in the U.S.A.

Many Poles had served the Germans in the time of war. Those who had found a hiding place among the Poles for payment or because of the goodwill of the Poles (there were people like that) saved themselves. They would look for Jews and other anti-Nazis uncover them and hand them to the SS or the Gestapo for justice. Now these people were scrounging in the Lublin markets, seeking their own lives and safety. There was plenty of food on the black market, sausages, cans of preserves, cigarettes and cigars. These were sold at exorbitant prices.

From the time I began to roam round liberated Poland I began to notice and understand that there were many people who had not yet come to themselves, even after the war. People who had been left without any family completely bereaved. Young women who had come back looking like hags, having suffered starvation and hardlabour. This was not the case with the majority of Poles who had been left in their places and had remained the arrogant, boastful and mocking people they had always been..

In the end Yusiek said: "I have had enough. I am sick of this distorted motherland and its peculiar people. I did not expect anything like this during my years of captivity. The people have changed and become worse than they had been before. Let us hurry home to my parents as fast as we can." We therefore continued on our way with all the means of transportation available to us till we got to the town of Kruvyeshov. It seemed to me that I had read in some place that Kruvyeshov had been less damaged than other places. It was a big city with a long and eventful history connected to the Polish Kings of bygone ages. It had suffered during the wars with the Tartars and with the uprisings of the Ukranians. The construction and set out of the market place was typically Jewish. The market was filled to overflowing that day with farmers and traders. The farmers had brought their crops to the market. They apparently had known how to hide their produce during the war. How the market was overflowing with plenty from meat and potatoes or various other vegetables and food. I felt that I was back in a market place where I had been before the war. I looked for Jews. I was sure that they had returned to their normal occupations and places, but I was bitterly disappointed. Of the seven thousand who had been there before the war, I did not manage to identify a single one. When I asked the Poles they answered abruptly: "There isn't a single Jew left in this town."

We came to the little town of Dubienko where Yusiek's parents lived. As the people told me there had been a Jewish community of one thousand five hundred Jews. These were needy and different Jews who had been occupied in retail trading and peddling and earned their modest livelihood from the surrounding villages. There had been others who had been employed transporting logs of felled trees along the river Bug to the port of Gdunia, the only port along the Baltic where Poles and Ukranians were. There were two Churches, the Catholic and the Provoslavian. Both stood empty

but at the end of the war and the establishment of temporary Polish State the Ukranians fled eastwards over the River Bug in fear of the vengeance of the Poles. The inhabitants were proud of the history of the place. At the end of the 19th Century Kostietsusko had defeated the Russians there and had not allowed them to cross the river Bug. Now the little town was in an unknown and faraway corner of Poland that was situated on the Polish Russian, the former Curzon line. The river was the natural border line. The town was quiet. The typical Jewish market place was sunk in the mud. Around it were such wooden houses with narrow ruined porhhes. Part of the houses were deserted and the windows shuttered. Most of the houses were occupied by Polish refugees who had fled from Volien and Galicia. These refugees had fled from the vengeance of the Ukranians. There was no Russian Militia or Polish Police. They only knew that they were assigned to independant Poland. Across the river and on the Eastern side in the forests and river there were still white Poles whose aim was to kill the Soviets and any Jews who had still remained alive. They wanted to return to their houses in the town. There were also bands of Ukranians who wandeded about on the other side of the river, attacking any Polish villages that remained, looting and killing the inhabitants. The common enemy of both the groups were the Jews. Both groups were afraid that the Jews would come back and demandthe return of their property. Inhabitants of the place told me about the Jews who had been concentrated in one area half ghetto, half open community, in 1941, by the Germans who had conquered the area at that time. In 1942 the Jews were put on wagons and removed to a place about 15 kilometers away. From there they were taken by train to the extermination camp of Sobibor. That was the end of the Dubienka Jewish community. Before the war the Christians had hated Jews but had hidden and controlled their hatred (I had heard that their relationships had been one of tolerance and humanity.) Shortly before the war anti-semitic incitement

of the "Endekim" had been spread in the area. Before the extermination of the Jews the hatred of the Christians for the Jews grew to such an extent it had no limit. Now I felt a prisoner and a dangerous tension in the air whenever Jews were mentioned. I noticed that generally the area had not suffered very badly during the war. The houses were white-washed and in good conditions. The farmers continued to develop their farms and raised pigs and chickens and the cows gave good milk. It was different for the Polish refugees, who had come from the other side. The armies that came here were not very comfident but they took their share from the crops of the land. Partisans units too came here and asked for food and supplies from the farmers. The Poles, however, worked hard, habilitated themselves after every such event and knew how to hide a cut of pork and bags of grain from the eyes of the army. It is like the folk saying, the farmer is like a sheep. It is shorn but starts growing her wool afresh.

Before I went to the home of Yusiek's parents, I asked him not to tell them of my Jewish origin. While I was with them I felt from the hostile atmosphere around that I could get into trouble. He promised. His parents received him with tears of joy. He introduced me as a Pole, his friend and companion, from the war and from captivity. They welcomed me heartily. His mother at once prepared a basin of hot water and soaped my hair and back and washed me. She gave me a warm vest and underpants. They all treated me well in the house, but as the saying goes: the fact that I was a Jew was known on the very first day. This however, did not change their attitude towards me. They told me of their two married sons who went to settle in Galacia with the help of the Government. It meant that as real Poles they got land in the Ukraina and in Polish Bylorussia. It was a political policy of the Government to settle Poles in an area in which there were not many real Poles. Their sons managed to build up two fine farms there. When the Germans conquered the whole of Western and Eastern Ukraina the Ukranians attacked them and wiped

them out. They threw their young children into the wells and drowned them. Theycrucified the children on the walls and wrote the caption "The Polish Eagle" above them. She also spoke about the inhuman murder of the Jews.

They opened a bottle of semagon for supper and drank to the wonderful occasion of their son's return from the war. They spoke about the "Banderowtzim and the Bulowtzim" and what they had done to both the Poles and the Jews. Little by little their neighbours, relatives and friends came over from the nearby villages to participate in the celebration of the return of a son, who had been in captivity. Everybody had brought a "perog" (meat patty) and a bottle of alcohol. They drank to the son and the future daughter-in-law, and to me. I sat at the head of the table and drank with them. Yusiek introduced me to the guests as a Pole and a brave fighter for the fatherland. The next day there were guests again as the news got round about the return of the lost son. They drank and between glasses told about the extermination of the Jews from the area: how they killed everyone from the elderly to the babies. They spoke steadily without emotion, or expression or regret or pity; the hosts were quiet and sighed. Before the people came to visit Yusiek whispered in my ear. "Remember Theophile, most of the visitors who come here helped the Germans at the time of the conquest either directly or indirectly. Some of them still belong to the A.K. (Armia Krajowa) They still go out at night to hunt remaining Jews, or they attack Polish Officials who co-operate with the New Polish regime that is being established and they take revenge on the Ukranians. In fact, murder has become an everyday routine thing for them." His words were a clear hint and warning ..... "in other words know whom you are sitting with, and guard your tongue."

His parents were both happy and sad. It was the third day that people had come to congratulate them. Every time they drank, they told about what had happened. I sat among them and listened intently to what they had to say. It was also depressing. They gave me a glass and another glass and Yusiek and his parents made

me feel good. I frequently looked out of the window at the empty market place. It was dark and terrible. I looked at the houses but there was nothing and no-one in them. Here and there a single figure crossed the market place, trod in the mud and the snow. There was a man in a long army coat. He made his way through the muddy market place, holding a small slight woman by the arm who was wrapped in a woollen country scarf. He tried to match his steps to hers. Suddenly all the people in the house were looking through the window. They all had sardonic expressions on their faces and burst out laughing in a body. A week later I got to know the reason for their laughter. The man was a Jew, a last remnant of the thriving community that had been there. He had just been released from the army and had married a Christian woman.

A few days later Yusiek came to me and asked me if I were interested in meeting two young Jews in the area who had been saved from the general extermination and slaughter by hiding with a farmer and had paid him very well for this. I agreed and we went along together. There were two young Jews there , one a little over twenty and the other round about sixteen. They weren't brothers but close relatives and the local mill had belonged either to the parents of one of them or both of them had been a close relative of the late mill-owner. I didn't have the facts very clearly. Now the mill belonged to the Soviets or to the new Polish Govennment and they meanwhile were working the mill under their supervision. The two young men had been given the sole right to buy corn and sell flour to the inhabitants of the area.

They were living in a two roomed house stacked to the roof with sacks of barley, course and fine flour. They had a home and a wagon about two kilometers from the mill. At night they would bring the bags of flour back with them and stack them in the room.

I asked Yusiek to leave me alone with them for a few minutess.

I told them that I was Jewish. I told them from where I had come. It was very hard to get them to talk. They were very stiff and understandably suspicious. Here and there they half answered a question but usually evaded answering. I warned them of the danger that was threatening them in this out of the way place among inhabitants who were completely hostile to Jews - I suggested they move to a bigger city where there were more Jews and where they would be more protected from danger. I told them that it would be better to leave the country and go to Eretz Yisrael. It was something I was thinking of doing myself ever since I had come back to Poland. They looked at me in amazement and told me clearly and definitely to leave them alone. "We don't intend to leave this place. This is where we will stay. We have a means of livelihood and a right to the mill. We are making good money and not afraid of the whites. We carry guns when we are on the road and at home too." I felt that they wanted to get rid of me and my advice. They were not in the least polite. They did not even ask me to sit down or offer me a cup of tea. I felt their hostility towards me. I was afraid for their lives but they did not realise their own position. (I still have something to say about them later.)

After about three days rest in Yusiek's home I told them of my plans to go Northwards about 80 kilometers and from there to go to the town of Slowatiche where my sister and her family had lived before the war. I wanted to look for them or at least find out what had happened to them. Yusiek was taken aback and not at all pleased about what I intended doing. His parents too were against my plans and begged me not to go on such a dangerous journey. They told me openly "You won't find your sister's family alive. The weather is bad and there is no road and very few trains go that way. Although the region belongs to Poland it is nevertheless dangerous. There are still white partisans hiding there."

I remained firm in my resolve. "I must find out what happened to them. My conscience would never let me rest. "

I felt free and had confidence. I was very tired physically and my Prussian experience had left deep psychological scars. The kindness of this Polish Christian family had warmed me and encouraged me and given me some hope of one day reaching the Jewish land where the sun shone. How and when I as yet did not know. I put a loaf of bread in my rucksack and said farewell to my friend, his fiancee and to his parents, especially to his bereaved and suffering mother.

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MY ADVENTURES WHILE LOOKING FOR MY LOST SISTER'S FAMILY

Snow had fallen during the night. The way would have been good for winter sleighs. The farmers passed me with their sleighs. A farmer took me along with him for a few kilometers. The second invited me into his sleigh. Everyone wanted to know from where I had come and to where I was going. For the rest of the way I walked on foot against the snow and the wind till I had no strength left. I was filled with doubts. What if I came to my desired destination and all my efforts were in vain, and there was no-one to look for? I looked for shelter so that I could rest a little and continue on my way. The storm continued and every step cost me great effort. Towards evening of a short winter day I saw a village sunk into heaped up snow. I knocked at the door of a well-to-do farmer. The farmer with a big blond moustache hanging over his upper lip opened the door. I showed him my identity certificate as he had asked for and as an ex-Polish soldier, he invited me to spend the night. They prepared a place for me on the 'dargash' next to the stove. On the wall were Ikons of the Saviour and at the sides smaller ikons of the saints. His wife gave me hot potato soup. After a short rest on the 'dargash' I felt better and the host invited me to the table. He gave me tobacco and told me what had happened during the war. In the end he brought out a bottle of alcohol. He began to talk more freely after the first glass.

His eyes moved from corner to corner and his cheeks moved up and down in nervous excitement. He spoke depracatingly of the period to come in Poland and spoke longingly of the past, the days of war, that would not return. According to him, the Polish farmer was exploited by the previous Polish Government that had been sold out "Judim". He mocked the new regime - he called it the "Democratic" regime which our "brothers" from the

East were forcing on them. He soon stopped talking about it. After another glass he began to talk about smuggling. He had smuggled partisans across the Bug but especially Jews. "Believe me Pani I smuggled across Jewish women and children who fled from the slaughter during the years of war. The Soviets protected them. They had gold and silver. A Jew like that was prepared to give up everything only to get across the border, but I was a Christian, helped them in mercy, and if I took a single ring from them, it was my just reward for having risked my life for the "unbaptised". You will not believe, it, hundreds of Jews drowned in the river and were dragged away by the water in all types of weather, when they tried to cross the water alone. They were stingy about giving their last zloty or gold watch to a pilot like myself. Suddenly the thin ice cracked. They sank and disappeared, or when the thick ice melted suddenly during the thaw the river would open up and the Jews would be whirled away, swallowed up by the surging waters. In the dark autumn nights I would load them on boats and they had just begun their crossing when they were caught by a German ambush. Imagine it. They never reached the other side. I managed to save myself". He sighed and poured me a glass, filled his own and swilled it down and wiped his thick moustache with the back of his hand and said: "Now everything is finished." He gnashed his teeth. "Our brothers the 'Muscovites' will provide us with everything." Thus he expressed his displeasure at the present regime and his nostalgia for the past. He drank another glass of alcohol and after he had heard my plans he was worried about my adventure. "I am talking to you as a Pole to Pole who has fought and suffered for the motherland. Don't go out alone! The way is dangerous from every aspect. I know the country, the roads and the ways. They are as clear to me as the lines on the palm of my hand, and I know our 'whites' and the 'whites' of the 'provoslavs' (he meant Ukranians) Understand what I am saying ..." He seemed to be a landowner, a self-confident farmer and family man. His wife and children worked in the stables with the pigs

and the chickens. When they finished their work they ate their evening meal quietly, crossed themselves and went to sleep. He frightened his entire family when he gave his wife instructions for the following day. He kept quiet while his eyes kept moving from side to side. I got up early, thanked the farmer for his hospitality and continued Northwards. Rain and snow with heavy rain lashed down. Everything was wrapped in a thick mist and as I walked I kneaded the sticky mud with the effort of putting one foot after another. I was wet to the skin squelching along in my boots. I battled with the forces of nature till I had no strength left and managed only about 40 kilometers on foot and in sleighs through villages and deserted Jewish settlements spread out along the river Bug. Every farmer told me about the war and the wandering groups of people who perhaps were partisans or perhaps robbers. They told me about the slaughter of the Jews and showed me the inns that had belonged to them. Now they were boarded up with planks, others left broken, open but all were deserted. Rain and snow fell inside and winds howled like dogs in the wilderness. In the afternoon the sky darkened, there was not a ray of sunshine. I went into an empty house, apparently belonging to a Jew. The house was flooded with water and there was a stench from the bodies of dead mice. Further on the houses were occupied by Polish refugees who had fled from the bands of Vlasovites and Banderowites. Cold and depression gripped me. It seemed that the night shortened the day's walking. I sat in a hut thinking about what I should do... continue, or give up? Night fell. I knocked at the door of a poor hut on the edge of a village. An old woman half-opened the door. I asked her for a night's shelter against the snow and rain. I told her from where I had come and that I was going to a village near Vlodava. The woman hesitated but in the house the voice of a man shouted at the old woman: "Enough Mother! Let the passing visitor in. Let him rest. Don't you know that Beelzebubs and murderers are wandering about! Bu t in

this weather one does not leave a person outside, even the worst of them. There is nothing to rob here except perhaps our soul" "Batka (father) I was afraid". "You don't have to be afraid", he stopped her, "A Pole who experienced the suffering of German captivity will not be "white" or "red" or "whatever". In the cracks of the stone the'kuchina' burned. It lit up the room and the mud floor dimly. A puddle formed from the water running from my coat. The old man lay in the bed coughing and said to me, "Take off your boots and your clothes and lie on the low "dargash"." The house was small and low. Nearby all the plaster had peeled off and the wooden logs stuffed with moss could be seen. The old couple had only lived there a couple of months. Their children had not yet come back from the Russian side. The old woman asked me if I were a Pole or Russian, a Catholic or a Provoslav. "You are definitely not a Jew. The poor unbelievers have all lost their lives long ago. The earth has covered them or the waves of the river have dragged them and their children away. Ho! Ho! Yezusje Cochania (Our beloved Jesus) guards the believers," she said and crossed herself. There were no Ikons in the hut, only a figurine of Jesus hanging on the wall, below it was a rough shelf on which there were old dried out flowers from the previous summer. Before I lay on the "dargash" I said to them. "I won't disturb you - I will be happy to spend the night in your warm home. Early in the morning I will go on my way." "Man," the old man said hoursely, "you will endanger yourself. There are bandits in the area. Go to the train. The way is longer, but it is safer. " I spread my army coat on the "dargash", put my boots on it and lay down to sleep. Later in the evening the old woman woke me and invited me to the table to eat potatoes and fish and the sauce of the fish. She gave me a warm cup of chicory and apologetic ally said: "I am sorry we have no sugar or bread." I took out the loaf of bread Yusiek's mother had given me. Their eyes lit up and they thanked me. We ate together and I felt good. Early in the morning I got up from the "dargash" with a headache, tired and with a cold. It was bitterly cold outside. I felt that

I would not have the strength to continue my journey. I was angry with myself that I could not carry out the plan which I had set myself but it was causing me useless waste of energy and suffering. I dragged myself to the train and came to Lublin.

There I found a place in the station and lay down on the floor among other civilians and also French captives. I dried my clothes on my body. I slumbered and had nightmares. The shouts of the crowd often woke me. There was an uproar when an SS man disguished as a refugee was found. (These were mainly Volksdeutche who knew Polish) The crowd took vengeance on him.

The station hummed with the thousands of men and women from Poland, Russia and the Ukraina who were thrown out of the overfull train carriages. They returned from the great estates where they had worked. Just like the thaw in the spring everything moved and was released like people who did not know where to go. Most of them were dead tired with sores and lice infested, limping or on crutches, or sick and eating from preserved cans of meat or fish. People who had had strength had broken into German store houses and rifled them. There were those who had managed to find jewellery which they had hidden in their bags. Among these pitiful and miserable people were those who were like shadows and who had found place in this big building. They were covered in blankets and carried bags. They were women with hair shorn and thin shrunken bodies. They seemed small and bent in comparison to others. One could see their lack of confidence and fear of death in their eyes. Their skin hardly covered their bones that were sticking out underneath it. Their appearance was clear evidence of cruelty and ruthless exploitation of man. They were a shame to humanity. Even if the armies had come a week or a few days later then these people would not have been alive. Around them people stood, looking and whispering. They tried to guess who. They were frightened and with tense nerves. Their eyes lowered and heads covered in cloth or blanket expressed a

terrible injustice. I got to know that these were Hungarian Jewesses. I tried to talk to them in German but they answered unwillingly and I did not get much from them. They were living corpses who had been rescued at the last moment frmm the depth of hell. I lay on the floor for another day. I tossed around in troubled sleep disturbed by events and memories that were released in dreams and nightmares. I would wake again and fall asleep. I would hear talking and shouting and a mixture of languages and the whistling of locomotives coming and going and the stamping and banging of the carriages wheels vibrating the rails and the ground on which I was lying.

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BEIT PERETZ IN LUBLIN

The next day I went to town in spite of headache and the fever I had. The mainsstreets of Lublin were not touched by the war. I wandered round the streets without any food. Here and there, there was a queue near the Red Cross giving out preserves but this did not solve my problem. I knew there were Jews in the city. I asked people in the streets if they knew where the Jewish congregation was. (It didn't seem likely that there wasn't a place for the Jews even for a handful of refugees.) No-one could tell me exactly. I asked a Polish policeman. He had heard of something but didn't know exact details. I met groups of people in twos and threes with clean clothes and leather jackets and I asked them. They looked at me - and hurried away. I appeared to be one of the informers they had been warned against. No-one trusted a person that was not known to them. I decided to follow a group of people whom I was sure were Jews. I followed them and so after some distance I discovered the well-known Beit Peretz which was a long distance away from the centre of the city. It was a big building and stood at the top of the road and overlooked an area in which there weren't many buildings.

To get there one had to cross muddy roads and pools of water. Soldiers in Soviet and Polish uniforms went oft of the building. There were Jews. There were partisans in orderly clothes and there were also people wearing the striped concentration clothes. They were bent over and continuously coughing and I saw another group of women similar to those I had seen at the station the day before.

Outside at the entrance of the building I could smell cooking. I went up the wide steps which were dirty with mud and grey snow. The smell of the food cooking assailed my nostrils but because of lack of confidence in me I had words with

the person who gave out the meal tickets. He looked at my German certificate, read here and there and could not come to any decision. He did not believe his eyes. He had never yet come across a case like mine. I spoke a mixture of Yiddish and Plattdeutch and it was not to my benefit. In the big hall stood long tables and on them stood dishes filled to overflowing. Some finished their meal, others took their place. In the other rooms ex-concentration camp inmates lay on iron beds. They were mainly women. The men were withered and bent and weak, depressed and apathetic and kept on smoking all the time. They did not have the strength to get up.and get their portion of food in the kitchen. Women of 17 looked ageless. Their hair was completely shorn and their faces wrinkled. One could not see them as women. They looked like old worn out hags, ugly and repulsive. Nevertheless, these women had some sort of energy. They were not as apathetic as the men. They ran to the kitchen and argued with the cook about the food. Afterwards they suffered from diarrhoea. Their stomachs had not yet got used to absorbing so much food. The dirt was repulsive. They did not wash the plates, the water supply gave out, the taps were broken. The sanitary bowls were blocked. Well built strong men who had been released from the camps were the cooks. They ladled the thick soup with big ladles and treated different people differently. Strong healthy people who could stand up to them were given more food than the weaker ones who could not fight or argue with them. The women cursed them in all the languages. The cooks reminded them of the camps and the hard-heartedness of the overfed distributors ruled the hungry inmates by the force of their fists and hit all those who had the temerity to open their mouths to them. Again women came from the camps. They collected in groups according to their countries of origin and their languages. From Lithuania, from Congress Poland, from Hungary. In spite of the difference of mentality and language they had learnt to remain together as a group because of the sufferings they had lived through. Their outward appearance was shocking. A young Lithuanian woman with

a shorn head, a survivor from Stutthoff cried and said to me: "I am returning released, saved from the slaughter. My two little girls, my treasures and my husband were killed. Now I feel that I have no place to go. No-one is expecting me at home if there were any home to go to. I feel unwanted." She let out a cry and I shuddered as I looked at her. "Where are you, Oh G-d of Israel, whom I so believed in and put my hope only in Three."

Her emaciated companion who had her head covered with a scarf interrupted her. She spoke a broken German with a Hungerian accent. "I have told you more than once, we have no G-d, and you complain to Him again and again (she turned to me). See what the Germans have done to us? We look like monsters and old witches." She cried breaking the mirror she held and began to cry bitterly. "I am only twentypone. I was a guinea-pig. I will never forget the joy of a woman and the joy of love. I will never embrace any children of mine." A woman from Congress Poland interrupted and spoke in a good Polish and said; quietly and firmly with confidence: "I will not return to Judiasm. I will remain a Pole. I will assimilate and if need be I will become a Christian. Actually, I don't believe in any Saviour. It is all a big lie. I won't go to the camp because of my Judaism. I will remain a Pole at all costs. " Her friend added: "I will also remain a Pole, just not to be Jewish. I won't accept any more insults. I won't be belittled and mocked. I know how I will live. I will live like one of them." She spoke in terrible bitterness and with utter determination. I thought to myself: would she be able to run away from herself? Would she be able to evade the Spirit of Judaism within herself? No matter how superficial a Jewess she had been, would the estranged Polish Society accept her? If she were discovered to be a Jewess, wouldn't both the Poles and the Christians throw her out on the spot?

I heard these remakks again and again from women camp survivors, at a later date especially women who came from Congress Poland. The complaints of the women from Lithuania and Hungary made me think of their past and their future. I did not belittle their feelings and thoughts when the Holocaust had brought into their souls, I fully realised the enormity of the tragedy which they had lived through. Their questions left me beaten. I had no answerefor them how to lessen their pain and suffering. Actually, their sufferings opened my wounds and sufferings afresh. I deliberated their questions and remarks and had no answer for them. Every word and tear of theirs were mine. I pulled myself together not to fall into dispair and helplessness. I did not dare to comfort them. Any attempt that I would have tried to make to comfort them, would have been unreal.

In spite of having learned a great deal of Judaism in my youth, I did not dare to try to heal them with my store of knowledge. I seemed to me that I would have thrown sand in their eyes to blind them. I would have lied to them and also to myself. Perhaps I could have told them about a man who had lived more than two thousand years ago, whose name was Job. He had been an honest, G-d-fearing man. He had been wealthy and lived happily with his family. Suddenly trouble descended upon him. Catastrophe followed catastrophe. His flocks were robbed, everything was destroyed by fire and blown away by the wind. On top of that he contracted leprosy and suffered great pain and discomfort. Only his wife remained with him. She wished him a speedy death so that he should be released from his sufferings. He remained alone and sick and then protested against his misfortunes which G-d had caused him to bear. He revolted and argued with him and cursed the day he was born. I would have comforted them and told them that in the end his wounds were healed and he recuperated. He had more children and established a large family. His property increased. His belief in G-d returned and he lived as before in

happiness and in honour and dignity.

Nonsense! To make them follow the example of Job while the blow was fresh, burning and cruel and especially as some of them had no means of cmmforting themselves either. No way of mending their broken lives, nor finding any pleasure or joy in it. This is what I saw in Beit Peretz. The broken remnants of a nation that had had millions of people belonging to it.

Jewish soldiers and partisans came in and looked for relatives brothers and sisters, wives or girl-friends. Perhaps one would find a life companion for the future.

I left Beit Peretz with a bitter aftertaste but withideas considerably changed. Perhaps this place was the last which uncovered the distortions of the past and after that would come the resurgence.

T he bones of these women would get flesh, their faces would become rounded. The wrinkles would vanish and their hair would grow again. Out of necessity everyone would become reconciled to what was missing. They would all live in a new light. Just the terrible shadow of yesterday would always cloud their lives. It would not vanish. This wound would never heal entirely.

The enjoyments of life and the urges would force them back to life but the joy would always be mixed with sorrow and mourning. In spite of their desire to drown their Judaism in the deep water of past experience, they would not succeed,the sorrow of the Holocaust that they had lived through would always awaken the pain.

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I WORK FOR MY LIVING IN POLISH SOCIETY

I was without a roof over my head. I roamed the streets aimlessly, sat on benches, spent the night at the station among the many people and I could sleep in the warmth of the crowd there. I had no money and nothing to sell on the black market, no warm clothing or jewellery as others did and I did not have a penny to buy bread. I stopped going to Beit Peretz after two meals. I was alone but I had no feeling of lonliness. I was able to see everything in a clear but neutral light, after my captivity. My eyes were open and ready to register everything. I was free to move around and I was not hungry as I had been in certain years of my captivity, but I lacked food and suffered from stomach pains. With that I had a hidden hope that supported me and gave me patience. I thought to myself that I must find work as a source of earning a living. One day as I stood in a queue outside a tobacco stall a broad-shouldered Polkovnik wearing a long army coat noticed me and when he saw me with the painted cross on my back he stood aside and let me go before him in the queue. I was rather surprised and refused, but he insisted. I asked for a quarter of a packet of tobacco. The Polkovnik ordered the woman to give me the whole packet and paid her at once. I, of course, refused and then thanked him for his kindness. After that he began to talk to me. When I told him of my recent past he asked me from where I was. I told him from West Bylorussia. "Very nice, now you have the right to return to your homeland. We rule there now and life is returning to peace and order." "Yes, this I intend to do but until then I am looking for work to support myself." He at once gave me a note of recommendation and told me to go to one of the mills and signed himself, the Chief Inspector of the mills, and bakeries (If I remember correctly). So I went to work. The mill was being renovated to be operated. I worked for a few days with two Polish workers in the big bins which were to hold barley. There was very little air and we worked by the light of a kerosene lamp. We had to clean and scrape the walls of the bins. The two Poles

discussed politics and the low salary. They cursed the Russians, laughed at democracy and mentioned the Jews derogatively at every opportunity. It annoyed and hurt me. How could one curse dead people in this way? This hatred of the Jews did not cease. It was worse than before the war. The only difference was that when they spoke of the Jews, they whispered because the Polkownik was a Russian Jew (I had never noticed that he was Jewish. I never saw him again and it was not important to me.) Most of the time they spoke of drinking and rash bravery just as before the war. They did not mentionethe 1939 war or their slavery during the war. When I asked them what they had done during the occupation they gave me evasive answers. I got to know later that they had been busy on the Black Market. They had ambushed Jews in the towns and villages and had handed them over to the Germans, getting a tin of conserves and a glass of schnapps. Their gallantry had consisted of standing at attention in front of the swastika in police uniforms, overeating, drinking and going with women. Every time a German threatened them they would bow before him and blame the Jew. As I got to know them in the short time I worked with them I saw they were the typical cowardly riff-raff that most of their type were. Now they had run away from their former place of residence, left the police and the white partisans in the forest. They tried to cover up their traitorous past and tried to fit into the present population . They tried to change their spots and tried to get jobs in the new regime that was being set up. So I had to work in this poisonous atmosphere because I needed to work for my living. In the evening I returned to the station crowded and buzzing with people. My life had taught me to adjust to all types of conditions. I got used to being with these filthy types at the mill. They even respected and trusted me but they did not know much more about me than what was written on my German Certificate.

The workers of the mill got ready to vote for a council which could represent them and demand their rights to the management.

There were arguments and differences of opinion. They asked me to be a candidate for the workers council but I always put them off, giving them evasive replies. I kept my future plans secret. I decided that I first had to have some time to come to myself to get some steadiness and inner peace of mind as well as strengthen myself physically before I began to carry out my plans. In the meantime one of the workers offered me a place to stay with a family in an area where no Jews had lived before the war (I don't remember the name of the suburb). It was an area close to Maidanek. My living conditions had now vastly improved and my way of living was also changed. I lived with an elderly couple. He was a little man, stout and healthy. He had been a worker all his life. He told me that he had belonged to the P.P.S. before the war. He was liberal in ideas and not very pedantic in his religion. His wife was not very energetic but very religious indeed. They had a flat on the ground floor which consisted of a long kitchen and a room. My bed was separated from theirs by a curtain. They had a heap of cushions and covers on their beds. Jewish friends had left them the bed clothes, they told me, before they had gone to Maidanek. Meantime they knew I was a Pole who had returned from captivity. They sympathised with my difficulties and sufferings in the past. The old woman, withered and wrinkled, saw that I had hot water to wash after work every day and she gave me clean underclothes. After paying for the rent and the other things she gave me I had very little money left but I was satisfied because I rested and recuperated and slowly came to myself. After the master of the house got to know and trust me he said to me: "You are like one of my family." In the late hours of the evening he would put half a bottle of vodka on the table, with sausages and herring. He invited me to join him. As he drank the vodka he became sadder and sadder. He began to tell me more about himself and spoke quietly and sadly. He told me how he worked at a sugar factory close to Maidanek during the war. He spoke about the cruel treatment of the Germans to the Polish population,

about the slaughter of the Polish underground, how they brought the Polish Jews to the extermination camps. The Hungarian Jews and Sheks and told how they were cremated.

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After work I would be on the lookout for Jews, because I was sure there were Jews in the vicinity. Once to my great joy and surprise I met schoolfriends and friends from the youth movement who had survived as partisans in the forests of Bylorussia or who had fled into Russia and had now returned to Poland. From them I heard about the extermination of my family. Also by chance I met people who knew my sister's family and told me how they had been killed. I was not quiet until everything was explained to me. I also got to know about the operations of the "Bricha" (The illegal immigration movement to Palestine). I got to know people working in the movement. I met them secretly and determined the time when I would leave Poland. Together with that I worked to support myself and late in the evening I would return to the place I lived to finish off the evening with a glass of vodka which either I or the housemaster would buy.

It was on one of the usual evenings. The lamp lit up the room dimly. The old mistress sat on her bed knitting and listening for the umpteenth time to the words of her husband. The master of the house as I said before, would get very sad after his first glass of vodka. He held the glass in his hand and said "Pani, the Jewish population numbered millions before the war. They had all the trade and factories and workshops in their hands. It was an industrious people who had initiative. They did not like doing heavy physical work such as working in mines or working on the land. That they left for the Poles, even though a large part of them was very poor, but they were united. The rich helped the poor. Not like with us. The people work the land without knowledge and the land does not give up what we expect.

Ihad heard that there were Jews in the vicinity of Lublin. They were people w
who had survived inthe forests of Bylorussia as partisans. There were also Jews who
who had fled to Russia and were returning to Poland . After work I would stroll aro
around on the lookout for Jews ortrying to contact some Jewish orginisation .
I strolled around hoping to find someone who might kow me even distantly.

To my joy I met an old school friend from the village of Deweinischok . It
was Meir Joshe Itzkowitz and his wife Esther from the town of Lydda which was
really near my home . Li I was meeting her now for the first time.
We were happy to see each other even though we were rather tense and repressed . We
We had all lived through a great deal . I was saddened at the thought of not being
able to see the grave where the members of my family were buried .

Our conversation was terse and to the point . Meir Joshe told me he would s
speak to Mordechai the officer commanding the "Bricha" in that area. I was a member
of the Hashomer Ha Tzair but all the youth movements were working together trying to
organise a co-ordinated and orderly exodus irrespctive of what movement they belonged
to.

I was met by a man from the "Bricha" who fixed a second meeting with me. I was
given a crushed piece of paper with a code word and an address .
It was March . Although the winter had been mild the snow had not yet compleetely melted
Snow still hung on the dilapidate eaves inthe broken down houses/nthe town . People
dragged along kneading the snow into a dirty muddy mess .

I came to a low gloomy looking buiding. I climbed the stairway , knocked on one
of the doors. There was adead silence behind the door. Then it was opened a crack on
a chanim and a girl's face peeped outn. I shoved the note at her . She opend the door
In a corner a group of young people huddled together . Their faces were filled with
fear suspicion and distrust. The entie group seemd to close in on itself when they
saw a man in a faded dilapidated army great-coat with a red painted cross ont the back
the sign of the prisoner of war. They whispered together. I spoke Polish . In af few
words I told them who I was and what I wanted

It was only later that I got to know thee reason for fear and distrust. The
day before. they had had an unpleasnd incident . Two members of the group, two sisters
Whiperd to each other: " This man looks honest not like those others "

I spoke yiddish and broe down what liittle confidence I had managed to gain

Worst of all, what remains of the fruit of the labour is drowned in the bottle. The 'Pani' who are rich don't worry about the poor. They live in Paris but I will tell you the truth, the murder of the Jewish people has shocked every honest Pole." After a long drink he added: "The Russians reconquered the city on the 23rd July, 1944. If the German occupation had lasted another month, they would have taken all the Poles in Lublin to Maidenek. We got to know of their plans from the most reliable sources. We would have gone to our Lord God through the same chimney the Jews did." He finished his vodka to the last drop and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. He became depressed, he began to think about the not too distant past. After a long silent interval he expressed his inner thoughts. "Pani, I was a living witness to everything that happened at Maidanek. For a long time I saw carriages filled with Jews. Jews from Poland, Hungary and Chechoslovakia. They got them out of the carriages in terrible panic, shooting and shouting and inciting the dogs. They chased them to the gas chambers the way people chase cattle in to the pens in slaughter houses." "Pani," I dared to press him, "How could you see such a thing quietly and calmly every day? Did you try to save anyone? Did you help any of those unfortunates? As a Pole you were comparitively free. Your life was protected!" I felt an inner urge of passion to press him and demand human responsibility, the obligation of one human being towards another. "As a P.P.S. party man and as an exploited member of the Polish nation - tell me! How did youhelp them?" Under the influence of vodka I became excited. I wanted to cry out or shout: Why did those people keep quiet? But I realised at once that I had overstepped the mark with my excited behaviour. I was sorry that I had had such an outburst (I had never been so daring among my friends during the entire period of the war.) He looked down, dropped his eyes and kept quiet and hesitated as if struggling with his conscience. He was looking for words how best to express himself, and almost whispered speaking quietly: "Pani, I understand you as a Pole, who suffered in captivity. I

did not watch for pleasure. My heart would shudder. I and all the workers in the sugar factory were afraid for our lives and guarded ourselves as best we might. Nevertheless, I more than once risked my life by giving them bread. They would push Polish, Hungarian and Check money into my hand but I did not take it. Those people were so very hungry. There were prisoners of all nations. The SS appointed "kapos" from among the Polish prisoners or the Communists, the Ukranians and from among the Jews themselves. These people tyrranised over them and they were even worse in their cruelty than the Germans themselves.

With that I have to say that the Jews of Poland and Hungary were polite. I have no right to judge them. The Check Jews suffered the worst of all. They were so noble-minded and had no shrewdness like the Pole or the Polish Jew. They only knew how to be open, straight and honest. They did not know how to steal and grab. They broke soon and died of hunger before they exterminated them. I helped these people as much as I was able."

I finished my glass of vodka. My head felt heavy. The world appeared to be dim and repulsive. The old woman sighed from time to time. She crossed herself and murdered: "Oh, the suffering of Jesus." "Old woman, stop crossing yourself. It won't help anyway!" he shouted at her. She said to him. "Old unbeliever, you have drunk more than you should. Go to sleep, the Pan, also go and rest after a hard day's work."

From time to time I went to the "Bricha" people to find out how my affairs were proceding. After that I sat with the old man over a glass of vodka. He continued to talk about Maidanek. He again mentioned the Check Jews and how sensitive and honest they were, and I listened and meditated.

Once when I returned from work he told me what the A.K. had done in that area.

That afternoon two masked men went to the grocery store at the corner and at gunpoint took all his takings. After this he

handed me a paper to let me know what was happening at the time. At that time I read about robbers who had murdered two young men in the early hours of the evening. They hadbeen taking bags of flour to their home in Dubienka. I saw that the paper had mentioned the Jewish names of the young people. They were the same Jews that I had spoken to at the time and had advised them to leave the place because their lives were in danger but they had turned their backs on me. The murder shocked me but did not surprise me.

On one of the Sundays I went walking in the city and stopped in front of the cinema and joined the queue. The morale of the Poles was high and they joked as usual about the new democracy that was being established. They made jokes at the expense of the many prostitutes who were walking around and made both the men and women laugh. A young Polish youth was standing in front of me. We introduced ourselves and started talking. He told me that he had left his hometown Vilna, only a few days previously and had decided to come and live among the Poles in Poland. As we had come from the same region we found that we had something in common. In the end he invited me to his room which was in the same area where I was living. He and two other fellows were living together in a big room. It wasn't clear whether they were working or not. Their means of livlihood was by no means clear. After meeting them a few times it becams clear to me that they were members of an organisation whose aim was to wipe out the "Muscalim". As usual we drank to our good health and they invited me to visit them often. Actually, they were well-read, intelligent and cultured, and were very friendly towards me. Of course, they did not know that I was Jewish. From their discussions I got to know that they hated the Jews more than anyone else. After a few visits I stopped going there.

One day on coming back from work the old man gave me a form which the inspector of the house had given him and asked me to go to the Municipality to register as a resident in the house. Because of the increase of robberies and attacks upon

people the Municipality wanted to know more details about the people living in the area, especially those who had come from places like Vilna. The municipal clerk filled in the form. Among other questions I was asked about my nationality and I answered quietly and confidently - a Jew. (This, for the first time in five years.) This official examined my Certificate, which was written in German, looked at me a long time, looked me up and down, was amazed at the difference in the details on the Certificate and my declaration and went to show the form to another clerk near him. He also shook his head in amazement and was puzzled about what to do. He went to the Chief Clerk of the department who sat in another room. The Chief Clerk came out of his office and stood looking at me from the doorway. In the end he signed the form and asked me to give it to the Inspector of the house in which I lived. This I did and he looked at it and smiled to himself and asked me to give a copy to the old man I lived with. The old couple read the form and could not believe their eyes. They were taken aback. Thus the secret of my Jewishness was finally revealed. I well understood their amazement. They were afraid that in their conversation with me they had inadvertantly hurt me. Indirectly the old man condoled with me on the bereavement of my family, my lonliness and how the Germans had treated me and my late family. The old woman began asking me questions about my family but as I avoided answering she stopped and treated me with great tenderness and kindness. She did not want to accept my rent and even though I understood the reason for their generosity I refused to agree to this.

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A VISIT TO MAIDANEK

The A.K. began to increase their activities in that part of the city. The Police were not seen in that part of the cityl Perhaps because the provisional Government was not yet established firmly ehough to ward off the terrorist underground. The Soviets were still fighting battles in the depth of Germany and Hitler was still sitting in his lair in Berlin. In short, the A.K. attacked and murdered everyone who looked at them askance in the villages or the suburbs. They were active at night and even in the light of day. There was continual danger to life and limb in the area where I loved. In the later hours of the evening it was dangerous to walk around. Even the earlier hours were none too safe. There was always another robbery, another murder and one could hear shouts and the sounds of shooting in the streets. The old woman would wake and murmer"again they are murdering and robbing." She would say another prayer more fervently as she barricaded the door. So I continued working for my living and sat with the old man over a glass of vodka in the evenings. He would talk about Maidanek in great sorrow. He spoke about the chimneys of the crematorium that had given off thick smoke day and night, and the ash that came down and covered the fields, paths and roads with a layer of thick gray dust. His head would rest on his left hand and with his right he held the glass he would drink from, from time to time. He continued to talk about the cremated people and of the heaps of white bones of all the different parts of the body that remained. Even now in the winter there was still a smell of something having been burnt. He spoke of the numerous people of all nations and among them also of the Russian prisoners of war who were shot outside the camp, outside the crematorium. He spoke of the shoes and high boots that were left there in excellent condition and how the inhabitants of Lublin and the surrounding villages ran there as soon as the Germans were thrown out and grabbed most of the footwear. He swore to me that he had

not taken anything.

"Pani", he suddenly turned towards me and raised his voice, "more than a million people were shot, smothered and burnt by the Germans. Come with me to Maidanek on Sunday. It's only three kilometers from here."

So we went. We both walked and I saw what he had spoken about. The snow had melted and layers of ashes which had been the bodies of people had become mud. I walked on it as if kneading it with every step.I took, stepping heavily through the mud. I was heaps of dry white bones and fingers, legs with their toes on their joints, spinal columns, ribs and on top of everything were the eyeless skulls with uncovered teeth as if grinning and threatening. I looked at it and it seemed as if I had once seen similar pictures. Perhaps from the great arts of the Middle Ages perhaps in the Pesach Hagadahs, or pictures of Dantes "inferno". Skeletons of distorted animals came before my eyes as I saw them during the war and also the skulls on SS mens' helmets. Everything was mixed up. I felt as if I was in the war again. I simply could not understand why my senses were dulled in such a terrible place. From 1939 till about a month before I had seen corpses from which fresh blood had flown or frozen corpses at the war front, or the rear in roads, in ditches, together with horses only the bones stood out. Suddenly I felt very tired. A feeling of emptiness overcame me but with that a feeling of restlessness began to stir within me, a feeling of dispair and disappointment and a lack of belief in Man on the earth. I remembered the words of Ecclesiastes: "For that which befalleth the sons of man, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath';so that a man hath not prominence above the beast; for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust and all of them turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth."

From the dawn of my youth ideas like that had not entered my mind. They just added to the process of becoming an unbeliever. Within myself I remained true to my belief that man is worth more than anything else and is capable of absorbing all the good and the beautifulthat there is in our time, but within my heart of hearts, I admitted that there was something in what the old Jew had said but to put man next to the beast and not mention his superiority really hurt me and I resisted it with all my might. Like most people who had lived through the war, I saw and felt the naked reality and the words of Ecclesiastes did not disturb me any more. I got used to them and agreed with this ancient philospphy. What I had seen in Maidenek was similar to what I had seen in other places. I thought I had strength enough to see these scenes and to remain sober and clear thinking when I saw these terrible scenes and said - "Vanity of vanities" But here I had innerstruggles and was shocked.

No, the words vanity of vanities is not to be said of those who die a satanic death, the invention and imagination of the insane. One cannot push that aside with a wave of the hand. Suddenly I saw heaps of small children's shoes which were meant for feet that were still small and weak. They had not yet got the power to trample anything. They could hardly squash an ant. The shoes of innocent little feet. Next to this pile was a mountain of toys. Teddies, and dolls. I began to shudder and shake. I went into shock. I bent down and with a feeling of awe and sorrow I touched them. I stroked them with my fingers. I saw my sister's children and my brother's children playing with toys like these. I saw the sturdy little legs in the shoes. I saw them running and jumping on the lawns. I saw the children picking the flowers in the fields as if hovering and swaying above the earth with the movement of the flowers and the corn. They were happily playing hide-and-seek in the standing corn among the bushes and the trees. They stopped and got up and the merry laughter re-echoed and filled the universe with joy. The laces of their shoes were tied

up with a butterfly bow fitted in with the many coloured flowers. Suddenly everything went dark around me. I felt weak in the knees. Ho, if I could have borne with all I saw and felt my heart was being squeezed in a vice, my temples pulsed, my head ached and my breath choked in my throat. I wanted to stretch out and lie down with open arms on the dolls and toys and piles of shoes and bury my face in them and wail and mourn.

No, this Holocaust could not be understood with cool logic. I was unable to stand up to it. I collapsed. When the old man saw me fainting, bending over the childrens' shoes he took me by the arms and spoke to me in a tender and fatherly voice, and I could not for the life of me answer. I stuttered and choked on the tears that flowed,unceasingly from my eyes. "Pani," he gripped me, "come, we will go home - be strong! We will drink some vodka. You will feel better. It is one of the best medicines for a man who is in dispair.During the years of occupation a drink always calmed me down and if not - I would have gone mad!"

I did as he said and with a bent head I dragged my legs towards the city. We got to the centre of the city. The stream of refugees had become even greater. Daily the Soviets occupied fresh territory and released more people. Every day miserable wretched people streamed into Lublin. They all had the overwhelming desire to grasp at life. God forbid that they should collapse from weakness or illness in these great days of freedom and miss the spark of happiness and light that they had so yearned for; The old man still continued talking and comforting me. "Friend," he said, "Look at all these who have remained alive who are dragging their thin legs. I tell you as an old experienced man; Life provokes and tempts. Look at these people. After they will have overcome their bodily weakness you won't recognise them in a year's time. They will become strong and sturdy and some of them will even manage to forget what they have gone through."

Three days after I had filled in the form from the Municipality in which I had declared my Jewish nationality openly, I began to experience a hidden hostility from all quarters. I felt that the workers at work began to withdraw from me. How did this information reach them so quickly, and who spread it? Who were interested in this? It was hard for the workers in the mill to understand why a Jew would suddenly come and work there. This was something out of the ordinary not easily understood by a Pole. There had to be some other/hidden reason. Perhaps I had been planted there by the Soviets for some reason or other and here the Municipality uncovered the plot.

The fact that a Jew would work together with them at hard physical labour was not something they could expect. At first I felt an all encompassing feeling of lonliness. They did not talk to mm directly and openly. First they whispered,behind my back. Every conversation or request had some sort of string attached to it. The trust that they had had in me seemed to remain, but in reality it bggan to slowly disappear. I decided to take no notice of them and to continue with my work until it was time for me to leave, then only would I stop working. I also felt the same feeling of suspicion towards me in the neighbourhood where I lived. The inhabitants of the street gossiped and complained that a Jew had come to live in their midst. Even before the war, the sight of a Jew was rare among them.

A woman stopped me in the street and asked me: "Does the Pan live with Pan Jelensky?" "Yes, lady," I answered. She smiled a shrewd rather acid smile and answered. From across the street watching suspicious eyes followed me. If I went into the grocer's inquisitive eyes stared at me. They gave up their places to me so that I could talk to the shopkeeper in order to get me out of the shop and their proximity as quickly as possible. It was as if I had suddenly developed an infectious disease which endangered those around me. All this without a ghost of a smile on their faces. The only ones who really had respect for me and trusted me as a human being were the two old people whom I lived with.

E P I L O G U E

So my life in liberated Poland became very unsatisfactory. My life was narrow and limited. During the entire time I was in living in Polish society or among the Slav peoples I felt that nothing had changed in their attitudes or way of thinking, especially towards Jews. I did not see the liberation holding out a rosy future for me or anyone of my kind. From my childhood I hadheard the prophesies of the great Yeshagahu and I was drawn towards them. But in 1939 this faith of mine was destroyed. However, it was not of my making. It was shattered on the rocks of the bitter reality of war. I learnned from the seeds that were intentionnally dewn that the fruit would be satanic and frightening. I did not have any false allusions, even though I still had some belief that man could learn a lesson and that there could be love and brotherhood among peopbe. Without this remnant of belief what was the purpose of my living in this land? But this only remained in the field of belief and reality proved to be completely different. I learnt these lessons during my six-weeks stay in Poland. I had got to know that the Polish people hated the Jews alive or dead and they had taken a considerable part in their extermination. The Polish man or woman walked around without any qualms of conscience as far as the extermination and destruction of the Jews was concerned. In spite of the sufferings of the Poles under the Germans, their attitudes towards the Jews did not change, the opposite was the case, the hatred of the Jews was so great that it was hard to imagine even though they did not express it openly. The bells in the church rang out and the priests continuedd with their incitement but only on a lower tone. In the eyes of the socialist builders of democracy the Jews were an annoyance and impediment. At any rate, both the Christians and Jews would have liked to build up a state without Jews. I have to say that there were few Polish families like the ones I had found shelter with. There were also other Polish families who had been

bereaved and treated the Jews with understanding. There were also cases where the Jews were hidden by the Priests and Nuns in the monasteries. Their beliefs and faith were absolutely pure; the fanaticism of the Middle Ages had not touched them. One must remember that these people risked their lives. It is true there were not many of them, but they will be as shining stars in the heavens of humanity.

During my stay in Poland I wanted to find out what had happened to my sister. I got to know about them from the few remaining Jews from the area of Slovatiche where she lived. It was in the Vlodawa region on the banks of the river Bug. My sister, Chaia Sara, together with her two daughters, Miriam aged seven and Malka aged ten, were shot in a cart which took them out of town. They were shot by the SS. Her husband Hershel and her fifteen year old son. Shlomo, found their death in Treblinka or in Sobibor. Her husband's family had been Chassidim for generations and had practised their faith according to the tenets their Rabbi had laid down.

My mother from Lipinshky in the Lydda area was complete and absolute in her faith. She served the Almighty and her belief in the goodness of man was complete. It made no difference to her whether it was a Christian or a Jew. She suffered hunger in the Lydd Ghetto and when she asked the people of the area for some bread on a few potatoes, the same people whom she had saved from hunger during the First World War, they and their swollen bellied children, they turned their backs on her. This hurt her and she cried bitterly, but she did not talk about her disappointment. She was ashamed to tell the people that her Christian friends had not helped her. She was afraid to lose her belief in the goodness of man, that was so strong within her. She saw her belief in the Almighty and her trust in man as one concept. She was afraid to admit that all the help she had given them was in vain. In 1943, sick, starving, and unable to walk straight and supported by my brother and his family, she dragged

her weakened body from the Lydda Ghetto to the place of extermination. Even then she did not believe that would be her final earthly reward; that that would be the end her Creator had determined for her. Even though then she was on the brink of dispair she did not lose her believe in'the G-d of Mercy on high! If man is not saved (by the man who wore the skull and cross bones on his helmet) there still remained the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They took my mother, Pesia Nechama together with her children and grandchildren, her son, Nathan and daughter-in-law, Bracha, and her grandchildren, six year old Chaia and grandson, the three year old Yitzchak. She bitterly cried and prayed to G-d from the depth of her pure soul. Perhaps G-d on high would see his faithful daughter in danger of her life and have mercy on her and soften the hearts of the sons of Belial as she once said were also children of a mother. They also had mothers and believed in G-d. Perhaps a miracle would happen because as she said lots of miracles had happened in her life-time. When they were ordered to undress and the whips of the SS and their helpers, the Latvians and Ukranians, whistled around them at the brink of the pit. Did her belief in G-d then fail? - one will never know. If I write that in her last moments the prayer of "Shima Yisrael" broke from her lips, it will be my subjective idea alone.

When the whole community had been shot, the elderly, the young men, the women and children, those who were badly hurt and those who were killed instantly, then everyone was thrown into the pit and among them my mother whose shuddering sensitive warm heart had been gored by a bullet.

Witnesses said that they saw arms raised heavenwards looking for help and rescue. Their dispairing choking cries were sunk into the dark mystery of death. With them was my mother with her pure trusting belief in the essential goodness of man.

They brought out the remaining Jews from the Ghetto and forced them to cover the grave with earth while many were still

twitching. They covered the pit and cried for those who were still alive and asked to be saved. When the Germans saw that there was no use for them any more they shot them as well. The pit of the dead still heaved and moved, rose and fell, while the throttling of the dying continued. They then brought farmers from the area who covered them properly. They patted down the earth well with their spades. In spite of that, warm blood still spurted up from the pit a few hours after the inhuman extermination and incarceration. The blood of my mother and her children and grandchildren was also there.

After the upheavel weakened and died down, great red bubbles came from the pit that changed to a bluish white foam. They rose, burst open and closed, they rose and fell.

For days the common grave was moved by the ferment of life. It cannot be imagined. Bubbles of blood took the form of dark [illegible] came to rest and the grave became quiet.

With the coming of spring and summer the grave was covered with flowers in many colours. A farmer who passed in the fields would glance across at it and would cross himself and sigh and say: Ho, Jews, our beloved saviour guard those who believe in you and hurried away.

Another farmer passing the place would smooth down his moustaches to right and left, would give a satisfied smile and say to his friends: "The ground round the pit is fertile, it will give a good crop." He would go on his way .....

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The night before I left Lublin I told the old couple I was staying with that I was leaving the next morning. They were taken aback and a little stunned. "Where are you going, young man?" You have no family, Stay with us until you are established. Work and live like everyone else! A new Government is being

established and a new regime, perhaps better than the old." "No, Pani, I found a relative in Cracow." He did not believe me. The next morning early the old woman put food in my bag and wiped the tears from her eyes with her apron. The old man poured out a glass of alcohol for me and one for himself and his eyes became moist. We clinked the glasses "To your good health and success my young friend," he said and he drank. He did not talk again and lowered his eyes. I was embarassed and it hurt me to leave them. I already in my mind's eye saw them sitting alone in the evenings. The old man sitting with the glass in his hand looking vacantly into the empty room and his old wife moaning and crossing herself, and there would be no-one to hear his mournful sighs, his stories about the hungry Jews, about the Gypsies, about the Russians who were shot and burnt, about the innocent upright Jews of Czechoslovakia who did not know how to exploit others in order to make their last minutes easier and who in their misery pushed their heads through the barbed wire fence, begging for bread because they were so hungry. His stories about the monstrous crematories and their long black stark chimneys towering upwards giving off the sickening stench of burning human flesh that spread out and pervaded the whole area. Things that he saw and that he couldn't forget. I used to sit quietly opposite him, without moving, looking at his work hardened hands and wrinkled weary old face. I would drink down the alcohol together with crematoria smoke and he would be very, very quiet. I would look up when the old man said something and so with lowered head and eyes on the floor, I quietly opened the door, went out

It was about the month of April round about the time of Pesach in 1945. The lorry inwhich we Jewish boys crouched, wended its way up the Carpathanians to a height of 200 meters above sea-level .

Behind us we were leaving a disintergrating Germany. In the north the Russians had after a terrible struggle finally overcome Koenigsberg. In Berlin, the Soviets had eventually overrun the undrground lair of the arch-murderer and his fiends.

Poland, the tragic land of our birth, whereas most of the population had co-operated with the Germans in exterminitting her Jews and most of the Jews of e Europe as well as others hostile to the Fasist regime , lay beneath us;.

In that land, six million Jews had come to their death either in cold blood or by sadistic torture. This land was soaked in blood . Sinl Single graves, common ones, were scattered allo over the length and breadth of it. Among them that of my own dear ones. Now, with the setting in of the thaw all the graves and unburied bodies were being laid open to the conscience stricken guilty eyes of an aghast world.

Admittedly there were more than "ten good" Poles whose hands were unstained by the blood of the innocent; however, among the Germans—— as I had come to know them for the last five years in Prussia———not even ten of those would be fou found. I lookd back at Poland for the last time, like the daring wife of Lot. ——— I was not turned to stone——— -in time with my pounding heart I vowed the words : "Never will I ever set foot in this Valley of Death again.———" My aim was to reach that Land that was ordained for me and my People.

In the lorry into whico the icy cutting wind blew we Jewish boys crouched together on the floor. Our heads were tucked into the collars of our coats. The lorry rushed on unheeding over the uneven rough stony roadway which was still pitted with the potholes fom from the not too remote battles. The motor rushed South South East over the Carpathian Mountains to the Czechoslovkian border and from there upwards on Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael.

and then went on wild eating and drinking orgies. We have no option friend. Now we must keep quiet and wait." We sank into the heaps of snow. We fell from one heap to another. After every step we had to pull our legs out of the snow. Every post looked like the one before it. The white snow wiped out all our confidence. We struggled and breathed heavily. This went on for two hours. We had walked in a circle of three kilometers. With great difficulty did we finally free ourselves from the blinding snow.

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