

The History of Jews in Proskurov, Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the early history of the Jews in Proskurov, Ukraine, until 1919, and the two tragedies in the history of the Jews of Proskurov: the pogrom of 1919 and the Holocaust during World War Two.

The study of the early history of the Jews in Proskurov relies on secondary literature in English and Ukrainian languages. The study of the 1919-pogrom in Proskurov relies on the book A Prayer For the Government, by Henry Abramson, and on the documents compiled by Volodymyr Serhiichuk in his book Pogromy v Ukraini (Pogroms in Ukraine), in the original Russian and Ukrainian languages.

The study of the Holocaust in Proskurov relies on primary sources which existed before this work was written and on the testimonies compiled by the author: two testimonies of the Holocaust survivors from Proskurov, on file at Yad Vashem, Israel; documentary material at the USHMM; a memorial book by Ilya Abramovich, a survivor from Zinkov, and an unpublished manuscript by Tova Perishtein from Proskurov oblast; the testimonies compiled by Ben Weinstock and David Chapin in their book The Road from Letichev; a testimony of a Holocaust survivor from Proskurov on file at the Fortunoff Video Archive, donated by the survivor to the author; and the testimonies of the Holocaust survivors from Proskurov oblast (tape recordings, letters, and oral correspondence), compiled by the author. The author used her translation of the documents, except where indicated otherwise. The study also relies on the Einsatzgruppe Reports in English translation. The study relies on secondary literature for background information.

Jewish people settled in Proskurov, Ukraine, at the end of the sixteenth century, after fleeing from religious persecution in Germany. The Jews contributed to the economic growth of the town, and although they did not constitute an absolute majority, the Jews were the most numerous ethnic group in Proskurov. After living in Ukraine for more than three hundred years, the Jews did not assimilate because of the differences in religion between the Jews and the indigenous population and because of the tsarist policies intent on ostracizing the Jews from the society. Ukrainians perceived Jews as the "outsiders." In the early twentieth century Ukrainians associated Jews with Russians and with Communists. In 1919, in the chaos of the Civil War, ten percent of the Jews of Proskurov perished in a massacre perpetrated by Ukrainian troops. Twenty years later, nearly all of the 13,000 Jews in Proskurov perished in the Holocaust. In 1941, the Nazis occupied the eastern republics of the Soviet Union. In Proskurov Jews were segregated in a ghetto. Six thousand Jews were murdered in the first pogrom on November 4, 1941. Thereafter the ghetto was partitioned into two. Jewish skilled workers worked inside the ghetto. Unskilled Jews worked as forced laborers on the road construction. More than three forced labor camps existed in the area of Proskurov. The remaining Jews were murdered in the second pogrom, which began on November 30, 1942. The Nazis perpetrated the crimes against the Jews in collaboration with local Ukrainian policemen and Lithuanian auxiliary forces. Approximately sixty Jews in Proskurov survived the Holocaust with the help of righteous Ukrainians. A few of the Jewish men who served in the Red Army returned after the war. A few Jewish families from Proskurov survived the war in eastern Soviet Union, where they fled to before the Nazis occupied the city.

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INTRODUCTION

Proskurov, renamed Khmel'nitskiy¹ by the Soviet government in 1954 to commemorate the memory of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy,² today is a city in the Podolian region of Ukraine, with 1,486,000 inhabitants.³ Only a small percentage of the population is Jewish.⁴ In the early twentieth century, however, Jews constituted nearly half of the population of the city and played an important role in its development.⁵ The history of the Jews of Proskurov is vitally related to the history of the city, Ukraine, and Ukrainians.

NOTES

¹ The transliteration of "Khmel'nitskiy" varies in different sources. I will use the Russian version of the transliteration, except in the citation of the sources, where "Khmel'nitskiy" is transliterated otherwise. The Soviet government also made the following street name changes after the war: Aleksandrovskaya Street became -- 25 October Street; Aptekarskaya Street -- Kotovskiy Street; Kamenetskaya Street -- Frunze Street; Komercheskaya Street -- Roza Luksemburg Street; Kupecheskaya Street -- Karl Marx Street; Remeslennaya Street -- Telman Street; Sobornaya Street -- Karl Lipnekht Street

² Kabachins'kaya, Svitlana. *Khmel'nits'komu -- 500*. 1993. Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy is commemorated by the Russians for his efforts in bringing the Ukrainian part of Poland into the greater Russia. Nationalistically-minded Ukrainians today consider Khmel'nitskiy their hero for freeing them from the Polish oppression but deny that Khmel'nitskiy played an important role in the unification of Ukraine and Russia. In 1991 Ukraine became an independent country.

³ Khmelnytsky Oblast. April 15, 2000. Regional Business Assistance Center, Kharkiv. September 2000. <www.ukrainebiz.com/Articles/KhmelnytskyFacts>

⁴ The statistics concerning the Jewish population in Khmel'nitskiy today are not available. In 1959, 6,200 Jews lived in Proskurov ("Proskurov," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1971). After the recent wave of immigration to Israel, the United States and other countries, the number of Jews in Proskurov must have decreased significantly.

⁵ In 1909, Jews constituted 47.4% of the population in Proskurov. I. M. Bogolyubova, L. O. Timofeeva, and O. B. Chernyshov, "Misto Proskuriv u XVIII -- Na Pochatku XX st. Daty i Podii" [Proskuriv City 18th-early 20th centuries: Dates and Events], *Ploskyriv*.

Prasuriv. Khmel'nyts'kyi. 1493-1993, ed. A. G. Filiniuk (Khmelnyskyi: Podillia, 1993). 10.

JEWS AMONG UKRAINIANS IN PROSKUROV, 1578-1919,
AND THE POGROM OF 1919

The town of Proskurov was founded in 1493. The seven houses that constituted the town were built along the rivers Ploskaya and South Bug. The town belonged to the Podolian region of the Polish kingdom. In the sixteenth century the Poles built a wooden fortress in Proskurov, similar to the fortresses built in the nearby settlements of Letichev, Medzhibosh and others, designed to protect the Polish kingdom from Turkish invasions. The proximity to rivers and the fortress gave spur to the growth of the town. By the end of the sixteenth century Proskurov was a little trading town and had a Polish military garrison. Polish soldiers came from the noble class and were Roman Catholic. In 1510, a Polish nobleman Stanislav Gursky received Proskurov as a reward from the King for his services. The Ukrainian peasants who lived on the land became his serfs. Ukrainian peasants belonged to Greek Orthodox faith since 988 AD.¹ Throughout their domain, the Polish rulers persecuted Ukrainians, whose religion and ethnicity they perceived as inferior. In serfdom, Ukrainians led a downtrodden existence.² In 1596, a split occurred in the Ukrainian church. A part of the Ukrainian clergy became Greek Catholic, a variation of Catholicism with strong Greek Orthodox traditions, such as married clergy.³ In Proskurov, however, as in most other towns in Podolia, the majority of Ukrainians did not change their faith.⁴ Hence Ukrainians lived in wretchedness in the Polish kingdom for many years. Podolia changed from Polish to Russian ownership at the end of the eighteenth century.⁵ Under the Russians, Ukrainians did not fare better than under the Poles. Religion and the relationships between Ukrainians and their minority ruling

classes, Poles and Russians, defined the relationship between the two dominant groups of Proskurov, Ukrainians and Jews.

Although Jewish settlements existed in the area that became Ukraine since the twelfth century, and in the fourteenth century, a Polish King Cazimir, influenced by his Jewish mistress, invited Jews to settle on Ukrainian territories,⁶ Ukrainian historians do not mention a settlement of Jews in Proskurov until 1578. Most of the Jewish settlers were refugees from German religious persecutions.⁷ While the records of Polish poll tax payments indicate that the number of Jews in Proskurov in 1765 was 750, similar population statistics are missing for Ukrainians in the town.⁸ In 1795, as a result of the second partition of Poland, Proskurov and the whole of Podolia became a part of the Russian Empire.⁹ The Russian Tsars came to dominate the people of Ukraine. In 1797, the number of Jewish inhabitants in Proskurov, 1,522, was three times as many as the number of Gentiles, 492; all 60 of the town's merchants were Jews. According to a Russian census, in 1806, the total population of Proskurov was 2,002 people. The census of 1847 indicates that 3,107 Jews lived in the town; in 1864 the total population numbered 6,930 people. In 1897, out of 22,915 Proskurovers, 11,411 were Jews. The last census taken in the town before the end of the Russian Empire, reveals that in 1909, out of 35,771 people, there were 16,971 Jews, 10,677 Greek Orthodox people (mainly Ukrainians but also Russians), 8,026 Catholics (mainly Poles but probably a small percentage of Ukrainians, as well), and 97 people who did not indicate their religion.¹⁰ Thus at least from the nineteenth century the Jews were an ethnic majority in Proskurov and Ukrainians were the next numerous group, a pattern characteristic of urban centers in Podolia. (The Jewish presence in Ukrainian countryside was insignificant. Hence,

although Jews were concentrated in Ukrainian cities, in 1897, they constituted only eight percent of the whole population of Ukraine).¹¹ Over the centuries of their coexistence, however, no harmonious relationship developed between Jews and Gentiles. Religion and political reality, where Ukrainians were never the dominant people in their own land, caused separateness, mistrust and antipathy between the two people and ultimately resulted in anti-Jewish pogroms in 1918-1920. The Proskurov pogrom¹² was but one episode in the anti-Jewish violence in Ukraine in the early twentieth century.

Religion defined the way of life of the people in the Polish kingdom. Jewish religion is based on "Servitude to the Name of G-d."¹³ When the Jews settled in Polish Podolia, the observance of Shabat and numerous other religious holidays, dietary laws, daily morning, afternoon and evening prayers, and the study of Talmud kept the Jews preoccupied in their own community and encouraged little social contact with Christians. In fact, as when in the Biblical times Joseph commanded his brothers, the twelve tribes of Israel, to settle in Egypt apart from the pagan Egyptians, the Jews who settled in Podolia did not seek contact with the uncircumcised pork-eating Ukrainians and somewhat regarded them with contempt. The Jews spoke Yiddish, a Germanic dialect with Hebrew overtones, and in their daily morning prayers in Hebrew men thanked G-d for not having been made non-Jews.¹⁴ Similar to the Jews, Roman Catholic Poles and Greek Orthodox Ukrainians were also deeply entrenched in their respective religions. Church attendance on Sundays and observance of religious holidays defined the lives of these two people. Both Christian Churches taught that Jews have killed the only son of G-d, Jesus Christ, and were "the lowliest of all nations."¹⁵ The myths about Jews using the blood of Christian children to bake matzo, Jews poisoning wells, and Jews being Devil-worshippers

were taken as truths in the Polish kingdom, as elsewhere in medieval Europe. The fact that Jews spoke and worshiped in foreign languages and kept apart from Christians reinforced the alien image of the Jews.¹⁶

This setting of three conflicting religions ultimately shaped the socioeconomic relationship between the peoples living in Ukrainian territory. Although the Poles allowed Jews to settle in their kingdom, because they were infidels, Jews were not allowed to own or to cultivate land. Roman Catholic Poles owned all the land while Greek Orthodox peasants, bound to the land in the Ukraine (literary the "borderlands" in Slavic), cultivated it, and were burdened with heavy taxes by the hated Poles. By default, Jews had to choose their residences in towns, such as Proskurov. Thus Jewish settlement contributed to the growth of urban centers in Ukraine. Despite the fact that Jews were Christ-killers, largely illiterate Polish landlords valued Jews for their male literacy. Living comfortably in the Commonwealth of Poland, the Poles rarely appeared in the Ukraine but used Jewish agents to collect burdensome taxes from Ukrainian peasants. The Jews made their living from keeping a small percentage from the taxes, trading, and craftsmanship.¹⁷ To a downtrodden Ukrainian peasant an alien Jewish tax collector appeared as the source of his misery. That the "lowliest of all nations," the Devil-worshippers, associated with the Poles, should "plow the field with our people as one plows with oxen,"¹⁸ appeared as an ultimate injustice to the peasants. Thus when in 1648-1652 Bogdan Khmelnitskiy led a Cossack rebellion against the Polish nobility, thousands of Ukrainian peasants joined in rebellion and massacred 100,000 Jews along with many Poles.¹⁹ In *Abyss of Despair*, Rabbi Nathan Hanover, a survivor of the Khmelnitskiy rebellion, described the horrors of the Jewish massacres in many towns in

Volhynia and Podolia. Although Hanover did not mention Proskurov in *the Abyss*, the Jews of Proskurov until this day cite the Khmel'nitskiy massacres as one of the misfortunes that befell their ancestors.²⁰

Although in Western and Central Europe, where anti-Jewish persecution was also common in medieval ages, the Jews became fully or at least nominally emancipated by the twentieth century,²¹ on the eve of WWI, Russian Jews and Ukrainians stood almost in the same place as they did in the seventeenth century. When, in 1795, Podolia and other parts of Ukraine became a part of the Russian Empire, the Tsars continued to keep Ukrainian peasants in serfdom. Intent on keeping the Jews out of the heartland of Russia, unless they converted to Greek Orthodoxy, the Tsars confined the Jews to the territory where they resided before 1795, known as the Pale of Settlement.²² The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the appearance of sugar refineries, waxwork, brewing, iron, tobacco factories, brickworks, and other industrial enterprises in Proskurov in the second half of the nineteenth century, evidently resulted in the growth of the town. In 1880, Proskurov was given the status of a city and a regional capital (*uyezd*).²³ In the region of Proskurov, out of 226,000 inhabitants 27,000 (12%) were Jews.²⁴ Villages were overwhelmingly settled by Gentile peasants. However, in a few towns, like Felshtin and Cherny Ostrov, Jews made up nearly hundred percent of the population. In Yiddish these towns were known as *shtetles*. The ratio between Gentiles and Jews in the city of Proskurov was half and half.²⁵ Yet, with the only exception of their interaction in the market for goods and services, on the eve of WWI, the Jewish and Ukrainian communities continued to be as separate from each other as in the seventeenth century.

The oppressive tsarist policies precluded the overwhelming majority of Jews from moving into the Gentile society and from acquiring secular non-religious education. Thus, in the early twentieth century, while internal tensions started to appear between a small minority of politicized Jews and their orthodox brethren, to a large extent, Jewish communities remained socially self-secluded. The observance of the Jewish law and Jewish holidays remained the way of life of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people. In Proskurov, Jews worshiped in five synagogues while Gentiles prayed in two Greek Orthodox churches or the Catholic church. Although they traded with Ukrainians, Jews commonly mistrusted Gentiles. After more than three hundred years of coexistence, the majority of the Jews in Proskurov did not speak Russian or Ukrainian, only Yiddish. Because Jewish law proscribed intermarriage, Jews stereotypically had differing facial features from Ukrainians, such as dark eyes and dark hair. Jewish children did not attend the same schools as their Gentile peers. In 1910, there were 18 Jewish schools (*cheders*) in Proskurov and a smaller number Christian primary schools. Gentiles attended one of the two Christian colleges (*uchilishcha*) in the city. Jewish men and women could choose from five Jewish colleges: three female gymnasiums, one male college for artisans, one coed college, and a Talmud Tora – a religious college for poor men and orphans. In addition, the Jewish and the Christian hospitals functioned separately in Proskurov.²⁶ The dividing line between Jews and Ukrainians stemmed from religion but was also ethnic in character. The myths of Jewish blood libel persisted in Ukraine. In 1911, Mendel Beilis was charged with a ritual murder of a Gentile boy in Kiev (he was acquitted in 1913).²⁷ On the other hand, in 1915, an undoubtedly anti-Semitic observer of Jewish and Ukrainian life in Galicia, Glushkevich, wrote that "From the religious point

of view Jewishness decisively does not threaten our people;" he believed that Jews comprised a pernicious, separate race.²⁸ In his recollections about the events that took place in Proskurov in 1919, K. Lysiuk, who was the head of the counter-intelligence in the paramilitary administration of the city at that time, wrote that he had many friends among Ukrainians as well as among Jews. Yet he invariably referred to the Ukrainians as the "townspeople" (*meshchane*) and to the Jews as "the Yids" (*zhidy*).²⁹ Thus the xenophobic perception of Jews by Gentiles in Proskurov was reflected even in Ukrainian language and speech.

Not only their perception of the Jews, but also Ukrainian perception of their own history is important to understand the pogroms that took place in Ukraine in 1918-1920. In the last days of the Russian Empire, nationalistically minded Ukrainians viewed their history as an everlasting oppression by foreigners. Even after the Tsars lifted the yoke of serfdom in 1861, the majority of Ukrainians continued to toil in poverty. In 1897 less than six percent of all Ukrainians lived in Ukrainian urban centers; seventy-three percent worked as peasants while most of the land still belonged to ethnically Polish landowners.³⁰ Until 1905 the Tsars prohibited publications in the Ukrainian language and did not allow any state schooling in that language. In fact, many Great Russian intellectuals regarded Ukrainian as a Southern dialect of Russian rather than a separate language: "the Ukrainian language never was, is not, and can never be."³¹ When Tsar Nicholas relaxed his imperial grip in 1905 and granted some basic civil rights and representation in local governments to the people of his Empire, Ukrainians still did not feel themselves politically in charge. In 1919, in the local government of Proskurov (*Duma*), out of 50 democratically elected representatives, 24 were Jews.³² (Keeping in

mind that Jews constituted almost half of the population of Proskurov, the high percentage of Jews in the city *Duma* is not demonstrative of Ukrainian attitude towards Jews). At the head of the city government in Proskurov were two Polish representatives and not Ukrainians, similar to the pattern in the other cities and towns of Podolia.³³ Jews dominated industry in Ukraine (35%); Russians constituted the second largest group in the industrial class (19%).³⁴ Khmelnitakiy historians definitively state that in 1909 eight out of 42 major industries in the city, including a sugar refinery, an aluminum factory, and cement factories, were owned by Jews.³⁵ There is no reference as to the ethnicity of the other owners. Jews also dominated trade. A non-native of Proskurov described this city in 1909-1911 as "a large Jewish community of tradesmen and small shops."³⁶ Thus, in the eyes of Ukrainians, Jews were responsible for the ups and downs of their economy. When, during WWI, the Tsar failed to stimulate the imperial economy, and high inflation afflicted the cities, Ukrainians directed their wrath against Jewish tradesmen (*spekulyanty*): "During the time that Ukrainian sons... soaked the battlefields with their blood and covered them with their bodies... [the Jews] pillaged our land, and sold it out."³⁷ Police reports in numerous Ukrainian cities documented that the doubling, tripling and quadrupling of prices evoked extreme animosity against Jews by Christians.³⁸ The fact that the Jewish intelligentsia (*maskilim*) and Jewish liberals, who represented a small but vocal minority of the Jews in the early twentieth century, absorbed the culture and the language of the hated Russians, did not endear Jews to Ukrainians.³⁹ Thus on the eve of World War I, as in the seventeenth century, the majority of Ukrainians regarded Jews as aliens and as their historical oppressors.

World War One was humiliating and disastrous to the Russian Empire, and, perhaps, more than any other factor, led to its downfall. Soldiers of all ethnic groups died at the front not only from battle but also from typhus and starvation.⁴⁰ Unlike in Galicia (Western Ukraine that belonged to Austro-Hungary), apparently, no battles took place on the territory of Podolia. Yet in Ukrainian cities shortages of food and basic commodities gave rise to outrages, which sometimes resulted in small-scale violence against merchants. People held the Tsar ultimately responsible for the failings in the war. Thus the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917, and the accession of the popular Provisional Government with its declaration about the "abolition of all class, religious, and national restrictions"⁴¹ was welcomed by Ukrainian socialists; they aspired to get cultural and linguistic independence at last. The Central Rada, a coalition of socialist parties that came to represent Ukraine under the Provisional Government, declared in its First Universal proclamation of June 1917: "let the people of Ukraine have the right to manage its own life on its own soil," within Russia.⁴² Yet, in 1917, Ukrainians constituted only 72 percent of all people living in Ukraine; less than 20 percent of all Ukrainians were literate, and the Ukrainian intelligentsia represented only a small minority of their people.⁴³ Thus the leadership of the Central Rada realized the need for non-Ukrainian "democratic elements" to join them in the building of a culturally autonomous Ukraine. In its Second Universal of July 1917, the Central Rada invited Jewish, Russian and Polish minorities, and other peoples living in Ukraine to take part in the drafting of the legislation for the new autonomy. Those Jewish political parties that believed that a Jewish autonomy in a country other than Palestine could be the answer to

the end of Jew-hatred and tsarist oppression gladly answered the call; other minorities, too, took part in the elections for the new legislative body.⁴⁴

In the summer and fall of 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada passed very liberal legislation, favorable towards Jews and other minorities. A General Secretary for Nationality Affairs was appointed by the Rada "to campaign for accord among all nationalities in Ukraine, with the aim of forging a political consensus of all peoples living within its boundaries in the upcoming battle for [territorial] autonomy." On July 13, 1917, the Rada appointed Jewish, Russian and Polish Secretaries for Nationality Affairs to represent the needs of their respective peoples. For the first time in the history of Russia, a Jew represented his people in a legislative body at a state level. In September of 1917, ninety-two delegates that represented twenty different nationalities in the Congress of Nationalities formulated the Law of National-Personal Autonomy; passed in January of 1918, the law granted "extra-territorial personal autonomy" to Great Russians, Poles and Jews of Ukraine.⁴⁵ While most Western and Central European countries granted Emancipation to the Jews with an implication that Jews should assimilate, abandon their traditions and adopt the culture of the Gentiles,⁴⁶ the articles of the Congress of Nationalities specifically granted the Jewish minority the right to retain its cultural distinctiveness within Ukrainian democracy. Article 6 of the Law of National-Personal Autonomy made the Jewish Vice-Secretariat for Nationality Affairs (whose title later changed to the Minister of Jewish Affairs) responsible for setting up a Jewish education system within Ukraine. Article 10 guaranteed the full use of Yiddish, Russian and Polish languages in Ukraine. On November 7, 1917, the Central Rada proclaimed Ukraine a Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) within greater Russia and subsequently

issued currency with inscriptions in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish, unprecedented in the history of any country.⁴⁷ Thus, overnight, the lives of both Jews and Gentiles seemed on the verge of a complete transformation in Ukraine. Yet the miracle did not materialize.

The Bolshevik Revolution, which took place on November 7, 1917 while World War I was still going on, spelled the end of every reform attained in the Russian Empire during the short reign of the Provisional Government. When the Bolshevik Red Army invaded Ukraine in January 1918, with the intent of spreading Communism to this part of the former Russian Empire, Ukrainian nationalistic aspirations were shattered. A Civil War ensued. In a desperate attempt to save their perceived autonomy, on February 9, 1918, the leadership of the Ukrainian National Republic, known as the Directory and headed by Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Symon Petliura, concluded a separate peace with the Central Powers. German and Austro-Hungarian troops promptly moved into Ukraine and by March pushed the Red Army out of Kiev. In April 1918, a German sponsored coup, led by Ukrainian General Skoropadskiy, temporarily pushed the Directory out of the scene. In Kiev, German troops issued proclamations accusing Jews of disrupting "general peace" in the Ukraine by the spreading false rumors regarding German and Austrian authorities, and promised to punish the Jews for their offence.⁴⁸ In Podolia, however, apparently German soldiers behaved with respect towards the local population. Tova Perlshtein, a resident of Kupel, some 60 km west of Proskurov, described the German occupation of her *shtetl*:

The German commanders who billeted in the homes of the Jews behaved with dignity and received a warm welcome... The Jews were captivated by the elegant behavior of the German soldiers to such an extent that on a Shabat towards the end of the war, when a passing German airplane dropped a bomb on the *shtetl*, the

Jews were convinced it was an error – that they had no intention of harming civilians.⁴⁹

In December 1918, after the Germans and Skoropadskiy retreated from Ukraine, the fighting between the Red Army and the Directory troops (and other numerous armies and self-proclaimed bands) resumed in full force in the chaos of the Civil War. No definite front lines existed between the armies. One government replaced another in a matter of days. In Proskurov, 16 different governments existed consecutively throughout the Civil War. From November of 1918 until November of 1920, Bolsheviks and Directory troops replaced one another 11 times.⁵⁰ Thousands of Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks joined the Directory troops to fight the Bolshevik Red Army.

To be sure, Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks did not fight on the side of the Directory for ideological reasons. Since less than 20% of Ukrainians were literate, the majority of the troops did not know that “from everyone according to [his] ability, to everyone according to [his] need” was a Communist dogma. The Bolshevik attack on religion, “the opium of the masses,” did not begin to materialize until after the Communists had won the Civil War. In 1915, an observer of religious life in Western Ukraine noted that the Orthodox Christians valued their religious traditions rather than Christian dogma. While most peasants went to church on Sundays, immediately after the services they visited local taverns to get drunk on alcohol.⁵¹ Forced collectivization of farmlands by Communists did not begin until 1929 in the Soviet Union. The fact that, in 1917, the Central Rada with popular support from Ukrainians proposed land reforms, which would dispossess wealthy Polish landowners, suggests that the Bolshevik attack on the rich did not conflict with the Directory either.⁵² When, in 1918, the Communists “nationalized” (confiscated by force) large businesses in Proskurov, the victims of the

nationalization were mainly the owners, Jews and wealthy Gentiles, not Ukrainian Cossacks. Thus a Ukrainian soldier did not perceive the invading Bolsheviks as ideological enemies but rather as national enemies, trying to subordinate the Ukrainian masses after their first steps to free will.

The vast majority of Jews in Ukraine were politically inactive at the time of the Civil War. In 1909-1911, when Isaac Donen tried to organize the workers of Prekursov into a "workers' organization" (a labor union of sorts), he met "only disappointment and pessimism." Donen wrote, "Some of them [workers] were even afraid to talk about it. Others laughed at me and warned me not to accept such naïve and wild ideas."⁵³ By 1911, in the population of more than 35,000, the workers' organization counted only 500 members, most of whom were Jews. The strikes carried out by the organization were mostly directed against Jewish employers: "We were not afraid of them because even many of their children belonged to us." Yet the organization of Isaac Donen was not Communist. Whereas Communists are viciously anti-religious, most of the meetings of the organization were held in a synagogue. In discord with the Communist pro-internationalism ideology, one leader even proposed that the membership in the organization be limited to Jews.⁵⁴ Neither Jewish socialist parties nor Zionists that represented Jews in the Ukrainian National Republic agreed with the Communist ideology because of its denial of national distinctiveness.⁵⁵ Yet the Ukrainian masses, overwhelmingly, perceived the invading Red Army as a Jew-driven force. For reasons that will not be discussed here, Jews were disproportionately represented in the Communist party of Russia. In 1917, almost 30 percent of the Bolshevik Central Committee was Jewish by nationality. Leon Trotsky, the Bolshevik Commissar of

Foreign Affairs who organized the Red Army was a son of a Ukrainian Jewish farmer. Jewish Bolsheviks broke all their ties with the religion of their parents and the Jewish community and identified themselves only with the international proletariat. Yet the fact that 75% of the members in the terrorizing Extraordinary Committee, which accompanied the Red Army into Kiev in 1918 had Jewish origins, convinced Ukrainians that "oppressor," "Bolshevik," and "Jew" were synonymous words.⁵⁶ The 1905 fraudulent publication, entitled The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which describes the alleged Jewish plan to conquer and subordinate the world, undoubtedly, also influenced Ukrainian nationalists.⁵⁷ Thus in the chaos of the Civil War, from 1918 to 1920, Jews, who were perceived as aliens, foreigners, economic and political oppressors, and the henchmen of the Russian Bolsheviks, became the victims of pogroms, unprecedented in magnitude, carried out by Ukrainian Directory troops and other perpetrators.

The pogrom in Proskurov was but one episode in the anti-Jewish violence that took place from 1918 to 1920. A Bolshevik uprising served as a pretext for the pogrom. On February 10, 1919, the underground Bolshevik council of Podolia issued a secret order for a region-wide Bolshevik uprising, to take place on February 15, against the Directory troops.⁵⁸ Proskurov was chosen as the starting point of the uprising evidently because of its strategic location on the railroad junctions between Starokonstantinov and Kamenets-Podolsky and between Zhmerinka and Volochysk, and because the 15th Belgorod and the 8th Podolia regiments stationed in the city were pro-Bolshevik.⁵⁹ Two days prior to the revolt, the secret coalition of the socialist parties in Proskurov, headed by a member of a Jewish socialist party, learned about the scheduled uprising from the Communists, who were also part of the coalition. Although the socialist parties feared

that the revolt would fail and lead to oppression of the local political parties and the Jews in Proskurov, the Communists maintained that the uprising must proceed and would succeed because a total of eleven localities in Ukraine were to revolt simultaneously, and Bolsheviks from 16 surrounding villages with ammunition were to come to Proskurov to bolster the rebellion.⁶⁰

At 6:15 am, on Saturday February 15, the Jewish Sabbath, the uprising began. After taking control of the city postal office and the telegraph, and establishing their headquarters in a Jewish apartment on Aleksandrovskaya Street, the main street of Proskurov, the Bolshevik organizers awoke the 15th Belgorod and the 8th Podolia regiments to fight the Cossack Zaporozhian brigade and the 3rd Haidamak regiment, both loyal to the Directory and stationed in the city since the beginning of February. Apparently, after seeing that the Cossacks were much more numerous than they and that no help was coming from the nearby villages, the pro-Bolshevik regiments retreated and dispersed to nearby towns. Directory troops put down the uprising in less than two hours. The Cossacks celebrated their "victory" with a luxurious feast and vodka.⁶¹ According to the recollections of Lysiuk, who witnessed the skirmish between the Bolsheviks and the Directory troops, after 10:00 am on the same day, the Cossacks broke into the apartment on Aleksandrovskaya Street where they found ammunition. After learning about the incident, the ataman (commander) of the Zaporozhian brigade, Semosenko, called unto his Cossacks and instructed them thus:

Without shooting, without looting, cut out the Jews in those apartments that rose to rebellion. For murder of children and for plunder I will shoot [you].⁶²

One *sotnik* (company commander), who had connections with Petliura, the General Secretary for Military Affairs in the Directory, refused to carry out the order and his *sotka*

(company of 100) walked out of Proskurov. The rest of 300 to 600 Cossacks aligned in a military formation and, preceded by a musical band, marched down the Aleksandrovskaya Street.⁶³ At precisely 2:00 pm the Cossacks dispersed in different directions and the massacre began:

The Angel of Death was knocking on their doors... in groups of five to fifteen, looking absolutely calm [they] walked into houses. They took out "swords." And began to raze those whosoever Jewish was in the house, without distinction to age or sex. They killed elderly people, women, and children...⁶⁴

The witness Shenkman gave evidence that the Cossacks killed his younger brother in the street near his house, then entered the house and cut open his mother's head. Other members of the family tried to hide under beds, but when a small brother of his saw his mother dead, he got out from under the bed and kissed the dead body. Thereupon the old father also came out from his hiding and was shot dead...

The house of Krotchak was visited by eight men, who began breaking all the window-panes. Five men entered the house while three remained outside. Those in the house seized the old man Krotchak by his beard, dragged him to the window of the kitchen and threw him out of the window to the other three who killed him. Then they killed the old woman and her two daughters. A young woman who was visiting in the house was dragged by her long hair into another room, then thrown out of the window into the street and there killed. After that the Cossacks re-entered the house and inflicted several wounds on a boy aged 13, who became deaf in consequence. His elder brother received nine wounds in his stomach and his side, having first been placed on his mother's dead body.⁶⁵

In the house of Za.ulia one daughter was killed who was tortured for a long time. The boy in the house received a few wounds and pretended he was dead. The mother offered money to murderers, they replied: "we came for [your] souls only."

...one wounded young man asked to be shot. A Haidamak shot him twice, another [haidamak] said to him "why do you shoot, the ataman ordered us to cut, but not to shoot." The former one replied: "what can I do, he asks me himself."⁶⁶

As the slaughter proceeded, the city paramilitary administrative commandant, Kiverchuk, disarmed all policemen except those who volunteered and took part in the bloodshed, and sent telegrams to police stations in nearby villages to shoot on the spot all "instigators

and Jews" picked up on the road fleeing from Proskurov or transfer them to Proskurov commandant for execution.⁶⁷

Some Christian civilians tried to stop the massacre and to help the Jews. A man named Kocherovs'kyi ran into the street and tried to save a Jewish child, crying to the Cossacks, "Christians, what are you doing?" He and the child were killed immediately.⁶⁸ Emma Sheynberg testified that a Ukrainian friend forewarned and helped the family of her mother to hide from the pogromists.⁶⁹ A member of Ukrainian intelligentsia, Verkhola, was instrumental in bringing order back to Proskurov.⁷⁰ Yet other Gentile civilians were indifferent to Jewish fate and some even took part in the carnage:

Dr. Skornik... boasted that in one house they met such a beautiful young woman that none of the haidamaks dared to cut her; then he cut her with his own hands... When one charity nurse cried to him: "What are you doing, you are wearing a badge of the Red Cross," – he ripped off his badge and continued to cut.⁷¹

Three hours after the slaughter began, a city administrator Taranovich telegraphed Shapalov, the Directory commander of the front, who immediately telegraphed an order to Semosenko to stop the massacre. The Cossacks were summoned by their ataman and they ceased the slaughter in an "organized" way just as they started their "mission." Sporadic killings continued in Proskurov through Sunday, February 16. Lysiuk asserts that on Sunday morning money and valuables were found next to the many dead bodies that lined the streets because the Cossacks refused to accept bribes from Jews, in accordance with the order from Semosenko. However, according to the numerous Jewish witnesses who survived the massacre, during the night from Saturday to Sunday, Cossacks, local police, and many others in Proskurov looted the houses of the murdered Jews and of those who remained in hiding in their basements, attics, and elsewhere. On Monday, the surviving Jews buried 1,200 corpses in four mass graves. Out of 600

wounded victims, 300 joined the dead. Thus six percent of Proskurov Jewry was annihilated.⁷²

In a nearby village of Zarech'ye, peasants broke into the houses of "their" Jews and killed them without the help from Directory troops. The peasants "arrested" the Jews on the roads and gave them in to Cossacks who proceeded to cut. The peasants of Grinovtsy, invited Cossacks to their village, who plundered 30,000 rubles from the local forty Jews. Although Cossacks offered to the peasants of Grinovtsy to murder "their" Jews, as well, the peasants refused to spill Jewish blood in their village and drove them out to Proskurov to the "authorities." The lives of forty Jews were spared because by that time Semosenko halted the massacre.⁷³

After hearing about the massacre in Proskurov, on February 16, 1,900 Jews of Felshtin, located 25 km from Proskurov, asked the head of police of their *shtetl* for protection and paid him the "appropriate sum." Instead of protecting them, the head of police invited peasants from the nearby village of Porich'ye to surround the Jews. When, on February 17, the Cossacks and haidamaks came to Felshtin from Proskurov, 485 Jews were brutally murdered; many were fatally wounded and died subsequently. In Felshtin, unlike in Proskurov, the soldiers raped and maimed most women and girls before they killed them. Also unlike in Proskurov, the pogromists accepted "contributions" – money and jewelry, from some of the Jews who pleaded for their lives.⁷⁴

In the city and in the *shtetles*, Cossacks, local police and "specifically peasants" pulled up carts to Jewish stores and homes to load the stolen goods.⁷⁵ Apparently, although many of them were indifferent to the Jewish fate, the Gentiles who resided in Proskurov next to the Jews did not take a pro-active role in the plunder. Yet to Ukrainian

peasants, the murder and plunder of alien Jews was fully justified. In his explanatory proclamation, issued on February 17, Semosenko stated that the pogrom was committed because:

some irresponsible men... of the Jewish nation, wanted to seize power, bring confusion into the services of the State and lead our Ukraine, which has already suffered so much, into anarchy and disorder.⁷⁶

Semosenko admitted that "it is quite possible that among the victims who fell by the arms of my Cossacks there were many innocent persons." Yet, in his opinion, the murders of 1,500 Jews in Proskurov and 485 Jews in Felshtin, as a revenge for an uprising by two Bolshevik military regiments, were fully justified.⁷⁷

Before he left the city on February 27, 1919, Semosenko collected 600,000 rubles from the Jews who remained in Proskurov "in gratitude for the labors" of his troops. Semosenko was not court-martialed by the Directory until 1920.⁷⁸ Nearly every other change of government in Proskurov, until the end of the Civil War, resulted in minor pogroms against the Jews. Jews became used to paying "contributions" for their lives to soldiers. Many of them constructed permanent shelters in the basements and attics of their one-story and two-story houses on the dirt roads of Proskurov to protect themselves from the pogromists. In the words of Tova Perlshtein:

The reds blamed the [Jews] for warmly receiving the whites; the whites claimed that the Jews like the reds better so they murdered Jews. The revolutionary red soldiers, when they arrived in the shtetl [Kupel, 60 km west of Proskurov] hurried to steal whatever they could find. Along came their officers who demanded the Jews give them gold, watches, and boots, and if the booty was not forthcoming they murdered the Jews. The whites behaved similarly but the soldiers joined in with their officers.⁷⁹

Thus the nearly ten percent of the Jews of Proskurov who were murdered in 1919 became a part of the more than 100,000 Jews killed in pogroms.⁸⁰ The pogroms ended when the

Soviet government permanently occupied Ukraine. The Red Army walked into Proskurov on November 18, 1920.⁸¹ The Soviet rule became embedded. Twenty years later, during World War Two, the memory of the pogrom and the Civil War, and the Jewish perception of the Soviet reality affected the behavior of the Jews in the Holocaust.

NOTES

¹ E. D. Nazarenko, "Davniy Ploskyriv," Ploskyriv, Proskuriv, Khmel'nyts'kyi, 1493-1993, ed. A. G. Filiniuk (Khmelnitskyi: Podillia, 1993) 17-21.

² Nathan Hannover, The Abyss of Despair, trans. Abraham J. Mesch (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1950), *passim*.

³ Henry Abramson, A Prayer For The Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920 (Cambridge, Mass: Ukrainian Research Institute and Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, 1999) 3, 152.

⁴ In 1909, 29.8% of the population in Proskurov were Greek Orthodox and Ukrainian, while 22.4% were Catholic and Poles. I. M. Bogolyubova, L. O. Timofeeva, and O. B. Chernyshov, "Misto Proskuriv u XVIII – Na Pochatku XX st. Daty i Podii" [Proskuriv City 18th-early 20th centuries: Dates and Events], Ploskyriv, Proskuriv, Khmel'nyts'kyi, 1493-1993, ed. A. G. Filiniuk (Khmelnitskyi: Podillia, 1993), 10.

⁵ Nazarenko, 20.

⁶ "Proskurov," Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem, Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16 vols. (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1971); M. Glushkevich, "Evreistvo," Pogromy v Ukraini: 1914-1920. vid shuchnykh stereotypiv do hirkoj pravdy, prykhovuvanoi v radians'kykh v arhiyakh, comp. Volodymyr Serhiichuk (Kiev, 1998) 116.

⁷ Nazarenko, 18.

⁸ "Proskurov," Encyclopaedia Judaica.

⁹ Nazarenko, 18.

¹⁰ Bogolyubova, 6-10; "Proskurov," Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia: "Proskurov," Encyclopaedia Judaica.

¹¹ Abramson, 10.

¹² In Russian, the noun *pogrom* comes from the verb *gromit*, which literary means "to destroy." Although Russians may use the word *pogrom* to signify any "destruction" from a burglary to a massacre, in history, the word *pogrom* came to mean the anti-Jewish massacres in the greater Russia at the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries.

¹³ Abramson, 4.

¹⁴ Abramson, 1-32.

¹⁵ Implied in Hannover, 27-28.

¹⁶ Abramson, 1-32.

¹⁷ Abramson, 1-32; Hannover, 27-28; Solomon Grayzel, Preface, *The Abyss of Despair*, by Nathan Hannover, trans. Abraham J. Mesch (New York: Bloch Publishing Company) 1950.

¹⁸ Hannover, 27-28.

¹⁹ "Bogdan Khmel'nitski," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16 vols. (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1971).

²⁰ Tatyana Uzenkel, letter to the author, December 2000; Maks Voskoboinik, letter to the author, 16 October, 2000.

²¹ Howard M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, New Rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 38-61.

²² Sachar, 62-92, 202-224.

²³ Nazarenko, 17-21.

²⁴ "Proskurov," *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia*.

²⁵ Bogolyubova, 10.

²⁶ Bogolyubova, 5-11; Kabachins'kaya; Sonya Shteyner, telephone interview, 4 October 2000.

²⁷ Sachar, 294-295.

²⁸ Glushkevich, 117.

²⁹ K. V. Lysiuk, "Spogady ukrainsia – ochevydtsia evreis'koho pohromu v Proskurovi"

(original pub. in *Sprava Ukraïna'ko-zhydiva'kikh Vzaemovidnosyn*. Ontario. 1964. 22-27), Pogromy v Ukraïni: 1914-1920. vid shtuchnykh stereotypiv do hirkoï pravdy. prykhovuvanoi v radians'kykh v arhivakh, comp. Volodymyr Serhiichuk (Kiev, 1998) 202-208.

³⁰ Abramson, 9.

³¹ Abramson, 13.

³² Gillerson, A. I., "Doklad A. Gilersona pro pohrom u Proskurovi 15 liutogo 1919 roku." Pogromy v Ukraïni: 1914-1920. vid shtuchnykh stereotypiv do hirkoï pravdy. prykhovuvanoi v radians'kykh v arhivakh, comp. Volodymyr Serhiichuk. Kiev. 1998. 208-209.

³³ Gillerson, "Doklad A. Gilersona pro pohrom u Proskurovi," 209.

³⁴ Abramson, 15.

³⁵ Bogolyubova, 5-11.

³⁶ Gloria Donen Sosin, A New Life is Coming Soon: the Story Of My Father Isaac Donen (New York: Kalita Press, 1992) 13.

³⁷ Tiutiunyk, "Nakaz otamana Tiutiunyka z vymohoyu suvoro karsty hrbizhnykiv i tykh khto zaklykae do pohromiv," Pogromy v Ukraïni: 1914-1920. vid shtuchnykh stereotypiv do hirkoï pravdy. prykhovuvanoi v radians'kykh v arhivakh, comp. Volodymyr Serhiichuk (Kiev, 1998), 305.

³⁸ Volodymyr Serhiichuk, comp. and ed. Pogromy v Ukraïni: 1914-1920. vid shtuchnykh stereotypiv do hirkoï pravdy. prykhovuvanoi v radians'kykh v arhivakh (Kiev, 1998).

³⁹ Abramson, 40-43.

⁴⁰ Richard Pipes, A Concise History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 56-74.

⁴¹ Qtd. in Abramson, 34.

⁴² Qtd. in Abramson, 44.

⁴³ Abramson, 9-16.

⁴⁴ Abramson, 33-102.

⁴⁵ Abramson, 33-102.

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- ⁴⁶ Sachar, 38-60.
- ⁴⁷ Abramson, 59-66.
- ⁴⁸ Abramson, 67-102.
- ⁴⁹ Tova Perlshtein, Kunei: In Memory of My Shtetl and the Dear Ones who Died There, unpublished ts., trans. Eliav Bar-Hai (Tel Aviv), Ophira Druch and Joel Cohn (Oakland, CA), collection of Ben Weinstock, 3-4;
- ⁵⁰ O. M. Zaval'niuk, "Zbroina Borot'ba v Proskurovi u 1919-1920 Rokakh," Pisokyriv, Proskuriy, Khmel'nyts'kyi, 1493-1993, ed. A. G. Filiniuk (Khmelnitskyi: Podillia, 1993) 34-39.
- ⁵¹ Pipes, 333-342; Glushkevich, 120.
- ⁵² Abramson, 60; "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 32 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998).
- ⁵³ Sosin, 14.
- ⁵⁴ Sosin, 13-17.
- ⁵⁵ Sachar, 303-357.
- ⁵⁶ Abramson, 109-116; Sachar, 351-358.
- ⁵⁷ Sergiei Nilus, Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion, trans. Victor E. Marsden (Los Angeles, Calif.: Christian Nationalist Crusade, 196-).
- ⁵⁸ Zaval'niuk, 34-39.
- ⁵⁹ Gillerson, 210.
- ⁶⁰ Gillerson, 210-213.
- ⁶¹ Gillerson, 213-215; Abramson, 122-131.
- ⁶² Lysiuk, 206.
- ⁶³ Gillerson, 213-215; Abramson, 122-131.
- ⁶⁴ Gillerson, 215.
- ⁶⁵ Abramson, 127.

⁶⁶ Gillerson, 217.

⁶⁷ Gillerson, 215-236.

⁶⁸ Abramson, 127.

⁶⁹ Emma Drakhler (Sheynberg), telephone interview, 29 September, 2000.

⁷⁰ Gillerson, 215-236.

⁷¹ Gillerson, 219-220.

⁷² Gillerson, 215-236; Lysiuk, 202-208.

⁷³ Gillerson, 229-232.

⁷⁴ A. I. Gillerson, "Dopovid' A. Gilersona pro evreis'kyi pohrom u mistechku Fei'shtyni bila Proskurova," *Pogromy v Ukraini: 1914-1920, vid shtuchnykh stanoctypiv do hishoi pravdy, prokhorovanoi v radiana'kykh v arhivakh*, comp. and ed. Volodymyr Serhiichuk (Kiev, 1998) 237-244.

⁷⁵ Gillerson, 218-219, 242.

⁷⁶ Abramson, 129.

⁷⁷ Abramson, 129.

⁷⁸ Abramson, 122-140.

⁷⁹ Perlshtein, I.

⁸⁰ Sachar, 355-358.

⁸¹ Kabachin's'kaya.

HOLOCAUST IN PROSKUROV

During World War Two, Hitler led Nazi Germany to conquer the living space, *Lebensraum*, for the German race in Western and Eastern Europe and to annihilate the Jews of the Earth – “the vermin” and “the parasites” – “the misfortune”¹ of the German people. Although Germany lost the War and the integrity of its State, from 1939 until 1945, the Nazis successfully annihilated two out of every three European Jews, in addition to the Jewish men and women who fought and died in the Allied Armies.² Since the end of World War Two, the survivors, the perpetrators, the bystanders, and their descendants have struggled to understand how and why the Holocaust has happened. A vast number of documents, diaries, photographic evidence, scholarly literature, and memoirs have been produced and published to explicate the murder of a people in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

In 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union with the tripartite goal of exploiting the natural and human resources of the racially inferior Slavs, eradicating Bolshevism, and exterminating Jews, who were responsible for Bolshevism in Hitler’s mind. More than 3,000,000 Soviet Jews out of 5,000,000 fell victims to the Nazis.³ For various reasons the Soviet government suppressed Holocaust-related research and publications by survivors and by indigenous and foreign researchers in the USSR, until its demise in 1991.⁴ While the truth about the Jews in Western Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the largest Soviet cities has seeped out from under the Iron Curtain, the catastrophe of the Jews in Podolia remains largely unknown. The fate of the Jews of Proskurov is one chapter in the history of three million Jews who lived, died, and survived, during World War Two, in the pre-1939 borders of the Soviet Union.

At 3:00 o'clock in the morning, on Sunday, June 22, 1941, two years after Hitler had invaded Poland and declared war on France and England, Operation Barbarossa began. Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.⁵ As they watched the class of 1941 graduate from high schools,⁶ the Soviet citizens learned about the beginning of war from the speech of the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, transmitted over the public radio loudspeakers throughout the country.⁷ On June 23, the bombs were falling on the cities of Western and Eastern Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Baltic states.⁸ In Proskurov, the bombing of civilian houses, the conflagration of kerosene storage, and the deadly wounds of the first few victims brought the message of the German invasion home.⁹ Traditional Soviet historians cite the unpreparedness of the Red Army, in terms of the number of tanks, aircraft, artillery and motor vehicles as the reason for the Soviet failures in the first months of the War. Contemporary evidence shows that the Soviet and the German technologies were equivalent in 1941, and that the Red Army was numerically superior to the German *Wehrmacht*. Stalin's unwillingness to believe the intelligence reports, stating the exact date of the Operation Barbarossa, was the main reason for the immediate inability of the Red Army to check the German advance. On the day of the German invasion, the Soviet troops were not aligned along the border to ward off the enemy. As a result of the immediate Soviet inaction, the German Army "smashed, captured or wholly disorganized" the Red Army units and rapidly advanced into the interior of the USSR. While official Soviet communiqués claimed that the German troops were being successfully repelled at the border areas, in reality, the Red Army was retreating in disarray.¹⁰ On July 7, two weeks after the war has begun, units of the German Army Group South marched into Proskurov,¹¹ 300 km from the Western

border, and continued to advance east. By the end of September 1941, Germany occupied Byelorussia, the Baltic states and the Ukraine.¹² The Soviet Army did not liberate Proskurov until March 25, 1944, and all of Ukraine until August of that year.¹³ The Jews who remained in the occupied German territories were trapped.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Jews who remained in Proskurov on July 7, 1941. In 1909, 16,971 (47%) out of 35,771 inhabitants in Proskurov were Jews.¹⁴ The events that followed the Russian Revolution of 1917 – the Civil War, the pogroms, the migration of Gentiles and Jews into large cities, and the emigration of Gentile intelligentsia and some Jews to Western Europe, America, or Palestine – resulted in a decrease in the city's Jewish population. The last complete census taken in the Soviet Union prior to the Great Patriotic War indicates that in 1926 nearly 32,000 inhabitants resided in Proskurov, 13,408 (42%) of whom were Jews.¹⁵ Although, in 1933, in the rural areas of Ukraine and in the cities thousands of people perished from the Stalin-induced famine, and hundreds of political "enemies of the state" were either executed or deported from their homes in the late 1930's, apparently, the population of Proskurov increased by 1941. According to the pre-war residents of Proskurov, on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, the population of their city numbered approximately 60,000 people.¹⁶ The likelihood of doubling of a city population in fifteen years by natural reproduction is very small. However, the migration of peasants into the urban centers of Ukraine during the years of starvation could have produced such an increase; the percentage of the Jewish population in Proskurov, thence, would have fallen.¹⁷ In the two weeks between the invasion of the Soviet Union and the occupation of Proskurov, June 22 – July 7, a few Jewish families who believed that the Nazis would harm the Jews

and who had access to transportation evacuated the city.¹⁸ At the same time, quiet a few university students who studied elsewhere in the Soviet Union, shocked and confused by the news of the invasion, returned home to Proskurov in the beginning of the war; some of them were Jews. A few Jewish families from the Proskurov oblast, who had relatives in the city and believed that the war would be of short duration, also came to Proskurov.¹⁹ Men of all nationalities, aged nineteen to thirty-six, volunteered for service and were drafted into the Red Army; men with health-related problems were exempt.²⁰ On June 22, sixty-five women in Proskurov volunteered to serve in the medical corps;²¹ Jewish women were among them, as well. Many Soviet officers and soldiers, routed by the Germans in the first days of the war, were taken as POWs. Those who managed to escape – found themselves behind the front line; they had nowhere else to go but to return to their cities.²² Thus on July 7 the number of Jews in Proskurov must have been approximately the same or slightly lower than their number on June 22. More than 13,000 Jews remained in Proskurov under Nazi occupation.

In August of 1941, Hitler redrew the map of the occupied Soviet Union. Western Byelorussia and its main city Bialystok became part of the Reich-Protectorat area, annexed to East Prussia. Western Ukraine (Galicia) with its main city Lvov became incorporated into the Generalgouvernement, Poland. Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories, divided the remaining conquered territories of the Soviet Union into Reichskommissariat Ostland, which included Eastern Byelorussia and the Baltic States, and Reichskommissariat Ukraine – Eastern Ukraine. The Nazis planned to resettle large numbers of ethnic Germans in the fertile lands of Ukraine and to exploit the natural and human resources of the Slavs. Ukrainians were to

learn to obey their Aryan (German) Masters. Jews had no place in a German dominated Europe. The Reichskommissar of Ukraine, Erich Koch, established his headquarters in Volhynian city of Rovno, 150 km North of Proskurov.²³ He subdivided Ukraine into general regions (*Generalbezirke*), and each region into administrative districts (*Gebietskommissariate*). In the administrative bureaucracy of the Reichkommissariat Ukraine, Proskurov became one out of twenty-six district centers in the Volhynian-Podolian general district. Felshtin, Cherny Ostrov and Friedrichovka, within 25 km of the city, and adjacent villages and kolchozes became incorporated into Gebietskommissariat Proskurov, numbering a total of 260,600 inhabitants in March 1942.²⁴ Except agriculture, all Soviet enterprises and institutions, including schools and cultural centers, were shut down.²⁵ Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck²⁶ made his residence in the House of Officers on Aleksandrovskaya Street in Proskurov in late July-August, 1941.²⁷ As the lowest-ranking official in the German hierarchy, Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck was responsible in Proskurov for organizing and carrying out the policies of the German Reich, which were formulated by Erich Koch.

In addition to the "civil" administration, four paramilitary groups, *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C and D, totaling 3,000 men, entered the Soviet Union on the heels of the German Army. On the eve of World War Two, the *Einsatzgruppen* were conceived and organized by Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). Heydrich was directly responsible to Heinrich Himmler, who was the head of the SS, the Nazi agency responsible for carrying out the execution of Bolsheviks and the Final Solution – the murder of European Jews. Each *Einsatzgruppe*, further subdivided into company-size *Einsatzkommandos* and *Sonderkommandos*, received its ammunition, gasoline, food

rations, and communications from the Army; however, its functional instructions came from the SS.²⁸ Thus the fate of the Jews in the occupied Soviet Union depended not only on the German "civil" administration, but also on the "work" of the Einsatzgruppen attached to each area. The "civil" administration of Reichkommissariat Ukraine facilitated the "special tasks" of the Einsatzgruppen.

Einsatzgruppe C, headed by Otto Rasch, followed the German Army Group South into Ukraine. On September 29, 1941, less than two weeks after German troops walked into Kiev, Einsatzkommando 4a of Einsatzgruppe C assembled and massacred there 33,000 Jews in Babi Yar, a ravine outside the city. In the same month, Einsatzgruppe C and German Order Police, under command of the Higher SS and Police leader Jeckeln, shot 23,000 Jews in Kamenets-Podolsky, 90 km South of Proskurov.²⁹ According to the Operational Situation Report USSR No. 24, on July 16, 1941, Einsatzkommando 4b was "at work" in Tamopol. From there, "it [was] planned to have the [Einsatz]Kommando proceed to Proskurov."³⁰ However, on August 7, Einsatzgruppe C reported that the location of Einsatzkommando 6 was in Proskurov.³¹ It is possible that either Einsatzkommando 4b never entered the city or that Einsatzkommando 6 entered Proskurov after the Einsatzkommando 4b has already left. As a rule, Einsatzkommandos rapidly moved from one location to another to complete their "work." On July 30, Einsatzgruppe C reported that

In Proskurov the entire [Soviet] documentation is either destroyed or removed. All officials have disappeared.³²

The report also stated that 146 persons were shot in the city.³³ As a rule, Einsatzgruppen summarily executed both Jews and Bolsheviks.³⁴ However, since the Soviet (Bolshevik) officials of Proskurov seem to have evacuated the city prior to German occupation, the

majority of the people killed in this first execution, evidently, were Jews. In addition, from the very first day of their arrival, Nazis beat, tortured, and killed Jews randomly on the streets of Proskurov; they cut off the beards of old men and took photographs.³⁵

These atrocities were not documented in the Einsatzgruppen Reports.

Spurred by the Nazis, Western Ukrainian nationalists, who blamed the two-year Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine with its repressions and deportations of many Ukrainians on Jew-Communists, staged violent pogroms in Western Ukraine. In Lvov, Western Ukrainians murdered 4,000 Jews in early July.³⁶ After the pogroms in the Western Ukraine, bands of nationalists organized into auxiliary battalions and raided Jews throughout Eastern Ukraine. After staging pogroms in the Chernovtsy and Ivano-Frankovsk regions, the Bukovina Battalion, headed by a member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Peter Voinovsky, assaulted Jews in the Proskurov area.³⁷ Etya Tsalevich, a sixteen-year-old Jewish girl from Felshtin at the outset of the War, who miraculously survived the Holocaust, described:

German troops passed our village and then they were followed by a police detachment of Western Ukrainians who "put the place in order." Jewish pogroms began. Some families were killed. I'd like to tell you what I saw with my own eyes. Once I was with the family of Abram Bukievker. We were having dinner. Four policemen came in. They began unmercifully beating the father of the family and his two sons, one 19 and the other my age, 16. They tied their hands, took them into the street and shot them just around the corner. When they were being taken away, the mother began crying in a terrible voice. A policeman fired at her several times. He shot her arm and shoulder. She fell down and did not see how her husband and sons were shot. The same happened with a few other Jewish families. I don't need to mention plundering and beatings.³⁸

In Proskurov, Shurim Shpak was whipped to death in the dining room of his own house.

His young daughter was dropped in an outdoor toilet and shot.³⁹ It is likely that the

Bukovina Battalion was not the only Western Ukrainian force that assaulted the Jews in Gebietskommissariat Proskurov in early July.

The reaction of indigenous Ukrainians to Nazi and Western Ukrainian brutalities against Jews in Proskurov was not unanimous. After twenty years of concealing their Jew-hatred under the threat of Communist persecution of anti-Semites, many Ukrainians in Proskurov joined the Nazis and Western Ukrainians in the anti-Jewish pogrom. They plundered Jewish homes and shops that were administered by Jews prior to the Great Patriotic War. Gentile children broke windows in the synagogue. The forbidden "zhid" reemerged in the speech of Ukrainians.⁴⁰ Yet some Ukrainian people in Proskurov and adjacent towns and villages were appalled by the atrocities against Jews. When their "work" began in Eastern Ukraine, Einsatzkommando 6 of Einsatzgruppe C complained that "almost nowhere can the population be persuaded to take active steps against the Jews."⁴¹ Every Jew who survived the Holocaust in Proskurov district owes his or her survival to the Gentiles who did not betray or helped. Unfortunately, the deeds of indigenous Jew-haters outnumbered the deeds of Ukrainian heroes who saved the Jews.

On July 25, 1941, Himmler ordered the formation of indigenous auxiliary police, *Schutzmannschaften*, in Reichskommissariats Ostland and Ukraine:

The tasks of the police in the occupied eastern territories cannot be fulfilled solely with the [German] police and SS personnel already deployed and yet to be deployed. It is therefore necessary to establish without delay additional defense formations from among those population segments in the conquered territories that are acceptable to us.⁴²

Lithuanian auxiliaries, who were especially ruthless, operated in Ostland as well as in Ukraine.⁴³ Indigenous Ukrainian policemen, *Schutzmaenner*, were recruited by the Gestapo (Security Police) on voluntary basis and were trained by the SS. Neither

Lithuanian or Ukrainian policemen acted "arbitrarily." Their actions were congruent with the Nazi policies and orders. Every policeman received daily pay and free provisions for his wife and children.⁴⁴ However, it seems that few policemen joined the *Schutzmannschaften* singularly for this reason. The "informal incentives" exceeded the pay. Leonid Vorona from Zhitomir oblast, whose mother, Sofia Shterenbuk, saved her son's and her own lives by posing as a Gentile woman and working as a housekeeper in a wealthy Ukrainian household in Proskurov oblast, stated:

Approximately one week after my mother started working at the house [Spring, 1942], the son of the Mistress came home with five or six of his friends. He was a policeman. They brought large bags of clothes stained with blood and my mother washed those clothes of murdered Jews. Every time the son came home with his friends, they drank booze (*samogon*) and played cards for jewelry and the gold crowns, which they knocked out from the mouths of Jews before they shot them.⁴⁵

As in 1919, civilian Ukrainian Jew-haters did not initiate the violence against their Jewish neighbors, but once the Nazis gave them a green light, many volunteered to persecute the Jews and to get rich on Jewish possessions. Ukrainian policemen wore Old Russian uniforms of "Ukrainian green" color, not the "German green," with blue-and-yellow armbands. Sometimes, they wore civilian shirts. Policemen were mainly identified by their hats and by the rifles, which ordinary civilians were not allowed to carry. In Proskurov policemen rode bicycles in the summers.⁴⁶ While, in July 1942, the policemen in Reichskommissariats Ostland and Ukraine numbered 33,270 men, by the end of the year their number increased to 47,974.⁴⁷ In Ukraine, stationary policemen outnumbered German Gendarmerie ten to one.⁴⁸ In Proskurov, Jews perceived the emergence of Ukrainian police as sudden and unexpected. Their schoolmates, coworkers, and neighbors became policemen; Grischenko, a high school military-

instruction teacher (*voenruk*), became the head of the Proskurov police.⁴⁹ Some policemen were particularly brutal: Schutzmann Pastukh "specialized in children" – he ripped live infants into halves.⁵⁰ Lithuanian and indigenous Ukrainian Schutzmannschaften played an ample role in the execution of the Jews in Proskurov.

On July 7, a few Jews, who believed the rumors about Nazi atrocities to be nothing more than Soviet propaganda, came out of their houses to meet the Germans. David Kozak was severely beaten but not killed for the failure to take off his hat and to bow in front of a Nazi.⁵¹ Others were beaten, tortured and killed. Most Jews, threatened by Nazis, Western Ukrainians, and hostile neighbors alike, refrained from leaving their homes. Many hid in the shelters constructed from 1918 to 1920 during the Russian pogroms. Older people recalled the 1919-massacre and prayed that this, too, would pass.⁵² After the initial violence, Jews were ordered to sew a Mogen David – a Star of David sewn in black on a yellow circle 8 cm in diameter – onto the upper front and back of every piece of their clothing.⁵³ In late July-August, Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck ordered Jews to assemble in a ghetto, two blocks on Kupecheskaya and Remesiennaya Streets near the open market place, surrounded by a tall row of barbed wire with one gate. The signs to assemble in the ghetto were posted in the city. Persons failing to appear would be shot.⁵⁴ Since the number of German officials, SS and Gendarmerie in Proskurov was small and Germans very often could not differentiate between Jews and Gentiles (they told Jewish old men only by their beards), Ukrainian policemen, who knew their Jewish neighbors if not by name then by face, supervised the assembly into the ghetto.⁵⁵ The majority of Jews in Proskurov did not resist going. Iosif Groyzman, a survivor of the Holocaust in Proskurov, described the reasoning of his neighbor David

Kozak, "So I will not be allowed to walk on the main street, then I do not need to. But I will work inside the ghetto and receive my wages, unlike during Soviet times."⁵⁶

Perhaps, ironically, the barbed wire gave the Jews a false sense of security; it "protected" them from Nazis and hostile Ukrainians. After the war, some people even said that "the Jews themselves requested to be concentrated in the ghetto where the Germans promised to protect them."⁵⁷ The majority of the residents on Kupecheskaya and Remeslennaya Streets before the War were Jews; they remained in their houses. Other Jews had to leave their homes and move into the houses of the Jews living on the ghetto territory. Three to five families crowded into each house – fifteen to twenty people to one room. No one remained "homeless" and no one was allowed to leave the ghetto without a permit. Armed Ukrainian policemen guarded the ghetto.⁵⁸

As in other cities, in accordance with the 1939-directive by Reinhard Heydrich, titled "The Jewish Question in the Occupied Territory," a Judenrat, the Jewish Council (*obshchina*), was set up in Proskurov. Unusual in the occupied territories, a woman, named Liza Lindenboym (maiden name), became the chairman (*starosta*, *Älteste*) of the Judenrat.⁵⁹ Although the German word *Älteste* and the Russian word *starosta* imply "the Eldest" and hence "the important" person in a community, Liza Lindenboym was neither old nor prominent. In the aftermath of pogroms and the Russian Revolution, many of the most prominent and the most energetic Jews emigrated from Russia. In the late 1930's, many politically active Jews were either deported or executed by Stalin. In the first two weeks of the war before July 7, the most intuitive and energetic Jews who had access to transportation fled East from Proskurov. Born in 1903, at the beginning of the war Liza Lindenboym was a very attractive thirty-eight year-old woman. After high school, when

the Soviets came to Ukraine, Liza Lindenboym worked as a secretary in a poultry plant (*ptitse-kombinat*). She had one son, Fika, about 15 years of age. Like many other Jews, Liza studied German in school and understood the language because German speech is very similar to Yiddish.⁶⁰ (In 1941 the majority of the Jews spoke Yiddish at home in Proskurov). None of the survivors remember how and why Liza Lindenboym was chosen to be the chairwoman of the Proskurov Judenrat. In accordance with the order of Gebietakommissar Schmerbeck, she appointed ten other Jewish men and women to the Jewish Council. As a chairman of the Judenrat, Liza Lindenboym was "fully responsible, in the literal sense of the word, for the exact and punctual execution of all directives issued"⁶¹ by the Gebietakommissar and, hence, by the Einsatzgruppen. Her main job was to provide Jewish forced laborers to the Germans. Most of the survivors realized that the Judenrat was only a tool in the hands of the Nazi murderers. Others, however, bitterly hated Liza Lindenboym:

She acted as a real SS-woman (*eseovka*). Not only did she betray the Jews to the Germans, but also she herself beat women and men. To force people out to work, she threw rocks into their windows.⁶²

Most of the survivors maintained that no Jewish police operated in the Proskurov ghetto. Isid Groyzman, however, stated that Liza used Jewish police to assemble Jews for work: "the Jewish police knew who was physically strong and who was not; they knew who needed to stay home with the family and who was single [and thus could work]."⁶³ Perhaps, Isid Groyzman was referring to the members of the Jewish Council, who performed a similar job. All the survivors agreed that the members of the Judenrat had no power vis-à-vis Germans.⁶⁴

The first ghetto existed less than four months. From the very first day, the Nazis used the Jews as forced laborers. Schmerbeck demanded laborers; Liza Lindenboym sent out work notices to an appropriate number of Jews and saw to it that they submit to the orders. Apparently, Germans postulated that slave-work was the condition for the end of pogroms. The work varied from harvest collection and fruit concentration to the demolition of the Jewish cemetery, from the clearing of the houses ruined by German bombs to the shoveling of snow in the winter. The labor was long and exhausting – often Jews left for work at sunrise and finished the work after sunset. Most of the labor was performed manually; whatever tools they had, Jews brought from homes. Ukrainian and Lithuanian policemen guarded the Jews on their way from the gates of the ghetto to the work place and back. The policemen also “supervised” the Jews at work – they beat men and women of all ages with whips and occasionally shot those who were unable to work any longer. The hardest part about going to work was not knowing whether one would come back “home” at night.⁶⁵ Many Jews tried to avoid forced labor. Although Hana Gritarshteyn frequently received notices from the Judenrat to go to work, her mother did not let her go to the collection points and “worked for the two of [them].”⁶⁶ To leave the work early, a young Jewish woman told the policemen that she had to nurse her child. When the police found out that she had lied, they punished the woman by locking her into a barrel and by pounding on top of the barrel with hammers. This punishment was experienced by a few Jews in the first ghetto; some went deaf, others – insane – after the punishment.⁶⁷ Skilled laborers, such as shoemakers, tailors, tanners, welders, coopers, and others, labored the whole day in the ghetto; many of them had permission to go out of the ghetto. Some specialists worked in the shops outside the barbed wire, supervised

by the Nazis. Children of the specialists, as young as six years old, worked with their parents.⁶⁸ Dr. Khromoy, a Jew, was forced to work in the German infirmary.⁶⁹ The Jews who had permits to work outside the ghetto were not exempt from violence. Lyusya Blekhan described that, one day, her father, Yankel Blekhan, returned to the ghetto with his face bloodied; a policeman knocked out his gold-crowned teeth after Blekhan presented his permit to leave the ghetto.⁷⁰ The very old Jews, the sick, and the toddlers, who remained at homes in the first ghetto, lived in constant fear of Germans and of policemen when the able-bodied Jews left for work.

Forced laborers daily received 200 grams of bread.⁷¹ The non-working Jews and the skilled laborers officially were not entitled to any food. However, since the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles was only a row of barbed wire, many skilled workers in the ghetto took odd job orders from Gentiles, including the families of policemen. Townspeople compensated the Jews with food for their services. Because of the virtual absence of Gentile skilled workers in Proskurov, characteristic of other cities and towns in the Volhynian-Podolian general district, German administrators, SS officers, and Gendarmerie, too, used the services of the Jewish specialists in exchange for food. Since the German administration eliminated all indigenous enterprises, and Ukrainians could no longer buy clothing and other necessities in the stores, the townspeople and the villagers in Proskurov traded food to Jews for articles of clothing, household utensils, and other commodities over the barbed wire. The "trade" was risky for both the Jews and Ukrainians. Some policemen pretended not to see the exchange. Others beat Ukrainians "half-to-death" and sometimes shot the Jews when they caught the two parties at exchange. In spite of this danger, many Ukrainians frequently came to the barbed wire.⁷²

Whether their primary goal was to help the Jews or to make their own living, Ukrainians saved Jewish lives by bringing food. Volodymyr Lanko, a Ukrainian agronomist, helped many people in the ghetto.⁷³ Some "fortunate" Jews made arrangements with their Gentile acquaintances to meet at specific locations and times along the barbed wire to exchange items for food. Young Jews crawled out of the ghetto under the cover of night and begged for food from their former Gentile neighbors who sympathized with the Jewish plight. While the wire hardly presented an overwhelming physical barrier for a young person and the Stars of David could be easily removed, the Jews did not go out to search for food during the day; if they did, they would be shot by policemen who knew "their" Jews by face. Righteous Ukrainians feared just as much to be caught helping Jewish people. A few Jews who did not live in Proskurov before the War but were trapped there when Nazis occupied the city and those young Jews who had "Gentile" facial features had a better chance of smuggling themselves in and out of the ghetto.⁷⁴

Thus every day for four months physically able Jews slaved under the threat of death. Skilled workers toiled in hard labor. Daily bread was a matter of life and death although few Jews died from starvation in the first ghetto. Parents feared to let their children go out into the street. Many reinforced old shelters and built new hiding places in the ovens, in the basements, in the attics, in the planks between the floor of the second story and the ceiling of the first story in their houses. The Jews felt as if they did not live but only "existed." Although they were cut off from radio and newspapers, news passed through the barbed wire by word of mouth. Ukrainian pottery-makers, who traveled from village to village and from town to town on horse carts selling their products, especially spread the news. They also carried letters and messages between people. Thus

Proskurov Jews knew that in every town in Proskurov oblast Nazis subjected Jews to the same atrocities, as they were subjected to in Proskurov. The ghettos, set up in every town and city, included not only the town-Jews but also some Jews from the neighboring villages and kolchozes. Yet, having outlived the Tsar, the Russian pogroms, the hunger and the purges of the 1930's, the Jews in Proskurov hoped that the German occupation, too, was only temporary. The elderly prayed. Some time in the fall of 1941, the Nazis shot a Jewish *melnyk* in the center of the ghetto.⁷⁵ In spite of the Nazi legal prohibition of sexual contacts between Germans and Jews, the Nazi officers and administrators in Proskurov raped Jewish women. To protect themselves, Jewish girls smeared their underwear with lipstick. Germans cringed from the site of "blood." Other than that, however, after the initial murders in July and August, the Nazis did not "interfere" with the Jewish existence inside the ghetto. On orders from Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck, Liza Lindenboym collected gold, jewelry and valuables from the Jews "for Germany." Although they suspected that she kept some gold for herself, the Jews perceived the collection of valuables as a "contribution" for their lives. Young Jews got married and women bore children. They believed that, somehow, they would survive.⁷⁶

Yet the ghetto was not the Final Solution. On October 15, 1941, Einsatzgruppe A reported that it had killed 125,000 Jews in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. By November 3, 1941, Einsatzgruppe C, which operated in Ukraine, shot only 75,000 out of two and a half million Jews, who resided in Western and Eastern Ukraine before the War.⁷⁷ The inefficiency of Einsatzgruppe C did not stem from a lack of will, manpower, or equipment to carry out the Task of murder. In the fall of 1941, Otto Raach explained the slow progress of his Einsatzgruppe in practical terms:

If the Jewish labor force is entirely discarded, an economic reconstruction of the Ukrainian industry and the extension of the administration centers of the cities is almost impossible.⁷⁸

Rasch proposed "gradual liquidation of Jewry – a development which corresponds to the economic conditions of the country."⁷⁹ Later in the fall, the head of Einsatzgruppe C noted that "Difficulties have arisen in so far as Jews are often the only skilled workers in certain trades."⁸⁰ In Proskurov, the SS found a practical Solution to these "difficulties:" physically incapable Jews were expendable.

The first mass murder of Jews in Proskurov took place on November 4, 1941.⁸¹ In the first two days of November, Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck ordered the Judenrat to distribute a limited number of "work certificates" to the skilled workers in the ghetto. The certificates did not indicate either names or surnames; the words "Jude," a specialty, such as a "shoemaker," a "plumber," or a "carpenter," and the signature of the Gebietskommissar sufficed for a certificate. As the Jews found out later, not every specialist in Proskurov received a work certificate. Most likely, the Germans did not provide the right number of certificates to the Judenrat. Some survivors, however, believe that the members of the Judenrat gave the certificates to their family members and friends instead of distributing them among all of the specialists, and kept some certificates undistributed at all. Apparently, the Jews did not know what the work certificates were for. They found out after the pogrom.⁸² While throughout its existence Ukrainian policemen guarded the ghetto, on November 4, 1941, the Jews of Proskurov woke up surrounded by the SS. The first German pogrom began. Apparently, the Nazis compelled the members of the Judenrat to circulate through the streets of the ghetto and to order Jews to come out of their houses with their belongings, their documents and their

jewelry, for a resettlement to Kamenets-Podolsky. They threatened that if the Jews fail to come out, there would be a pogrom.⁸³ The Nazis had previously resettled Jews from some small villages into city and town ghettos. Yet when they found themselves surrounded by the SS, the majority of the Jews in Proskurov hid in previously prepared shelters or in any place they could find. With his wife, his two-year-old child, and people from another family, David Kozak, who doubted German intentions in the beginning of the War, squeezed into a camouflaged basement. When the Nazis entered the house and the toddler started crying, Kozak strangled his child; the people in hiding were not discovered.⁸⁴ This incident was not unique in Eastern Europe during Holocaust.⁸⁵ Few Jews walked into the hands of the Nazis voluntarily. Hana Gritserakhteyn described:

We were surrounded by SS-men (esesovtsy). Approximately at eight o'clock in the morning they started to break into the houses. We hid in the storage room for coal, but we were discovered.

I remember how old ladies with shaking hands could not manage to dress a small child, an SS-man was forcing her. All of us were driven to a textile factory.⁸⁶

The factory was located on Kamenetskaya Street, a street parallel to the ghetto. Before the War, many Jews worked in the factory. It produced ropes.

On the road [to the factory], they hit us with rifle stocks on our heads. My father, a physically strong man grabbed my brother and ran out of the multitude, but they were caught.

On the road my little brother kept asking "will they be shooting us now?" "what for?"

From one Jew they started to take off a good fur coat, but he managed to cut it with a knife: he was immediately shot.⁸⁷

Along the perimeter of the hall of the textile factory stood long tables. At each table in succession, the Jews were told to leave their documents, valuables, and other belongings. Early in the day, the Jews were not forced to undress until they came to the

execution pit; their clothes were then loaded on trucks and sent back to the factory. Those Jews, driven to the factory later in the morning and in the afternoon, saw the piles of clothes of the ones who were no longer with them. At this point most of them realized that "this was the end." Only a few still tried to console themselves and their families that they were being taken to work. These Jews were forced to undress in the factory. (Later, Jewish tailors, who survived the pogrom, fixed the clothing of the dead. The Nazis shipped it to Germany). The chief of the punishing squad said that whoever gives up their hidden valuables would be let go. Those few Jews who still had valuables hidden in their houses or at their former Ukrainian neighbors, under guard, with unstoppable beatings, went to get their possessions. When they returned to the factory, they were led to the slaughter with everyone else.⁸⁸ In large groups, naked and half-clothed Jews were driven out of the factory and led down the Kamenetskaya Street to an outskirt of the city, Ruzhichnoye, by Nazis and by policemen. In Ruzhichnoye, behind the two cemeteries, a natural elevation of the ground dropped into a ravine. This ravine became the grave of almost 6,000 Jews.⁸⁹ Lazar Bover, who stood at the ravine at the age of four with his mother and his older brother, described:

Here everyone was undressed and held in line to the pit, where after lining up a row of 15-20 persons on the edge of the pit, [the Jews] were shot. All around us, I kept hearing heart-rending wailing. Germans with dogs and machine-guns rounded up and shot children, women and elderly people.⁹⁰

They shot the Jews in the back of the head or in the back of the neck.⁹¹ Murdered or wounded Jews fell down the slope into the ravine. The next row of 15-20 people was shot. "After their 'work' SS-men (eseovtsy) walked out [completely] drunk and singing songs, some of them wore new overshoes, taken off the dead."⁹² After the war, the Soviet Extraordinary Committee for Investigation of Nazi Atrocities uncovered numerous

mass graves in five different locations in the area of Proskurov, including the graves where Soviet prisoners of war, dead from starvation and also shot – were buried. In one of the civilian graves the Committee uncovered 5,300 bodies; female corpses hugging each other and clutching tight onto child corpses were found in the mass grave.⁹³

Although in February 1942, Heydrich reported to the German command that the shootings were carried out in such a way that “the population hardly noticed them,”⁹⁴ on November 4, everyone in Proskurov, including Gentiles, knew of the pogrom. Although they were forbidden to come close to the place of the execution, Ukrainians saw the Jews driven through the street to Ruzhichnoye for murder; the righteous among them were powerless against armed policemen and the SS. Rumors circulated among Gentiles that the Jews were being electrocuted in a slaughterhouse in Ruzhichnoye.⁹⁵ Indigenous Jew-haters “rejoiced and made merry” on the day of the pogrom; some of them helped the SS to round-up hiding Jews.⁹⁶ Ukrainians pillaged and plundered the houses of the Jews who were taken to slaughter or those houses where no Jews were found. Those Jews who were hiding heard the terrible cries outside. Revekka Gritserakhteyn came out of her hiding place and attempted to hang herself.⁹⁷ Skilled Jewish laborers who began their workday outside the barbed wire before their wives, parents, and children began to be rounded up by the SS, saw the pogrom, as well. The father of Lazar Bover, Froim Bover, who worked in the tannery outside the ghetto, found out by noon that his family was among the thousands of Jews taken to Ruzhichnoye. He begged his German supervisor to save his family. The supervisor signed a pass, which allowed Froim Bover to run to Ruzhichnoye. Even though he had a pass, the Germans and policemen would not let him

pass to the execution place for a long time. A Schutzmann hit Froim Bover on his arm with an ax and finally let him through.

When he started to push his way through to the pit, the Jews, in line for their turn to get shot, grabbed his arms and cried, "take us, your [family] was already killed!" But my father rushed to the pit. And we - I, my mother and brother - stood naked near to the edge. Father wrenched us away from the pit, he cried and led us home.⁹⁹

Six thousand Jews were shot in Proskurov, on November 4.

Only a few of the Jews taken to the textile factory survived the pogrom. The family of Lazar Bover survived.⁹⁹ Hana Gritserahteyn was supposed to be shot with her father and her younger brother. (Her mother successfully hid). When the chief of the punishing squad promised to release any person who brings their hidden valuables, Abram Gritserahteyn, Hana's father, made his daughter ask for permission to get their silverware. When she approached him, the chief of the punishing squad led Hana out of the factory and placed her under guard of two Nazis; Hana never found out why he did not send her home to get their family's possessions. She was kept outside, under guard, until the end of the slaughter. According to Hana Gritserahteyn, approximately twenty other people, all of whom had "work certificates" remained in the factory at the end of the day; they were rounded-up "by mistake." Nora Faynshteyn, one of the survivors in the factory who had a work certificate, claimed that Hana was her sister. Thus Hana was released.¹⁰⁰ Apparently, the Nazis did not plan to kill the skilled workers in the first pogrom; that is why they ordered the Judenrat to distribute "work certificates" on the eve of the slaughter. However, not every specialist received a certificate; many were "mistakenly" killed. In the family of Abram Melamud, his wife Klara (Belder), his parents, his siblings, his in-laws, and he were all tailors by specialty. None of them

received a work certificate before the pogrom. After the members of the Melamud family laid out their possessions in the textile factory, the Nazis asked the members of the Judenrat to pick out young skilled workers out of the group of Jews in which the family of Melamud was standing. Although everyone in his family was a professional tailor, only Abram Melamud was picked. The father of Abram Melamud pushed his six-year-old grandson Mikhail out of the crowd towards Abram, unnoticed. All the other members of the family were driven away to Ruzhichnoye. Abram and his son Mikhail were the only two in the Melamud family to survive this pogrom.¹⁰¹ The first mass murder ended in one day.¹⁰²

On November 5, the Germans announced that they had achieved their aim – the “unproductive” Jews were eliminated.¹⁰³ The survivors from the textile factory returned “home” to the ghetto.¹⁰⁴ Approximately half of the Jews of the pre-pogrom population came out of their hiding places. During the night of November 4-November 5, the Bover family fled from Proskurov with the help of their Ukrainian friend, Lemeshiev. Lemeshiev risked his life to transport the Bover family from one hiding place to another until the end of the War.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that other Jews tried to flee or fled from Proskurov after the first pogrom.

On the second day after the first pogrom Gebietskommissar Schmerbeck ordered the partitioning of the first ghetto. One part of the Jews remained behind the barbed wire on the territory of the first ghetto, reduced in size. Many houses of the murdered Jews were removed from this “old” ghetto. Skilled workers were resettled to the second ghetto, across the road from the old one, located between Remeslennaya and Kupcheskaya Streets and Aptekarskaya and Sobornaya Streets. In both ghettos, Jews

still had to wear the identifying Stars of David; fifteen to twenty people lived in each room. The Judenrat, headed by Liza Lindenboym, continued to function in both the old and the second ghetto as before the pogrom. However, the second ghetto was not surrounded by barbed wire. It appeared unguarded.¹⁰⁶ Usually, skilled workers were not conscripted for forced labor. Anyone who had any tools tried to pass as a skilled worker to live in the second ghetto. Groups of Jews who had a craft in common tried to settle together. Abram Melamed and his son settled with thirteen other tailors in the second ghetto. During the nights they slept in one room; during the days they worked in a second room – sewing uniforms for the Germans. The Nazis resettled many specialists from small towns in Proskurov area into the second ghetto, as well. Yet, whereas in the first ghetto specialists had permission to go outside the barbed wire to take orders and to trade their produce for bread, they had no permission to wander outside the territory of the second ghetto. Germans came into the houses of the specialists to place orders. Ukrainians came in as well. As in the first ghetto, the specialists were compensated with food for their work.¹⁰⁷ The Jews in the old ghetto received 200 grams of bread daily.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the winter of 1941-1942 the Jews in the old ghetto were conscripted to shovel snow on the roads, especially the motorway leading from Proskurov to Vinnitsa, upon which German troops marched to the eastern front.¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Goykher, a survivor of the Letichev ghetto (40 km east of Proskurov), worked on the motorway with other Jews in 1941-1942:

Maintaining regular service on the road was very difficult. Sometimes we shoveled snow from before dawn to late at night without a break – if we stopped, we were immediately beaten by policemen. We were cold and hungry and it snowed frequently. Perspiration instantly froze into ice on our clothes. We worked like clockwork toys and a lot of people wanted death to come.¹¹⁰

During that winter, the Germans, unprepared to fight in subfreezing temperature, confiscated from the Jews their winter clothing, including wool and leather gloves, furs, coats, vests, and felt boots, to send to the front. (The Nazis also confiscated warm clothing from Gentiles and Soviet POWs).¹¹¹ Many Jews did not have any belongings left to trade for food anymore. The Jews in the old ghetto continued to exist only because righteous Ukrainians continued to toss them food over the barbed wire. After a day of work some young Jews stole away to the houses of the murdered Jews and tore the buildings apart for firewood. Not everyone survived that winter. Some Jews were killed at work, others died from exhaustion, still others died from hunger and cold.¹¹²

When the spring and the summer came, it became easier to obtain food because of vegetation. Throughout the spring of 1942, the Germans confiscated horses from kolkhoses and from townspeople in Proskurov oblast. They conscripted Jews to drive the horses to the Donbas where the front line stopped that spring, more than 900 km East of Proskurov. In May, Liza Lindenboym selected sixty to seventy Jews to drive the horses. Some of the conscripted men had never ridden a horse before. Israel Groyzman, the father of Isif Groyzman, was one of the conscripts. Isif Groyzman begged the head of the Judenrat to allow him to join his father but she refused – he was too young and did not have enough experience. In March 1942, Veniamin Grinberg was conscripted to drive horses to Donbas from Vinkovtsy, 45 km south of Proskurov. He returned two months later. Israel Groyzman and most of the conscripts from Proskurov oblast did not return.¹¹³

In late winter of 1942, the Todt Organization, one of the three branches of the German armed forces, came to Proskurov oblast. The Todt Organization was created

within the framework of Goering's Four-Year Plan by Dr. Fritz Todt, a Minister of Armaments and Munitions, and had direct communications with Hitler. In February 1942 Dr. Todt died in an airplane crash. Albert Speer, the former Inspector General of Buildings for the Renovation of the Federal Capital of the Third Reich, assumed all the responsibilities of the Minister of Armaments and Munitions. Xaver Dorach represented Speer in the Todt Organization. Throughout the conquered territories of Western and Central Europe the Todt Organization undertook construction and engineering projects, such as the building of U-boat shelters at the Atlantic Ocean and the building of major highways in Norway and France. From July 28, 1941, until December 13, 1943, the Todt Organization undertook the building of a borderline between Reichskommissariat Ukraine and Romania, a German ally; the project included the building and reconstruction of roads and bridges.¹¹⁴ Among other roads in Ukraine, German engineers undertook the reconstruction of the motorway from Lvov to Proskurov to Vinnitsa to Kiev. Beginning in the late winter of 1942 and through the late fall of that year, from all over Proskurov oblast, the Nazis gathered young physically capable Jewish men and women – those who still remained – and concentrated them in camps along the section of the road from Proskurov to Vinnitsa. They used the Jews as forced laborers (*Zwangsarbeiter*) and also hired Ukrainian workers for wages (*Hilfswillige*) to work on the motorway and on other roads in the area.¹¹⁵ Although the Handbook of the Organization Todt lists nominal wages for Jewish workers, and Vladimir Goykher, a survivor of Letichev ghetto, stated that the "Jews from the ghetto were paid several times" by the Organization,¹¹⁶ the survivors from the labor camps in Proskurov area stated that they did not get paid.¹¹⁷

In late February 1942, approximately 200-300 Jews from Felshin, aged fifteen to forty-five, were driven on foot to a concentration camp in Matkovtsy village, 4 km from Proskurov. Their work on the motorway mostly consisted of moving stones and sand. Etya Tsalevich described the existence of the Jews in the camp and their "working" conditions:

In February 1942, an order was announced [in Felshin] that all young Jews, aged 15 to 40 or 45 years, I do not remember exactly, should gather on the road in front of the [Felshin] police station for forwarding to work. Early in the morning a large crowd of about 200-300 people gathered and all of us were convoyed down the Proskurov road [from Felshin to Proskurov]. We were led to the village of Matkovtsy. It is 4 km from Proskurov. Here the place had already been prepared. A large area surrounding a big horse stable of a kolkhoz was surrounded by barbed wire. Here we were placed. The Jews from other places were brought here as well. In total, we were approximately 2000-2500 people.

We were building a war road. There were no cars, not even horse carts. [We carried] everything on our bodies. Wheelbarrows, spades, hoes, stretchers. We worked from dawn until late at night. The food was very bad. There was never enough bread. A wish-wash, made from rotten or frozen vegetables, even cattle would not eat. With such food, for many of us the work became infeasible. The weak, the tortured, those unable to work any longer – were shot on the spot in front of everyone's eyes. Those who could not walk home after work and lingered behind – were finished off. Consequently, it never happened that everyone who left the camp in the morning would return at night. A few persons were killed every day at work or on the way.

When spring came, in the stable and all around the stable there was awful mud. Everyone became infested with lice. Diseases spread. The sick were not given any help. All the [sick] ones who could not go to work in the morning were shot.¹¹⁸

Manya Gurvitz from Felshin was shot this way by a camp guard. The guard shot her eleven-year old brother Senya, who tagged along to the camp with Manya in spite of his very young age, when the boy tried to protect his sister.¹¹⁹ In Matkovtsy, as in other labor camps in the area of Proskurov, most of the guards in the camp and on the road were Ukrainian and Lithuanian Schutzmaennner. German engineers and foremen, who

wore khaki uniforms with red armbands with the letters "TODT" sewn onto them, were few. They requested a certain number of workers, gave out work-related orders and supervised the projects.¹²⁰ The Chief Engineer in Gebietskommissariat Proskurov, Colonel Lorentz, helped a few Jews in the labor camps. He was shot by Nazis in 1944.¹²¹ Private engineers tolerated atrocities, which they saw. Sometimes in the summer or early fall of 1942 a large group of Jews from Matkovtsy was led to work in the woods. Upon arrival, the Jews saw large pits dug up in advance – this would be the place of their execution. David Bershteyn, then a ten-year old boy from Felshin, was the only one who succeeded in running away.¹²²

Another concentration camp, "infamous for its atrocities," existed in Leznevo, 7 km east from Proskurov. After approximately seventy Jewish conscripts left for Dnubas with the horses, in May 1942, many young Jews in the second ghetto received notices from the Judenrat to assemble for work. Approximately 30 persons came inside the building of the Jewish Council. Soon after they entered, Ukrainian policemen surrounded the building and led the Jews under convoy to the concentration camp in Leznevo.¹²³ Similar to Matkovtsy, in Leznevo the Jews slept on straw in two horse stables of a kolchoz surrounded by barbed wire. In addition to Proskurov Jews, Jewish people from Gorodok, Cherny Ostrov, Zinkov, Yarmolitsy, Vinkovtsy and other small towns around Proskurov were driven to Leznevo by force; many of them were in their late middle ages.¹²⁴ According to Isif Groyzman, they were approximately 1,000 people in total.¹²⁵ The Commandant of the camp, Bockamer, was German – a tall thin man. The Jews called him "wind" because Bockamer circulated on his horse at every segment of the road like the wind over their heads. "He never smiled and walked with a whip." His Assistant

Commissar, Schmetzler, was also German. Schmetzler was a "beast just like his boss, although he always smiled." Bockamer allowed small groups of Jews to visit the ghetto in Proskurov on Sundays. Everyone returned back to the camp because of the fear of reprisals against others. Bockamer personally beat the Jews.¹²⁶ One day he beat Hans Gritsenko: "He hit [me] with his hands, his feet, and with a pick until the pick broke in half. After this I lay flat [and could not get up] for several days."¹²⁷ Local policemen guarded the Jews behind the barbed wire.¹²⁸

In Lझेve, the "food" was served twice a day. In the morning the Jews received "coffee" – burned barley. After they returned from work, the "meal" consisted of a small piece of white bread and a "soup" similar to the wish-wash served in Matkovtsy. Whenever Germans found a dead horse, it was a "holiday" because the inmates of the camp received a piece of meat that day. Similar to the first ghetto, it was impossible to survive on camp rations alone in Lझेve. In the summertime, the Jews picked up pieces of fruit on the road to work. Every now and then, a peasant left potatoes or bread lying on the road. A few peasants dared to throw food over the barbed wire, as well, putting themselves at risk of being severely beaten. The inmates of the camp had nothing to exchange. In Sharovka, where some inmates of Lझेve worked, French POWs brought the Jews some food a few times. The Jews shared every piece of food they could find with one another; they even shared cigarette-butts, which they picked up on the roads. Yet many expired from hunger.¹²⁹ In August a typhus epidemic broke out in the camp. The sick did not go to work. One day, after the "healthy" Jews left for work, local policemen threw more than two hundred people stricken with typhus into several tarpaulin-covered trucks and drove to a sandpit, where all the sick Jews were shot.¹³⁰ No

one knew if he or she would expire from hunger, disease, or would be shot at work.

Unlike in the first Proskurov ghetto, no one thought that they could outlive Leanevo.¹³¹

The Jews in the camp were divided into several work brigades. Every morning Germans counted out so many "Juden" and led them to a work place. Either engineers or foremen of the Toit Organization received the Jews at each work place and outlined the projects for each brigade.¹³² The brigade of Ilya Abramovich, a Holocaust survivor from Zinkov, every day walked 12 miles to and from work:

The workday lasted from seven in the morning until six in the evening. The segment of the road, which we laid with asphalt, was located near the train station, between two ruined factories – a completely ruined confectionary factory and partly ruined furniture [factory]. They brought us a hot mixture – burning asphalt and gravel, we had to level out this mixture while it was still hot. Here just hold tight – all you could hear was: "loa, loa, tempo, tempo!", and on our backs we felt clubs – massive pick shafts – and heavy whips. At first it was hard to step on the hot mixture with bare feet, but gradually a layer of asphalt stuck to our feet, a cushion of asphalt formed on them, which was almost impossible to remove, and we walked on this mixture, feeling nothing.¹³³

The Jews who worked in the sandpit had a 12-hour workday. Each day they had to load 120 cartloads of sand. Other Jews worked in stone quarries, loaded coal, loaded and unloaded trainloads of road-metal and curbs, and broke granite stones to fill them into spaces between larger stones to widen the motorway. The summer heat made the work exceptionally unbearable. In some brigades, Jews were allowed to have a "coffee" break in the afternoon. Lithuanians, Ukrainians, German Gendarmes, and later Italian soldiers guarded the Jews on the way to and from work and at the places of work. By all accounts, Lithuanians were particularly ruthless. "If one only straightened his/her back, one was whipped." If a person took too long to relieve oneself during work, he or she was liable to get shot. Similar to Matkovtzy, the weak were shot on the way to and from work and at work. Every day on the way from work, the guards shot two or three

physically able Jews, as well, – “just because.” A certain Lithuanian guard, nicknamed “Mee-mee” by the Jews, every day without fault shot one Jew in the morning on the way to work and another in the evening on the way back. The Jews were counted before they left the gates of the camp each morning, when they arrived at the place of work, and when they returned to the camp each night. For an escape of one Jew, the Germans would shoot anywhere from ten to twenty camp inmates in reprisal. Usually, the guards reported how many Jews they killed on a particular day, not to “sabotage” the count. In the brigade of “Mee-mee,” the Jews dragged the “morning corpse” with them to work, placed it in a curvette, and took it back from work, picking up the “evening corpse” on the way, too, to meet the count. Unlike the camp itself, work places presented some opportunities for escape. Jews watched after one another; one did not want to get shot for an escape of a fellow Jew. However, cases of escape did happen. Ilya Abramovich arranged the escape of his brother Matvey and later fled himself. Some Jews from Lezvevo were transferred to different work places in the Proskurov area.¹³⁴

Sometime in July of 1942, five SS-men called for joiners and metalworkers to work in a garage outside of Lezvevo. Feeling that he had no strength left to continue working on the road construction any longer, Iosif Groyzman among thirty others volunteered for the job. At first, the Jews walked every morning to the garage and returned to Lezvevo at night. Soon, they built plank-beds in the garage and stayed there day and night. The Chef at the garage was an elderly German. Iosif Groyzman did not know his name; the Jews at the garage referred to their boss as “*der Chef*.” The Chef referred to each Jew as *Jude*, Jew-carpenter, (*Jude-Tischler*), or Jew-metalworker (*Jude-Schlosser*) – no names. The work varied from fixing trucks to making wooden egg cases.

Germans confiscated eggs from Ukrainian peasants to send them to Germany. When there was no work to do, the Jews kept busy at doing something, never to be idle. No Schutzmannen guarded the Jews at the garage. On Saturdays the Jews worked only half a day. On Sundays, the Chef gave his workers a rest day. Soon after they came to the garage, the Chef allowed one metalworker from Vinohvry to bring his wife and daughter from the labor camp in Leznevo to cook for the workers in the garage. He supplied the cooks with food. Every now and then, peasants brought a pale of potatoes near the garage. The Jews did not starve here. One day, a Nazi official drove into the garage. He commanded Iosif Groyzman to change the water in his radiator. Having had no experience with automobiles, after filling the water, Iosif Groyzman did not close the cap of the radiator. The Nazi commanded his adjutant to shoot Groyzman for the mistake. The Chef stood up – Groyzman was a joiner, not a metalworker (mechanic) – the Nazi official should have asked the Chef to give him a mechanic. Groyzman was not shot. On another occasion, the Chef invited Iosif Groyzman to fix the floors in his house. After he finished the job, the Chef shared lunch with Groyzman at one table. Although Jews were never paid in Leznevo or in the garage, the Chef paid Groyzman ten German Marks and gave him cigarettes for the job.¹³⁵ Very few Jews in Proskarov were fortunate to meet a “good” German during the War.

In spite of the Nazi ideology, a German engineer apparently became infatuated with Hana Gritsarshyn when he saw her working as a translator for Ukrainian waged workers on the road. He petitioned the Chief Engineer Colonel Lorentz to transfer Hana out of Leznevo. She was transferred to a different camp in Proskarov area where she worked as a nurse and apparently treated local policemen. At the end of the summer of

1942, Hana Grisarshteyn was transferred to an Italian building organization. As a worker of the Italian organization, she witnessed many atrocities at the German coal loading train station. However, for the time being, she herself was "safe" at the Italian company.¹³⁶

Another German labor camp was located in the building of the school No 6, on Aleksandrovskaia Street, in Proskurov. (Before 1937, school No 6 was a Polish school. In 1937 the Polish and the Yiddish schools in Proskurov became Ukrainian, in addition to the Russian and Ukrainian schools that already existed in the city. When the Germans entered the city in 1941, they closed all the schools). Similar to the camps in Matkovtsy and in Leznevo, the inmates of school No 6 were driven to the camp from different towns and villages in Proskurov area. However, no Jews from Proskurov ghettos were interned at the school. Although he lived in Proskurov before the War, Veniamin Grisberg was driven to school No 6 from Vinkovtsy after he came back from Donbas in May 1942. In early November 1942, the remaining Jews from Matkovtsy were transferred to school No 6. The school was surrounded by a tall row of barbed wire.¹³⁷

There were very many people in the camp, more than 2,000 persons. The school was completely jammed with people. We slept tightly packed to one another. It was impossible to turn at night. It was very dirty and the lice tortured us, with which we could not do anything in these conditions.¹³⁸

The food rations in school No 6 were the same as in Leznevo. The Commandant of school No 6, Herr Kröll, was German and the policemen who guarded the camp were local. Kröll delivered a certain number of workers to the engineers of the Todt Organization each day. Unlike Bockamer, he did not appear at the places where the Jews worked. As in Leznevo, the inmates of school No 6 worked on the road construction.¹³⁹

The most horrible thing was to go to and from work, although the job itself was very hard, at least we grew warm at work. We walked several kilometers to and from work. Everyone's shoes were worn out, and the clothes, too. We walked in mud mixed with snow [in early November, 1942]. It was terribly freezing, we caught cold, but we were not supposed to get sick. [The sick got shot]. In the mornings, when we got up for work, everybody was coughing.¹⁴⁰

On the roads, the Jews of school No 6 were subject to the same brutalities, atrocities, and murders as the Jews in the other labor camps.

Since autumn, large groups of Jews were taken out of the camp supposedly for special work, and the people who were taken out never returned. In a day or two their places were taken by newly arrived Jews from different places. Since [the Germans] selected the most famished [Jews] for this special work, we all understood that they were killed. We made this inference also from the shots, which we always heard after the next group was taken for an execution.¹⁴¹

Ten people would be shot for an escape of one Jew from the camp. Thus in school No 6, as in Lemevo, the Jews watched one another to prevent another's flight.¹⁴² Nevertheless, some Jews fled, especially the ones who had neither relatives nor friends any longer.

During one night in November 1942, Veniamin Grinberg climbed over the barbed wire of school No 6 and found refuge in the second ghetto.¹⁴³

One year after the first pogrom, Jews still existed in Proskurov behind the barbed wire and in the second ghetto. Their numbers significantly decreased. Many were taken away to labor camps and many were killed at work. Random murders on the territory of the ghetto became common after the first pogrom. By November 1942, a famine fever epidemic, transmitted by lice and ticks, spread in the old ghetto. The Jewish doctor Khromoy took care of many of the sick but no medicines were available. Many people died from the epidemic and from other diseases. Famine fever did not spread to the second ghetto. The Jews in the old ghetto lived in greater fear than the Jews in the specialties ghetto, perhaps, because even the most senior Nazi officials relied on the

services of the Jewish skilled workers in the latter. The Germans issued a warning not to let any "foreign" Jews – runaways from pogroms in neighboring towns and from different labor camps – to hide in the ghettos of Proskurov.¹⁴⁴ When Moishe Einhorn, a runaway from Medzhibozh, tried to find shelter in Proskurov, the Jews in the old ghetto refrained from letting him in:

After crawling through the barbed wire, I knocked on the door of the first house and said very quietly: "Jews, please open. I am from Medzhibozh and suffered through the pogrom. Let me in to warm up." There followed a hubbub in the house. "Who is knocking?" several voices asked. I repeated my previous plea. For a while there was some discussion inside. "What do you say, Reb Naichik?" "I feel we should let him in." But a woman began ranting: "If you let him in, I will start screaming."

Just then, the window of the neighboring house was opened, I approached and conducted a conversation with a young man. He told me that in his house there were several sick people suffering from famine fever. The epidemic did not spare the Proskurov ghetto. He suggested I come into his room. However, at daylight he awakened me, saying: "Please leave. The Gestapo are already in the ghetto. [The Jews of the old ghetto were assembling for work.]"¹⁴⁵

The Otaman family, escapees from the pogrom in Mikhalpol, found a temporary shelter behind the barbed wire in Proskurov. In the specialties ghetto, Elys Millis, a tailor from Medzhibozh, gave temporary refuge to Moishe Einhorn. In the same ghetto, the Detan family gave shelter to Veniamin Grinberg. David Barshayn from Feistain and Jews who fled from other places hid temporarily in Proskurov.¹⁴⁶ To seek refuge from Gentiles was too dangerous. The Nazis promised death to a family of any non-Jew in whose house a Jew was found.¹⁴⁷ Even those Ukrainians who sympathized with the plight of the Jews were afraid to let them hide in their homes. From the runaways, the Jews of Proskurov learned about the pogroms in nearby towns. The Jews of the Zinkov ghetto were murdered in three waves – on May 9, July 9-10, and August 4, 1942. The Jews of Medzhibozh ghetto were wiped out in two waves – on September 21 and November 2,

1942. The Jews of Letichev – September 20 and mid November. In Yarmolintay, Nazis killed the last Jews in November.¹⁴⁸ Whereas, a year earlier, virtually no one in Proskurov foresaw the first mass murder, in November 1942 most of the Jews anticipated the next pogrom.

The rumors about an imminent pogrom spread in Proskurov. The inmates of school No 6 believed that they heard dynamite explosions –Soviet POWs blowing up pits in the frozen earth. Gentiles said that they saw Jewish forced workers digging pits for an upcoming execution in Laznevo. When the Jews selected for a day of “special work” did not return at night to the ghetto, their relatives instinctively knew that their loved ones were taken to dig the pits and were shot at the end of the day.¹⁴⁹ Those Jews who had means and trusted Gentile acquaintances tried to flee the ghetto on the eve of the pogrom. The Blekhnman family, exceptionally wealthy by the pre-war standards, paid their Gentile acquaintance Danil in gold to rent a house on the “free” territory in Proskurov. (Danil was raised in the Jewish family of Sherman after his own parents died in the 1930’s). In the cellar of the house, Danil dug a hole and covered it with straw. Yankel Blekhnman, his wife Riva (Lindenboym), their daughter Lyusya, their niece Sima Blekhnman, and their nephew Fika (the son of Liza Lindenboym) left the ghetto – unseen, in the fall of 1942 to hide in the hole. Two other persons hid in the hiding place made by Danil. (Liza Lindenboym planned to join her son but she never did. According to the post-war rumors, she poisoned herself). All seven persons stayed in the hole for four months and lived through the second pogrom.¹⁵⁰ The Jews who had no material possessions left of value but had trusted Ukrainian friends also tried to flee. When her husband and the eldest daughter did not come back from work one day in late November, the mother of

Etya B. forced her thirteen year-old daughter to run to the house of a young Ukrainian couple, Sabina and Alexey, whom the mother knew and trusted. Etya B. found refuge at the house of the righteous couple. Her mother and the mother's youngest son remained in the ghetto; had they fled to the same house as Etya B., they would put the lives of Etya, Sabina and Alexey in danger.¹³¹ According to Lyueya Biekhman, about 80 to 100 Jews fled the ghetto before the second pogrom. Many of them hid at the houses of Ukrainians. Many Jews did not survive in hiding; they were discovered and shot with their hosts.¹³² To run elsewhere from Proskurov, where one could try to hide his or her identity, or to run to Transnistria, the area under Romanian occupation some 90 km east from Proskurov, was difficult. It snowed early in November 1942; several feet of snow covered the roads and hindered an attempt to flight. By November 1942, many Jews learned by word of mouth that in Transnistria Romanians did not murder Jews. Physically capable Jews who had family members in the ghetto could not abandon their children, their elderly parents, or the sick. Moishe Einhorn and, undoubtedly, a few other Jews who no longer had anything to lose but their lives left Proskurov for Transnistria in November 1942.¹³³ The Jews who remained in the ghetto faced a pogrom.

In the labor camps and in the two ghettos many able-bodied Jews dreamt of resistance. The able-bodied men and women could not effect random violence against the Nazis or the policemen because it would result in reprisals against their children and elderly family members who still remained. The Jews in Proskurov had no weapons to generate an all-ghetto uprising. Thus many able-bodied Jewish men and women hoped to join the underground organizations or the partisan brigades, which they believed to exist in the woods, to avenge the deaths of their loved ones and their sufferings.¹³⁴ According

to Ukrainian historians, by September 1941, eleven underground groups operated in Proskurov under the command of Mikola Khranovskiy, a member of the Communist Party of Ukraine.¹⁵⁵ However, it seems that, in the beginning of the war, the underground in Proskurov mainly worked to spread the anti-German propaganda. The leaflets calling onto the residents of Proskurov not to surrender the Ukrainian towns and cities, "to save the plants and the factories," and thus to help the Red Army were posted around the city. In August 1942, the underground group headed by Petro Semaniuk sabotaged a train headed to Germany with Ukrainian young men and women conscripted for labor; the Ukrainian men and women returned to their homes. Sometime before April 1943, the same underground group freed 150 Soviet POWs from the POW camp in Rabovo, an outskirts of Proskurov.¹⁵⁶ However, it seems that the partisan movement in Proskurov did not gain full strength until late in 1942. Iosif Groyzman testified that before he was taken to the labor camp in Leznevo in May 1942, several times, Jewish boys and a few adults stole away from the second ghetto to the woods to find the partisans. Each time the boys returned without success. The adults did not return; they were killed.¹⁵⁷ Lubov Sherman from Dnarevtay, 60 km south of Proskurov, ran away from a labor camp near her town with the help of a Ukrainian friend in 1941. Posing as a Ukrainian young woman, she wandered in the woods and in the villages and joined a partisan brigade in Vinnitsa oblast east of Proskurov only in 1943 when a number of brigades were formed. While they were not universally welcomed in the ranks of Gentile partisans, Jews played an active role in the partisan struggle in the woods of Vinnitsa. Some brigades, such as the brigade commanded by David Mudrik, consisted entirely of Jews and included the children and the elderly family members of the fighters.¹⁵⁸ It is possible that a few Jews from

Proskurov also succeeded in breaking away to the partisans in Proskurov oblast or in Vinnytsia oblast. After the war, E. Lantman testified that in Proskurov "the shooting lasted several hours. Jews killed three SS men and five policemen recruited from the local population. Several young people succeeded in breaking through to the forest and escaping."¹²⁹ However, it is unclear when and under what circumstances the resistance took place.

Whereas in 1941 the head of Einsatzgruppe C proposed a "gradual liquidation" of Jewry to accommodate the economic situation in Ukraine, on January 20, 1942, at the Wannsee Conference, the Nazi party and state leaders decided not to linger with the murder of Jews any longer.¹³⁰ The turn of the Jews of Proskurov came in December 1942. By that time Einsatzgruppe C had several gas trucks designed to suffocate people with carbon monoxide and it used the trucks to murder ill inmates in labor camps in Letichev.¹³¹ In the second pogrom in Proskurov, however, the Nazis used the old-fashioned method of murder – they shot the Jews. During the second pogrom, the Nazis wiped out not only all the Jews from the two ghettos in Proskurov but also all the inmates of the concentration camps in the Proskurov area and the Jews from Nikolayev, a nearby village. The murder lasted more than a week. More than 7,000 people were killed.¹³² On the night of November 30 - December 1, SS-men, Lithuanian Schutzmannen, and the local policemen started to break into the homes of the Jews in the old ghetto and into the homes of the specialists.¹³³ Crying, beatings, shouts, pleading, and shootings of the ill who could not walk to their deaths accompanied the rounding-up of the Jews. It lasted several days and every day Jews were driven to Leznevo for the execution. On December 5, the murderers came to the garage outside of Leznevo where Isai Groyman

was working. (The Chef was released by the Germans two weeks prior to the pogrom. He forewarned the Jews of the impending homicide before he left for his "vacation"). The inmates of school No 6 were driven on foot to the execution in groups of one hundred throughout December.¹⁶⁴ It is possible that the inmates of Leznevo labor camp were the first victims of the pogrom.

Mikhail Orlov, a local policeman who witnessed the second mass murder of the Jews in Leznevo, testified after the liberation of Proskurov:

I was a witness to a horrible evil, when Beckman – German chief of the Gendarmerie, German Filippovich – head of the district Gendarmerie, and Germans Halber, cavalry sergeant major Han, Kjunk, Trach, [and] cavalry sergeant major Vernich shot thousands of Jews near Leznevo in the second pogrom. They shot them point-blank in the back of the head and threw the children alive into pits.¹⁶⁵

Clearly, seven Germans alone did not complete the murder of nearly eight thousand Jews at Leznevo. To execute the Jews of Proskurov and the Jews of nearby labor camps, SS-Einsatzkommando squads arrived to the city at the end of November. In addition to the local policemen and the Lithuanian Schutzmannen who were already there, the Nazis brought in Ukrainian policemen from nearby towns to shoot the Jews.¹⁶⁶ Mikhail Orlov may have played an active role in the pogrom. The testimony of Etya Tsalevich is the only account of a survivor of the mass murder at Leznevo:

At the end of December 1942 came my turn to get shot. On Saturday a party of about 100 people was taken out of the camp [school No 6] and driven to Leznev. By now we knew well that our deaths were imminent. In Leznevo we were put in a large cold shed near the dug out pits. It was already evening. No shootings were carried out on Sundays, the policemen-executioners rested and perhaps prayed to G-d. Thus we could live another day until Monday.

Early on Monday morning the trucks with new people arrived. These were the remaining Jews of Proskurov ghetto. They came as entire families with children. They were still well dressed and carried suitcases, bags, and bundles with

belongings. They were told that they would be resettled to another place but were brought to the pits.¹⁶⁷

Most likely, the Jews did not buy into the deception but were ordered to bring their belongings.

They began to shoot the newcomers first although we arrived nearly one day before them[,] probably because they stood nearer to the door of the shed. They were ordered to come out of the shed and to strip naked in front of its wall. It was ordered to undress the children as well. They threw all the clothes into a heap. The heap became larger and larger. Then the policemen ordered all the adults to line up and [they] separated the children from them, except infants whom the mothers held in their arms. The policemen passed between the rows [of Jews] and forced [them] to take rings off their hands, examined the mouths of the Jews and knocked out the gold-tooth crowns. Many people took out their dentures and gave them up themselves. If someone could not take a ring off, the policemen chopped off his/her fingers. The policemen were very covetous of gold and they could not allow any Jewish man or a woman to fall into a pit with a golden ring on a hand or a golden tooth in a mouth.

The adults and the juveniles were shot in the same pit, each separately. They shot them in the back of the head. By force, they ripped away young children and infants from their mothers and simply threw them into another pit. When there were about 10-20 children, one policeman fired a machine gun [at them], and they threw in the next kids. Many children were not even killed. They froze [to death] in the pit either untouched by a bullet or wounded.

When we were led out of the shed, I looked into the pit with children[;] they were stirring, crying and screaming... As the execution of the Jews of Proskurov ghetto continued, I could not always hear the shots, human wailing [drowned them out]. The screaming and the crying of women, the weeping of children, the swearing of men were unbearable to hear. We forgot for a moment that our turn followed these Jews.¹⁶⁸

Not to undress in front of the murderers and not to be shot in the back of the head, a few Jewish girls hung themselves on the attic of the shed. A few others tried but could not bring themselves to commit suicide.¹⁶⁹

When the murder of the Jews from the ghetto was finished, they started with us. I was led to the pit. A ladder (trap) lowered into the pit, everyone was to walk down this ladder and lie down head to head in rows. When one row filled up, others lay down. On the lowest rung of the ladder stood a policeman and shot everyone in the back of the head. As I stood near the ladder, I heard this

policeman ask another, "take my place, my finger is stiffened and can not work." He turned to climb out of the pit but saw me and said again, "Well, this is my neighbor, I must finish her off myself." He was Bronislav Zhukovskiy.¹⁷⁰

Bronislav Zhukovskiy, whose family suffered from Soviet repressions, joined the Felshtin police unit in July 1941. Etya Tsalevich knew Zhukovskiy from her home town.¹⁷¹

I did not lie down immediately where I was supposed to, but began to cry and to plead not to get shot. Zhukovskiy shouted, "Lie down, your life is over." I closed my eyes and threw myself onto corpses. I heard a shot...¹⁷²

Etya Tsalevich was not shot to death. She lost consciousness. As she began to suffocate, Etya freed herself from the human bodies that fell on top of her and climbed out of the pit. In the dead of the night, covered in blood and dressed in the clothes from the heap left by those who were now dead, Etya Tsalevich crawled from the execution place to the village of Leznevo. She was saved by a Ukrainian family of Darya Shershun and her son Vladimir Shershun.¹⁷³ The survivors refer to the 1942 pogrom as the final massacre of the Jews in Proskurov. More than 7,000 people were murdered. We may never know how many more people were not killed but climbed out of the pit and lived; how many of them were dragged back to the pit or shot when they tried to get out; how many Jews died from wounds, suffocated or froze to death in the pit. The mass grave remained uncovered throughout the winter months.¹⁷⁴

NOTES

¹ Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, Student edition (New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1985) 5-24.

² Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews 1933-1945 (New York: Bantam Books, 1975) xxxvi.

³ "Soviet Union," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1990. This estimate includes the Jewish men and women who died in action, serving in the Red Army, the Jews who were taken as POWs and murdered, and the civilian Jews who died in the Holocaust.

⁴ For the best analysis of the Soviet treatment of the Holocaust after WWII, see Hirszowicz, Lukasz. "The Holocaust in the Soviet Mirror" *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*. Ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.

⁵ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War 1941-1945* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1964) 131-158.

⁶ Semyon Gluzman, "Escape from the Zinkov Ghetto," rec. and trans. Vadim Altshuler; Vladimir Goykher, "The Tragedy of the Letichev Ghetto," trans. Vladimir Goykher, David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, *The Road from Letichev*, Comp. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock (San Jose: Writer's Showcase presented by Writer's Digest, 2000) 730-736, 703-725; Lubov Sherman, letter to the author, 23 January, 2001.

⁷ Mordechai Altshuler, "Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews," *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, Ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993) 92; The majority of the survivors from Proskurov area stated that they heard Molotov speak on the radio on June 22, 1941.

⁸ Werth, 131-158.

⁹ Lyuaya Blekman, interview, dir. Mikhail Fudin, videocassette, The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, 17 May, 1998; Rahel Sigal, letter, 11 June, 1990, donated to the author by Rahel Sigal.

¹⁰ Werth, 131-158; Veniamin Grinberg, personal interview, audiocassette, New York, 3 January, 2001. Veniamin Grinberg was a lieutenant in the Red Army. On the night of June 21-22, he was commanded to advance his division to the 1941-border without ammunition. When the Germans crossed the border, Soviet Marshal Timoshenko instructed front-line commanders not to engage Germans without explicit instructions (Altshuler, 92). In the morning, Grinberg lost communication with the High Command. At the end of the first day his division began to retreat. In the first week of July, Veniamin Grinberg was captured by the Germans. He escaped from a POW camp in Byelorussia. Unable to cross the front-line to the east, in the winter of 1942, Veniamin Grinberg reached Proskurov oblast.

¹¹ According to Ukrainian historians (Shkrobot, 47), Germans occupied Proskurov on July 8, 1941. However, survivors state the occupation date as July 7, 1941. Yefim Lerner, personal interview concerning his late wife Sima Lerner (Blekman), a Holocaust

survivor, audiocassette, New York, 16 December, 2000; Tatyana Uzenkel, letter to the author, December 2000.

¹² Werth, (map) 576.

¹³ P. M. Shkrobot, "Navichno v Pam'yati Narodny," ed. A. G. Filiniuk, Ploskyriv, Proskuriv, Khmel'nyts'kyi, 1493-1993 (Khmelnitskyi: Podillia, 1993) 53. The survivors state the date of liberation as March 24, 1941.

¹⁴ I. M. Bogolyubova, L. O. Timofeeva, and O. B. Chernyshov, "Misto Proskuriv u XVIII – Na Pochatku XX st. Daty i Podii" [Proskuriv City 18th-early 20th centuries: Dates and Events], Ploskyriv, Proskuriv, Khmel'nyts'kyi, 1493-1993, ed. A. G. Filiniuk (Khmelnitskyi: Podillia, 1993). 10.

¹⁵ "Proskurov, Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem, Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16 vols. (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1971).

¹⁶ Sonya Shteyner, telephone interview, 4 October, 2000; Rahel Sigal. According to Gersh Ivankovitsker, the city population was 90,000 people. Perhaps, there were anywhere from 60,000-90,000 people.

¹⁷ In 1926, Ukrainians constituted 47.4% of Ukrainian city populations, Russians – 25.1%, Jews – 22.8%. In 1939, the percentages were: Ukrainians – 70.2%, Russians – 15.6% , Jews – 11.8%. Baruch Gurevitz, National Communism in the Soviet Union, 1918-1928 (Pittsburgh, PA: University Center for International Studies, 1980), 68.

¹⁸ The exact number of evacuees is not known. The following individuals or their relatives stated to me that the following persons fled from Proskurov, June 22-July 7: the family of Shopse Shteyner and his daughter Bazya Shteyner with children; the family of Boris Froysheter; the family of Chaim Royzen; the family of Grigoriy Sheynberg; the family of Samuil Margulis; Reva Sigal and her parents; Fanya Shnayder and her parents; Yakov Birman and his parents; Vera Grinberg and her parents; Roman Inker and his parents; Meir Sheydvaser and his parents; Bronya Parnes and her daughter Rita (now Inker); Rahel Sigal (Tsessarskiy), her mother and brother; the mother of Iosif Groyzman and his three sisters; Sheyndl Grinberg (the mother of Veniamin Grinberg); Maria Roytburg. For the best analysis of the reasons why the majority of the Jews did not evacuate from Ukraine, see Altshuler, Mordechai. Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews. The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock. New York: M. E. Sharpe. 1993. 77-104. Also see Hilberg, 107-109.

¹⁹ Tova Perlshtein, Kupel: In Memory of My Shtetl and the Dear Ones who Died There, unpublished ts., trans. Eliav Bar-Hai (Tel Aviv), Ophira Druch and Joel Cehn (Oakland, CA), collection of Ben Weinstock, 4; Klara Melamud, telephone interview concerning her husband Mikhail Melamud, holocaust survivor, 21 January, 2001.

²⁰ "Soviet Union," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1990

²¹ Shkrobot, 46.

²² Werth, 131-158; Veniamin Grinberg, personal interview, audiocassette, New York, 3 January, 2001. Veniamin Grinberg was a lieutenant in the Red Army. On the night of June 21-22, he was commanded to advance his division to the 1941-border without ammunition. When the Germans crossed the border, Soviet Marshal Timoshenko instructed front-line commanders not to engage Germans without explicit instructions (Altshuler, 92). In the morning, Grinberg lost communication with the High Command. At the end of the first day his division began to retreat. In the first week of July, Veniamin Grinberg was captured by the Germans. He escaped from a POW camp in Byelorussia. Unable to cross the front-line to the east, in the winter of 1942, Veniamin Grinberg reached Proskurov oblast.

²³ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981) 84-103.

²⁴ Reichskommissariat für die Ukraine and Einsatzstab Rosenberg records from the Central State Archive of Higher Administration of Ukraine, USHMM archives RG-31.002M, (original in Central State Archive of Higher Administration of Ukraine Fond 3206 (Reichskommissariat für den Ukraine, Rovno) Opis 1, delo 58).

²⁵ Dallin, 123-167.

²⁶ Reichskommissariat für die Ukraine and Einsatzstab Rosenberg records.

²⁷ Iosif Groyzman, interview, dir. Maks Voskoboynik, audiocassette, San Francisco, 2 January, 2001; Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May 1998;

²⁸ Dawidowicz, 107-128; Hilberg 99-138.

²⁹ Dawidowicz, 127; Hilberg, 110-111, 133.

³⁰ Operational Situation Report USSR No. 24, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, ed. Yitzak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski and Shmuel Spector (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989) 29-33, March 17, 2001
<<http://www.pgonline.com/electriczen/osr24.html>>

³¹ Ereignismeldung UdSSR, Nr. 45, Berlin, August 7, 1941, RG.000431-444, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, trans. Kathrin Klotz, 000434.

³² Operational Situation Report USSR No. 38, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, ed. Yitzak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski and Shmuel Spector (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989) 58-60, March 17, 2001
<<http://www.pgonline.com/electriczen/osr38.html>>

³³ Operational Situation Report USSR No. 38.

³⁴ Dawidowicz, 107-128;

³⁵ Lyusya Blekman, 17 May 1998; Iosif Groysman, 2 January, 2001. Survivors from the other towns in Proskurov oblast, too, testify that Germans committed atrocities and took photographs in the first days of the occupation: David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, The Road From Letichev: The History and Culture of a Forgotten Jewish Community in Eastern Europe (San Jose: Writer's Showcase presented by Writer's Digest, 2000) 673-744.

³⁶ "Lvov," Historical Atlas of the Holocaust, ed. Yechiam Halevy, USHMM, (New York: MacMillan Publishing, Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 1996) 62; Dallin, 107-122.

³⁷ Ivan Matveychuk, "New Generation of Executioners," trans. David Tsai, Novyye Russkoye Slovo 27 Dec. 1996: 15, A Nazi Memorial Opened and Honored in the Ukraine, March 17, 2001 <<http://remember.org/ideas/bukovina.html>>

³⁸ Etya Tsalevich, testimony, RG 03-3734, Yad Vashem Archives, Israel 1974, 2-3.

³⁹ Sonya Shteyner, telephone interview, 4 October 2000.

⁴⁰ Lyusya Blekman, 17 May, 1998.

⁴¹ Hilberg, 119.

⁴² Qtd. in Minister of Citizenship and Immigration v. Serge Kisluk, Docket T-300-97, Federal Court of Canada, 1999, 3, March 17, 2001 <<http://www.fja.gc.ca/en/cf/1998/orig/html/1998fca21831.o.en.html>>

⁴³ Hilberg, 107-139.

⁴⁴ Minister of Citizenship and Immigration v. Serge Kisluk, 3-4.

⁴⁵ Leonid Vorona, telephone interview, 17 December, 2000.

⁴⁶ Minister of Citizenship and Immigration v. Serge Kisluk, 7; Etya Tsalevich, 11.

⁴⁷ Hilberg, 139.

⁴⁸ Hilberg, 139.

⁴⁹ Lyusya Blekman, 17 May, 1998.

⁵⁰ Hana Vaiskop (maiden name Gritserashteyn), testimony, RG 03-3766, Yad Vashem

Archives, Israel, 1973, 5-6.

⁵¹ Iosif Groyzman, 2 January 2001.

⁵² Lyusya Blekhman, 17 May, 1998; Iosif Groyzman. The Jews in the other towns of Proskurov area reacted similarly to the Germans: David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, 673-744.

⁵³ Moishe Einhorn, "In the Medzhibozh Ghetto," trans. Moshe Furst, The Road from Letichev, comp. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock (San Jose: Writer's Showcase presented by Writer's Digest, 2000) 693.

⁵⁴ Tatyana Uzenkel; Lyusya Blekhman, 17 May, 1998; Iosif Groyzman.

⁵⁵ Iosif Groyzman described one incident indicative of the fact that the Nazis poorly identified Jews: The baker of the only restaurant in town, on the corner of Aleksandrovskaya and Aptekarskaya Streets, was a bearded Gentile man. Sometime in 1941 he was approached by two Nazis on a street and questioned whether he was a Jew. The Gentile baker did not understand German and failed to respond. The two Nazis assumed that the man was a Jew only because of his beard. They grabbed his beard and ripped it out, leaving the baker bleeding on the street. As a rule, the Nazis did not perpetrate random violence against Gentiles in Proskurov. The baker was abused "by mistake." When the Jews were assembled to the ghetto, Ukrainians assisted the Nazis in identifying the Jews (Groyzman, 2 January, 2001).

⁵⁶ Qtd. by Iosif Groyzman.

⁵⁷ Tova Perishtein, 4.

⁵⁸ Lyusya Blekhman, 17 May 1998; Iosif Groyzman; Moishe Einhorn, 693.

⁵⁹ Lyusya Blekhman, personal interview, 14 October, 2000.

⁶⁰ Lyusya Blekhman, 14 October, 2000.

⁶¹ Dawidowicz, 117.

⁶² Hana Vaiskop, 5.

⁶³ Iosif Groyzman. Veniamin Grinberg came to the second ghetto in 1942, however, he, too, believes that there was a Jewish police in the first ghetto.

⁶⁴ Etya B. letter to the author, 8 January, 2000; Lyusya Blekhman, 14 October, 2000; Iosif Groyzman; Veniamin Grinberg.

⁶⁵ Etya B.; Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May, 1998; Iosif Groysman.

⁶⁶ Hana Vaiskop, 6.

⁶⁷ Iosif Groysman.

⁶⁸ Lazar Bover, letter to the author, 15 December, 2000; Klara Melamud.

⁶⁹ Hana Vaiskop, 9.

⁷⁰ Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May, 1998.

⁷¹ Moishe Einhorn, 693.

⁷² Etya B.; Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May, 1998; Iosif Groysman.

⁷³ Hana Vaiskop, 9.

⁷⁴ Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May 1998; Yefim Lerner. The survivors from other towns in Proskurov oblast described a similar situation in their towns. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, 673-744.

⁷⁵ Iosif Groysman.

⁷⁶ Etya B.; Lyusya Blekhan, 17 May, 1998; Iosif Groysman; Yefim Lerner; Klara Melamud; Tatyana Uzenkel; Semyon Gluzman, 734.

⁷⁷ Hilberg, 109.

⁷⁸ Qtd. in Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943*, (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992) 200.

⁷⁹ Qtd. in Headland, 200.

⁸⁰ Qtd. in Headland, 200.

⁸¹ Hana Vaiskop states that the first pogrom began on November 4, 1941. Tatyana Uzenkel states that the first pogrom happened in November. Mikhail Melamud states the date as November 6, 1941 (Klara Melamud). Since he was seven years old at the time and Hana Vaiskop was a high school graduate, I decided to go with the date provided by Hana Vaiskop. Ukrainian historians state that the first pogrom happened in November but do not indicate the date (Shkrobot, 47).

⁸² Lazar Bover; Iosif Groysman; Hana Vaiskop, 5. Although the German euphemism for a mass murder of Jews is an "aktion," the survivors refer to the mass murders as the "pogroms."

⁸³ Iosif Groysman.

⁸⁴ Iosif Groysman. The family of Etya B., the family of Lyusya Blekman, Iosif Groysman and his father hid during the first pogrom.

⁸⁵ For example, read: Pincus, Oscar. The House of Ashes. Schenectady, NY: Union College Press. 1990.

⁸⁶ Hana Vaiskop, 4.

⁸⁷ Hana Vaiskop, 4.

⁸⁸ Klara Melamud; Hana Vaiskop, 4.

⁸⁹ Tatyana Uzenkel; Iosif Groysman. Tatyana Uzenkel states that 6,000 people were murdered in the first pogrom. Ukrainian historian Shkrobot states the same figure (Shkrobot, 47). Iosif Groysman believes that 12,000 Jews were killed in the first pogrom. However, this figure seems to be exaggerated since the majority of the survivors state that approximately one half of the pre-pogrom Jewish population remained after the first pogrom.

⁹⁰ Lazar Bover.

⁹¹ The Act of the Judicial-Medical Committee for Investigation of the German-Fascist Atrocities in Proskurov, Kamenets-Podolsky oblast. The Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory. USHMM archives. RG-22.002M. Reel 2. (original in the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF). Fond 7021, opis 9, delo 813).

⁹² Hana Vaiskop, 5.

⁹³ The Act of the Judicial-Medical Commission for Investigation of the German-Fascist Atrocities.

⁹⁴ Hilberg, 128.

⁹⁵ Vladimir F. Koval, protocol of interrogation, May 10, 1944, the Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory, USHMM archives, RG-22.002M, Reel 2, (original in the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF), fond 7021, opis 9, delo 813).

⁹⁶ Hana Vaiskop, 5.

⁹⁷ Hana Vaiskop, 5; Lyusya Blekhnman, 17 May 1998, and Iosif Groysman also testified that the locals plundered Jewish homes on the day of the pogrom.

⁹⁸ Lazar Bover.

⁹⁹ Lazar Bover.

¹⁰⁰ Hana Vaiskop, 4-5.

¹⁰¹ Klara Melamud.

¹⁰² Lazar Bover; Iosif Groysman; Klara Melamud; Hana Vaiskop.

¹⁰³ Tatyana Uzenkel.

¹⁰⁴ Hana Vaiskop; Klara Melamud.

¹⁰⁵ Lazar Bover.

¹⁰⁶ Moishe Einhorn, 693; Veniamin Grinberg; Iosif Groysman; Klara Melamud; Hana Vaiskop, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Iosif Groysman; Klara Melamud.

¹⁰⁸ Moishe Einhorn, 693.

¹⁰⁹ Lyusya Blekhnman; Iosif Groysman.

¹¹⁰ Vladimir Goykher, 712.

¹¹¹ V. M. Molotov, The Note of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, USSR Information Bulletin, April 27, 1942, 3-5.

¹¹² Iosif Groysman; Although in Letichev and Zinkov (neighboring towns) there were no pogroms in the fall 1941, the Jews of those towns survived the first winter similarly to the remaining Jews in Proskurov. Vladimir Goykher, 710-714; Semyon Gluzman, 730-736.

¹¹³ Iosif Groysman; Veniamin Grinberg. The survivors from other towns in Proskurov also mention the conscription of people to drive the horses in the spring of 1942. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, 673-744; Eva Oksman, audiocassette, donated to the author, January, 2001.

¹¹⁴ Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: MacMillan, 1970) 180-196.

¹¹⁵ Veniamin Grinberg; Vladimir Goykher, 712-714; Moyshe Rekhman, "Hard Labor in the Letichev Camp," testimony on file in USHMM, The Road from Letichev, comp. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock (San Jose: Writer's Showcase presented by Writer's Digest, 2000) 701-702.

¹¹⁶ Footnoted in David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, 767, footnote 69; Vladimir Goykher, 713-714.

¹¹⁷ Iosif Groysman; Veniamin Grinberg.

¹¹⁸ Etya Tsalevich, 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Etya Tsalevich, 4.

¹²⁰ Etya (Galya) Tsalevich, telephone interview, 26 December, 2000.

¹²¹ Hana Vaiskop, 7.

¹²² Etya Tsalevich, 4-5.

¹²³ Hana Vaiskop, 6.

¹²⁴ Ilya Abramovich, Ne Zabyt: tragediya evreev goroda Zinkova [Never forget: the tragedy of the Jewr of the town of Zinkov] (New York: Effect Publishing, 1991) 34.

¹²⁵ Iosif Groysman states that there were anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 Jews in the camp. According to Ilya Abramovich, there were a few hundred people.

¹²⁶ Hana Vaiskop, 6-8.

¹²⁷ Hana Vaiskop, 8.

¹²⁸ Ilya Abramovich, 34; Iosif Groysman; Hana Vaiskop, 6.

¹²⁹ Ilya Abramovich, 34-35; Iosif Groysman; Hana Vaiskop, 6. Ilya Abramovich states that they received food only once a day. However, they had a "coffee" break in the afternoon. Perhaps the meal schedules differed from one brigade to another.

¹³⁰ Ilya Abramovich, 35.

¹³¹ Ilya Abramovich, 36; Iosif Groysman.

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- ¹³² Iosif Groysman.
- ¹³³ Ilya Abramovich, 35.
- ¹³⁴ Ilya Abramovich, 34-37; Iosif Groysman, Hana Vaiskop, 6.
- ¹³⁵ Iosif Groysman.
- ¹³⁶ Hana Vaiskop, 7-9.
- ¹³⁷ Veniamin Grinberg; Etya Tsalevich 5-6.
- ¹³⁸ Etya Tsalevich, 5. According to Veniamin Grinberg, the number of the Jews at the school building was much less than 2,000.
- ¹³⁹ Veniamin Grinberg.
- ¹⁴⁰ Etya Tsalevich, 5.
- ¹⁴¹ Etya Tsalevich, 5-6.
- ¹⁴² Etya Tsalevich, 26 December, 2000.
- ¹⁴³ Veniamin Grinberg.
- ¹⁴⁴ Moishe Einhorn, 693; Eva Okman Hana Vaiskop, 9.
- ¹⁴⁵ Moishe Einhorn, 693.
- ¹⁴⁶ Moishe Einhorn, 693; Veniamin Grinberg; Eva Okman; Etya Tsalevich.
- ¹⁴⁷ Etya B.; Lyusya Blekman; Moishe Einhorn, 694; Klara Melamud; Eva Okman; Lubov Sherman; Leonid Vorona.
- ¹⁴⁸ Moishe Einhorn, 693; Vladimir Goykher, 715-117; Ilya Abramovich, 39; Shura Detinskaya, personal interview, 7 January 2001; David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, 743.
- ¹⁴⁹ Etya B.; Lyusya Blekman; Etya Tsalevich 6;
- ¹⁵⁰ Lyusya Blekman, 17 May 1998; 14 October, 2000.
- ¹⁵¹ Etya B.
- ¹⁵² Lyusya Blekman, 17 May 1998.

¹⁵³ Moische Einhorn, 693-694.

¹⁵⁴ Iosif Groysman.

¹⁵⁵ Shkrobot, 48.

¹⁵⁶ Shkrobot, 48-53; 65,000 Soviet POWs were starved to death, shot, or tortured to death in the POW camp in Rakovo by the Germans (The Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory, USHMM archives, RG-22.002M, Reel 2).

¹⁵⁷ Iosif Groysman.

¹⁵⁸ Lubov Sherman; Vinnitskaya Oblast Katastrofa (Shoa) i Soprotivleniye [Vinnitsa Oblast Holocaust (Shoa) and Resistance], ed. Agmon Pinhas and Anatoliy Stepanenko (Tel Aviv – Kiev: Beit Lohamei ha-Gettaot, 1994) 92-187.

¹⁵⁹ "Resistance in Yarmolitsy," The Black Book, the Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders Throughout the Temporarily-Occupied Regions of The Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland During the War of 1941-1945, ed. Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, trans. John Glad and James S. Levine (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980) 26.

¹⁶⁰ Dawidowicz, 136-139.

¹⁶¹ Hilberg, 137-138; Rekhtman, 702.

¹⁶² Sto Evreyskikh Mestechek Ukrainy. Podolia [One Hundred Jewish places in Ukraine, Podolia], comp. and ed. Veniamin Lukin and Boris Khaymovich, ser. I (Jerusalem-Saint Petersburg, 1997) 184. _

¹⁶³ There is no consensus on the first day of the second pogrom. According to Mikhail Melamud, the pogrom began on November 30, 1942 (Klara Melamud). The same date is listed in the Encyclopedia Judaica ("Proskurov," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1970). Tatyana Uzenkel and Veniamin Grinberg state that the second pogrom began in November 1942. Hana Vaiskop states that it began on December 3. Iosif Groysman states the date as December 5, however, he was in the Leznevo garage-labor camp when the pogrom began. According to E. Tsalevich, the pogrom began in late December 1942. Hana Vaiskop and Veniamin Grinberg state that the pogrom began at night. Since, according to the consensus, the pogrom lasted more than a week, I decided to state November 30, 1942, as the first night of the pogrom.

¹⁶⁴ Hana Vaiskop, 9-10; Eva Okaman; Etya Tsalevich, 6; Veniamin Grinberg; Iosif Groysman; Klara Melamud.

¹⁶⁵ Mikhail S. Orlov, protocol of interrogation, May 10, 1944, the Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory, USHMM archives, RG-22.002M, Reel 2, (original in the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF), fond 7021, opis 9, delo 313).

¹⁶⁶ Etya Tsalevich, 6-10.

¹⁶⁷ Etya Tsalevich, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Etya Tsalevich, 6-7.

¹⁶⁹ Etya Tsalevich, 7-8.

¹⁷⁰ Etya Tsalevich, 8.

¹⁷¹ Etya Tsalevich, 3; Etya Tsalevich, 26 December, 2000.

¹⁷² Etya Tsalevich, 8.

¹⁷³ Etya Tsalevich, 10-12.

¹⁷⁴ Tatyana Uzenkel.

SURVIVING THE HOLOCAUST

According to the Soviet estimates, 16,000 Jewish civilians from Proskurov perished during the War.¹ Overall, more than 218,000 Jews from Proskurov oblast perished in the Holocaust.² Three million out of five million Soviet Jews died in the Great Patriotic War.³ When the Red Army liberated Proskurov from the Germans on March 25, 1944,⁴ approximately 60 Jewish men, women and children survived the Holocaust.⁵

The fates of the Holocaust survivors from Proskurov are incredible and heroic. The lives of the Jews who survived the second pogrom seem to have been not only in the hands of Germans, but in the hands of Ukrainians and in the hands of G-d. While most of the Jews in the two ghettos in Proskurov anticipated the second pogrom, they did not foresee its totality. Although the Todt Organization began to hire Ukrainian waged laborers and to use Jewish-Hungarian forced labor battalions to build roads and bridges in Ukraine, the Jews in Proskurov ghettos believed that the Germans still needed their skills and expertise. When the second pogrom began, the Jews assumed that the 1942 execution would last one day as the first pogrom and that they could hide out. Extended families and people who were not related squeezed into makeshift hidings. They did not take any food or water with them, assuming that the massacre would stop after one day.⁶ A few Jews did not hide. Eiderly Mr. and Mrs. Detun remained outside with their grandchild, fearing that the whole family would perish if the infant were to start crying.⁷ The overwhelming majority of the Jews from the two ghettos, seven thousand people, were hunted down by the Nazis and their collaborators, and massacred on the first day of the pogrom. More than one hundred Jews were not discovered. Some remained in their

hiding places up to ten days without food or water, nearly suffocating, and forced to relieve themselves in place. In nearly every hiding place, if they were not discovered by the Nazis or by the Schutzmaenner, someone expired or went berserk.⁸ Eva Okaman, a ten year old girl, hid with her mother Adelia and her brother Misha for two days:

We lowered into a cellar, it was called "the secret." Very many people packed into it, some with children. We were suffocating. Outside Germans and Schutzmaenner committed such deeds - [from our hiding place, we heard] shots, shouts, cries. We used a staircase to lower into "the secret" and camouflaged the entrance with a cupboard. There we lay. One night. One day. My little brother was crying because he wanted to drink. It was unsafe, someone could have heard us upstairs. But there was nothing to drink or to eat. My mother gave my little brother urine to drink. Then his heart could not endure it. As I held him, saliva came out of my brother's mouth and his body turned cold. He died. At that moment my mother was happy that my brother would not be shot. But for the rest of her life and after the war she thought that maybe my brother remained alive when we left him.⁹

After the first few days of the pogrom, nothing indicated that it was safe to come out.

Yet those Jews who were still in hidings realized that they would die from starvation or suffocation if they stay. One by one, families and single persons began to abandon their holes and to wander off in different directions.¹⁰

Not all of the people who lived through the second pogrom lived to see the day of the liberation. Many of the Jews, who came out of hidings, immediately fell into the hands of the Nazis or the policemen who roamed in the ruins of the two ghettos. When they crawled out of their shelter, seven days after the second pogrom had begun, Abram Melamud and his son Mikhail met face to face with a Schutzmann. Abram Melamud bribed the policeman in gold; the latter pretended not to see the escapees.¹¹ Some seventy other survivors of the second pogrom were not so fortunate. After 11 days of hiding, Revekka and Hana Gritsershteyn abandoned their shelter. They succeeded to bribe one policeman with a suitcase full of belongings but another Schutzmann

immediately gave the women away to a German officer. Revekka and Hana Gritsershteyn were led inside a building where nearly seventy other Jewish men, women, and children who came out of their holes were assembled:

The Schutzmann led us inside a very filthy building where the remaining Jews were gathered. On the way to the building we ate dirty snow. Ukrainian women watched and muttered, "Look, they are going to their deaths and still want to drink."

In the building there were nearly 70 Jews. For a few days they have received neither food nor water.

I began to knock at the door and to demand water but had no success. In the evening a guard came in, a Schutzmann, he asked, "who will go for water?" Everyone wanted to go but he chose me. Instead of a pail, he gave me a bottle from kerosene with a broken neck.

I satisfied my thirst at the well. [When I returned to the building, people] threw themselves onto the one bottle of water. Schutzmaenner beat them with whips.

During the night I was sent out for water again...¹²

Policeman Ivanov who became infatuated with Hana before the War decided to save her. Under the cover of night, Ivanov led Hana to the house of Volodymyr Lanko, a righteous Ukrainian, a friend of the Gritsershteyn family. For eleven months, Lanko hid Hana Gritsershteyn and a seven-year-old girl, Byata Beyter, under his bed. At the end of 1943, with the help of Lanko and with luck, Hana and Byata fled to Transnistria. They survived the Holocaust. Hana returned to Proskurov after its liberation but she never saw her mother again.¹³

Before murdering the last Jews in Proskurov, the Nazis made their final selection of the Jewish specialists. A small number of Jewish skilled workers were assembled in school No 5. In spite of the demands of the Final Solution, apparently, the Nazis in Proskurov still needed Jews to fix their watches and to darn their uniforms. Tatyana

Uzenkel, aged 17 at the time, became one of the inmates of school No 5. Very soon after its conception, the concentration camp was liquidated. Tatyana Uzenkel wrote:

One 'beautiful' day the Nazis emptied the building of the concentration camp – they murdered all the people who still remained. By the will of fate, some of the sufferers remained alive, including myself. I will not write in detail about what I lived through because it is too painful and physically unbearable.¹⁴

Apparently, these last Jews in Proskurov were shot in February 1943. In 1944, after the liberation of Proskurov, S. Kolodiy testified that sixty policemen from Volochiysk took part in the execution of "the soviet citizens from the concentration camps surrounding Proskurov." The shooting took place in Zarech'ye.¹⁵ Apparently, the last victims were driven not only from school No 5, but also from other concentration camps of which no documentary evidence seems to remain. Tatyana Uzenkel was shot but, like Etya Tsalevich, she climbed out of the dead. Tatyana Uzenkel struggled for survival and survived the War.¹⁶

The Jews who lived through the second pogrom could not remain in the ruins of the two ghettos. Until the final mass murder, some survivors of pogroms in the small towns near Proskurov fled to the city to hide among Jewish people from the Nazis and their henchmen. Escapee Jews felt safer in a ghetto among other Jews than hiding in the woods or among Gentiles. During the second pogrom, the Nazis liquidated the last two ghettos in Proskurov area.¹⁷ The escapees from Proskurov could seek shelter only among Gentiles or in Transnistria.

In August 1941, to appease their ally, Germans granted the civil administration of the Ukrainian region between the South Bug River and the Dniester River, extending south to the Black Sea, to Romania. This region was called Transnistria during the War. On the eve of the War, more than 300,000 Jews lived in Transnistria; 180,000 of them

lived in the southern port city of Odessa. Approximately half of the Jewish residents of Odessa fled the city before its occupation by the Romanian Army in October 1941. In the same month, Einsatzgruppe D, which followed the Romanian Army into the southern Soviet Union, and the Third Romanian Army shot and burned to death more than 50,000 Jews of Odessa. The remaining Jews of the city and its environs were taken by the Romanian authorities in cooperation with the Germans to Berezovka and to three different concentration camps in the Golta district, upstream of the South Bug River: Bogdanovka, Domanevka and Akhmetchetka. By February 1942, the Romanian Army in cooperation with the Einsatzgruppe D and the ethnic German militias murdered nearly 100,000 Jews in the concentration camps in southern Transnistria.¹⁸

At the same time as they murdered the Jews in southern Transnistria, the government of Romania evicted 150,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina, the territories reconquered from the Soviet Union, and deported those Jews to northern Transnistria. The deportations lasted from September 1941 until October 1942. Approximately 100,000 Ukrainian Jews lived in northern Transnistria, mainly concentrated in the cities of Zhmerinka and Mogilev-Podolakiy. Although these cities were geographically located within reach of the Einsatzgruppe C, apparently, the Einsatzgruppe did not operate in the "Romanian" territory. Einsatzgruppe D did not move north from Odessa but advanced east along the southern coast of the Soviet Union. The Romanian Army advanced to the eastern front. The indigenous Jews of Zhmerinka and its environs in northern Transnistria did not become subject to the mass murders that took place everywhere in Ukraine. In accordance with the Decree No. 23, issued in November 1941 by the Romanian dictator, Antonescu, the indigenous Jews in northern

Transnistria and the deportees were confined to ghettos in specific towns and villages. Their freedoms of movement and communication were completely restricted although not all of the ghettos were physically isolated. The Romanian administration did not provide any food or medical supplies to the deportees; tens of thousands of them perished from starvation, cold, and infectious diseases in the winter of 1941-1942. The fatality rate among the local Jews was significantly lower than among the deportees because the former remained at their homes and retained many of their possessions. By the winter of 1942-1943, the Romanian government allowed the Jewish organizations of Romania proper, such as the Union of Romanian Jews (*Uniunea Evreilor Români*), to send aid to the deportees in northern Transnistria. Soup kitchens, hospitals and orphanages were set up in the ghettos. The mortality rate dropped. In the fall of 1942, when the Nazis demanded to deport the Jews from Transnistria to the Belzec extermination camp in Poland, the Romanian government had every chance to annihilate the more than 70,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina and the 100,000 indigenous Jews living in north Transnistria. However, Antonescu refused. While the Romanian authorities exploited the labor of the Jews in northern Transnistria for nominal compensation and frequently delivered Jewish laborers to the Todt Organization under German control, Romanians did not pursue the total extermination of the Jews in Transnistria. Romania, unlike Germany, did not perceive the annihilation of world Jewry as its primary war aim. Apparently, its primary war aim was to regain the regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which Romania lost to the Soviet Union in 1940. Antonescu used northern Transnistria as the dumping ground for the evicted Jews. He did not plan to annex Transnistria to Romania proper; hence, apparently, he did not mind a relatively large concentration of Jews in that area.

Also, the normative use of bribery of Romanian politicians and the change in the tide of War in favor of the Allies after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in November 1942-January 1943, evidently, convinced Romanians to let the Jews in Transnistria be.¹⁹ Thus after the second pogrom in Proskurov in December 1942, Transnistria seemed to remain the only haven within reach, some 90 km east of the city. Roughly half of the survivors of the Holocaust from Proskurov survived in Transnistria.

No Jew survived the Holocaust without the help of Gentiles and without Luck. Iosif Groyzman and a man from Vinkovtsy fled from the labor camp-garage near Leznevo on December 5, 1942. Veniamin Grinberg escaped from the skilled-labor ghetto approximately five days after the second pogrom began. Iosif Groyzman and his companion, and Veniamin Grinberg walked through the villages covered with snow to Transnistria. The escaping Jews moved mostly at night and hid during daytime; they avoided towns because Germans were stationed in them. Ukrainian and Russian Gentiles recognized escapee Jews by the rags they were wearing, by their emaciated bodies, and by exhaustion and fear in their eyes. Some Jews never got to Transnistria. They were betrayed by Ukrainians to the local policemen or to German authorities. We may never know how many Jews were killed after they fled Proskurov. Every Jew who successfully reached Transnistria, at one point or another met a Gentile who showed him or her the right direction, gave a piece of bread, a lift on a section of the road, offered shelter in a shed for a day, or simply did not betray him or her.²⁰ The Blekhnman family paid a Ukrainian train conductor to smuggle them onto a train to Zhmerinka, Transnistria, shortly after the second pogrom.²¹ At the end of 1943, Volodymyr Lanko paid a train conductor to smuggle Hana Gritzershteyn and Byata Beyter to Zhmerinka.²² Sabina and

Alexey, the saviors of Etya B., did not have possessions to bribe a conductor. They drove Etya to northern Transnistria on a horse cart, risking their own lives.²³ Once they reached the Romanian occupied territory, the survivors from Proskurov found shelter among Ukrainian Jews or among the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina. Escapees from the German-occupied territory were subject to forced labor more often than the Jews who lived in northern Transnistria since the beginning of the War. However, by 1943, Romanians did not murder Jews arbitrarily and did not commit mass executions. By incredible Fate and with help from Ukrainians less than 60 Jews from Proskurov reached Transnistria and survived the War.²⁴

Not all of the survivors of the second pogrom attempted to flee to Transnistria. Ten-year old David Berahteyn and possibly a few other Jews fled to the woods. They could not hide outdoors for a long time because the temperature reached thirty degrees below the freezing point (in Celsius) in December 1942. After several days, David Berahteyn left the woods; he hid in Feishtin, in the cellars and in the attics of the houses of Ukrainians until the end of the War.²⁵ After climbing out of the mass grave in Leznevo, Etya Tsalevich entered the village. When the dawn broke, she had no place to hide but could not continue walking any longer; dressed in rags and stained with blood, the girl looked like she came from the dead. Etya Tsalevich entered a hut on the outskirts of Leznevo and collapsed unconscious. By a chance of luck, she fell into the house of Darya Shershun and her son Vladimir. This righteous Ukrainian family took Etya into their home, saving her from death. Not to arouse suspicions from their neighbors, Darya Shershun and Vladimir gave Etya a Ukrainian name, Galya; they taught her Christian prayers, and gave her a cross on a necklace. In the summer of 1943, when it became

dangerous for her to remain in Leznevo, Galya went to the city of Gaysin in Vinnitsa oblast, posing as a Ukrainian girl. While she remained Jewish, Etya Tsalevich kept her Ukrainian name, Galya, after the end of the War.²⁶

Many Ukrainians lived in poverty during the War. Thus the righteous Ukrainians not only put their lives at risk but also took on economic burdens when they helped the Jews. Some Ukrainians accepted money for giving shelter. When they fled the ghetto after the second pogrom, Abram Melamud and his son Mikhail came to the house of their trusted Ukrainian acquaintance in the outskirts of Proskurov, Grechany. At night, the Ukrainian friend escorted Abram and Mikhail to the house of his sister. This righteous woman hid in her cellar the father and son, and eight other Jews, who recompensed her with their valuable possessions, until April 1943.²⁷ After fleeing from the ruins of the old ghetto and after wandering for many days in the woods and in the villages outside of Proskurov, hungry, cold and exhausted, Adelia Oksman and her daughter Eva entered a house outside of the village of Korzhevtsy and asked for shelter. The owners of the house, the Martyniuk family, were very poor. They agreed to hide the Jewish woman and her daughter in an outdoor cellar behind their house in return for Adelia's winter coat and a roll of fabric. Adelia and Eva Oksman entered the house of Martyniuks by a chance of luck. Although they lived in danger of being evicted or discovered, Adelia and Eva Oksman survived the War.²⁸ Unfortunately, there were Ukrainians who took advantage of and betrayed runaway Jews. Galina Kratiuk in Proskurov was infamous for evicting a number of Jewish people after they gave up all their possessions to her.²⁹

In 1942-1943, the Germans conscripted Ukrainian youth to work for the Nazi war effort. More than 116,000 Ukrainians from Proskurov oblast went to Germany.³⁰

Although Ukrainian laborers received nominal wages in Germany and the majority of them returned to the Soviet Union after World War II, in 1943 many young people tried to hide from conscription.³¹ In April 1943, when her daughter hid from the German labor conscription, the Ukrainian woman who gave shelter to Abram and Mikhail Melamud, and to eight other Jews, asked them to leave, fearing that both the Jews and her daughter would be discovered. Abram Melamud and his son started walking towards Transnistria. On the outskirts of Derazhnya, 30 km east from Proskurov, they were spotted by a young Ukrainian girl, who betrayed them to a policeman. The policeman led Abram and Mikhail Melamud to Gestapo, the Nazi police office. By a miracle, the father and son were not killed. They became imprisoned. From April 1943 until March 1944, Abram Melamud, a skilled tailor, sewed for the Nazis. In compensation, the Nazis gave food to the tailor and his son. In March 1944, when the Soviet Army approached Proskurov oblast, a Ukrainian guard helped the prisoners to escape. By obscure luck, it seems that the Nazis spared the lives of Abram Melamud and his son because, by 1943, no skilled laborers were left in Derazhnya.³² After the liberation, Abram and Mikhail Melamud returned to Proskurov, Ukraine.³³

The approximately sixty Jewish men, women and child survivors who returned to Proskurov after its liberation in 1944 were not wealthier, cleverer or more educated than the 16,000 other Jews of Proskurov who perished in the Holocaust. Why were they the ones chosen to outlive the murder of their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and children, they do not know. During the process of my research, I had the honor of corresponding with twelve Holocaust Survivors from Proskurov oblast, who now live in Israel and in the United States. The memory of their sufferings and of those who did not live to see the

day of the liberation brings back unbearable grief and anguish until the present day. All of the individuals with whom I corresponded pulled their lives together, created families, and lived with dignity after the War. In my eyes, the men and women who survived the Holocaust in Proskurov oblast are true heroes and heroines.

NOTES

¹ The Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory, USHMM archives, RG-22.002M, Reel 2, (original in the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF), fond 7021, opis 64, delo 792).

² The Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory.

³ "Soviet Union," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. Israel Gutman, 4 vols, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1990.

⁴ P. M. Shkrobot, "Navichno v Pam'yati Narodniy," ed. A. G. Filiniuk, *Plaskyryv. Proskuryv. Khmel'nyts'kyi. 1493-1993* (Khmelnytskyi: Podillia, 1993) 53.

⁵ The list of the inmates of the ghetto and concentration camps, who belong to the Khmelnitskiy Oblast Organization, signed by Boris Levin, September 11, 1994, lists 47 survivors (Collection of Ben Weinstock). However, according to Lyusya Blekhman, approximately fifty-five to sixty Jews returned to Proskurov after the liberation. They frequently gathered in the house of Blekhmana. Some of the survivors did not live in Proskurov after the war. Hence they would not have registered their names with the Khmelnitakiy Oblast Organization. Etya B., letter to the author, 8 January, 2000; Lyusya Blekhman, personal interview, 14 October, 2000; Hana Vaiskop, testimony, RG 03-3766, Yad Vashem Archives, Israel, 1973, 13.

⁶ Morris Erger (a Hungarian Jew who worked in the forced-labor battalion in Proskurov oblast), letter to the author, 25 December 2000. Veniamin Grinberg, personal interview, audiocassette, New York, 7 January, 2001; Hana Vaiskop, 10; Eva Okaman, audiocassette, donated to the author, January, 2001.

⁷ Veniamin Grinberg.

⁸ Veniamin Grinberg; Klara Melamud, telephone interview concerning her husband, Mikhail Melamud, a holocaust survivor, 21 January, 2001; Eva Okaman; Hana Vaiskop, 10.

⁹ Eva Oksman.

¹⁰ Veniamin Grinberg; Klara Melamud; Eva Oksman; Hana Vaiskop, 10.

¹¹ Klara Melamud.

¹² Hana Vaiskop, 11.

¹³ Hana Vaiskop, 11-13.

¹⁴ Tatyana Uzenkel, letter to the author, December 2000.

¹⁵ S. Yu. Kolodiy, protocol of interrogation, Security Service Archives of the Khmel'nitskiy Region, No. 1, opis 23, delo 932, case # 1829, 1944, personal communication with Vadim Altman, archivist at USHMM.

¹⁶ Tatyana Uzenkel.

¹⁷ The ghettos of Mikhalpol, Zinkov, Letichev, Medzhibozh, Derazhnya, Yarmclintsy and other nearby towns have been liquidated by November 1942. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock, The Road from Letichev, Comp. David A. Chapin and Ben Weinstock (San Jose: Writer's Showcase presented by Writer's Digest, 2000), 673-744; Eva Oksman; Shura Detinskaya, personal interview, 7 January, 2001.

¹⁸ Dalia Ofer, "The Holocaust in Transnistria, a special case of genocide," The Holocaust in the Soviet Union, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993) 133-154; "Transnistria," Encyclopedia of the Holocaust. Ed. Israel Gutman. 4 vols. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company. 1990.

¹⁹ Dalia Ofer, "The Holocaust in Transnistria, a special case of genocide," The Holocaust in the Soviet Union, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993) 133-154; "Transnistria," Encyclopedia of the Holocaust. Ed. Israel Gutman. 4 vols. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company. 1990; "Romania," The Oxford Companion to World War II, ed. I. C. B. Dear (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1995.

²⁰ Veniamin Grinberg; Iosif Groysman, interview, dir. Maks Voskoboynik, audiocassette, San Francisco, 2 January, 2001.

²¹ Lyusya Blekman, interview, dir. Mikhail Fudin, videocassette, The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, 17 May, 1998.

²² Hana Vaiskop, 11.

²³ Etya B.

²⁴ Etya B.; Lyusya Blekhan (the Blekhan family, including Sima Blekhan and Fika (Lindenboym), survived); Moishe Einhorn (originally from Medzhibozh); Veniamin Grinberg; Isid Groyzman; Hana Vaiskop. Sheyva Zeltaer also fled from Proskurov and survived in Transnistria (Lyusya Blekhan, personal interview, 14 October, 2000).

²⁵ Etya Tsalevich, 4-5.

²⁶ Etya Tsalevich, 10-14. Etya (Galya) Tsalevich, telephone interview, 26 December, 2000.

²⁷ Klara Melamud.

²⁸ Eva Okaman.

²⁹ Hana Vaiskop, 11.

³⁰ The Soviet State Extraordinary Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes Committed on the Soviet Territory.

³¹ For a descriptive account of Ukrainian conscription and labor in Germany, see Rubinstein, Donna. I am the Only Survivor of Krasnostav. New York: Shengold Publishers, 1982. The young Gentiles in Proskurov not only chose to hide from conscription but were urged to do so by the local underground organizations (Shkrobot, 48-52).

³² The Jews of Derazhnya were murdered in September 1942. Chapin A. David and Ben Weinstock, 744.

³³ Klara Melamud.

CONCLUSION

The Nazi Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. The few Jews who succeeded in evacuating to the east Soviet Union before the Nazis have entered Proskurov gradually returned home.¹ A few Jewish men and women, along with the Soviet people of other nationalities, came back from the front alive.² The Jews from Proskurov came back to the city where their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers were murdered. The Soviet Union suffered tremendous human and physical losses during the War. Over twenty million people perished. Nine million of them were soldiers.³ In the consciousness of every Soviet child born after the war, the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945, stands as the greatest tragedy in history. The courage of the Soviet men and women who served in the War is glorified forever. Yet the chapters of Jewish history are erased from the Soviet textbooks. Today, three monuments, established by the Jewish people after the War, commemorate the Jewish life that once was in Proskurov.

NOTES

¹ The exact number of the people who succeeded in evacuating from Proskurov and returned to the city after the War is not known. The following individuals or their relatives stated to me that the following persons fled from Proskurov, June 22-July 7: the family of Shopse Shteyner and his daughter Bazya Shteyner with children; the family of Boris Froysheter; the family of Chaim Royzen; the family of Grigoriy Sheynberg; the family of Samuil Margulis; Reva Sigal and her parents; Fanya Shnayder and her parents; Yakov Birman and his parents; Vera Grinberg and her parents; Roman Inker and his parents; Meir Sheydvasser and his parents; Bronya Parnes and her daughter Rita (now Inker); Rahel Sigal (Tsessarskiy), her mother, and brother; the mother of Isaif Groyzman and his three sisters; Sheyndl Grinberg (the mother of Veniamin Grinberg); Maria Roytburg. Some evacuees who lived in small towns in Proskurov area before the war, settled in the city after they returned from evacuation.

² The exact number of the Jewish people who came back from the front alive is not known. The following men came back from the front: Chaim Blekhman, Boruch Broyde,

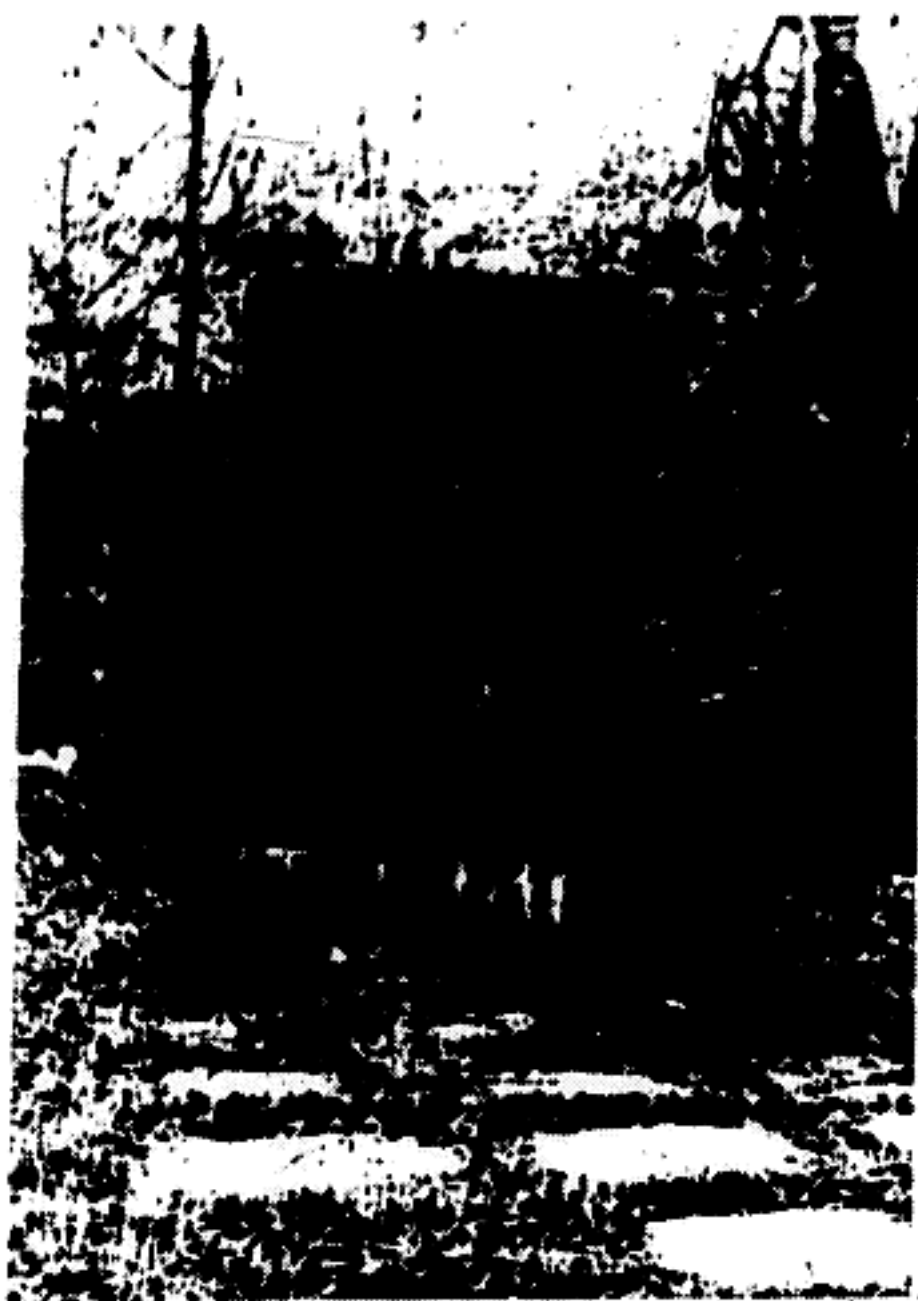
Gersh Ivankovitsar, Yefim Lerner, Iosif Neyman, Grigoriy Sheynberg, Boris Voskoboynik. Emma Drakhter, telephone interview, 29 September, 2000; Gersh Ivankovitsar, letter to the author, 16 October, 2000; Yefim Lerner, personal interview concerning his late wife Sima Lerner (Blethman), a holocaust survivor, audiocassette, New York, 16 December, 2000; Iosif Neyman, letter to the author, 17 December, 2000; Sonya Shteyner, telephone interview, 4 October, 2000.

³ "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 32 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998).



Courtesy of Rita (Lina) Inkse

*The monument in Proskurov commemorates the victims
of the pogrom of February 15, 1919*



courtesy of Biba (Annie) Inker

The monument in Ruzhichnoye commemorates
6,000 Jews of Proskurov who were murdered
there on November 4, 1941.



courtesy of Rita (Mrs) Laker

The monument at Lezpevo commemorates more than 7,000 Jews of Proskurov and nearby towns who were murdered there in December, 1942. The placard reads: "To the victims of Fascism" (Шептунівська громада)

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