



## THAT WE NOT FORGET

# The Nazis enter Rozhishch

JUNE 22, 1941, THE GERMANS COME TO ROZHISHCH

told by Berl (Dov) Schneider.

On their first day in town, the Germans killed ten Jews, among them Shlomo Klimbrod and Mottel Bronfn. The following day, they ordered the Jews to gather in front of the Gornstein theatre. Several hundred Jews came and arranged themselves as if for a parade. An order was issued for them to turn in the arms they possessed, but the Jews had no arms. On that day the Germans did not physically hurt people. They ordered us to run home. It was forbidden to walk. People were sped on their way by sharp blows from rifle butts.

The following day, they took Koppleman and killed him in the cruellest fashion imaginable. The Jews were ordered to gather in the marketplace while the Germans selected a Judenrat (council of Jews). A Jewish police unit was also appointed. They wanted to make me a policeman, but I paid the Judenrat five thousand rubles not to force me into that position.

In about a week, Gestapo people came, rounded-up some eighty of the town elite, educated and influential people. They said they were taking them away to work. These people never returned, and to this day their fate is not known.

About eight days after that, they took several hundred young people away to "work". These, too, did not return. The third time they took even old men and children over the age of twelve. Only women and small children and those who had managed somehow to evade the three actions remained.

The local commandant said that these people had been sent to work in remote locations, and that now there would be order. From time to time, the Germans demanded that furs and leather were to be remitted to them, and these were handed over as demanded. Several months went by in relative tranquility.



## A CHILD WATCHES THE GERMANS ENTER ROZHISHCH

As told by **Zvi Roiter**

When the Germans entered the city, the Jews took cover. I, as a child sat with Ukrainian neighbours watching the sight which struck terror into the hearts of the Jews. A motorcycle cavalcade of German soldiers came riding into Rozhishch, each with a trained wolfhound beside him.

The nationalist Ukrainians were happy at the coming of the Germans, and even fired at the backs of the retreating Russians. On that very day a few Jews were shot by the Germans. The following day several more Jews were taken to the marketplace and shot. Then panic overtook the Jewish population as the Ukrainian nationalists started going wild, victimizing Jews through robbery, extortion and cruelty.

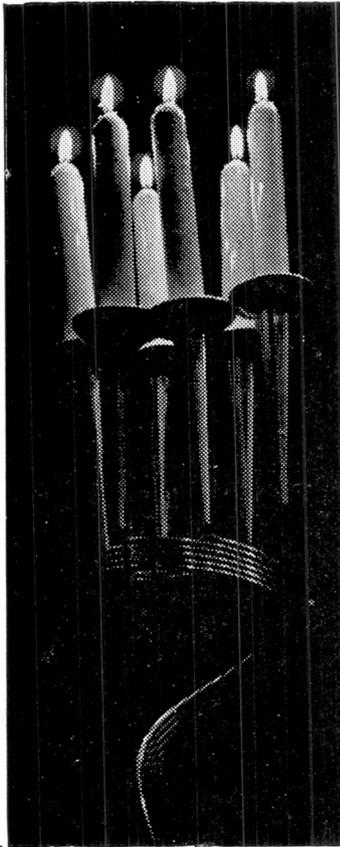
Different orders were issued every day. The Jews were ordered to relinquish their horses, cows, bicycles, radios, etc. A notice was published saying that people were required for work. At first people were taken in, and registered, however when the fate of those who had left for work became clear, the populace started hiding. Then the Germans would conduct a roundup — a siege. They would surround the town at night and in the morning would go from house to house and take the youths away for "work". In the third round-up they took my brother Haim and my uncle Motel Roiter together with his son Manny. My brother Bebe managed to escape after having been taken.

In the fourth roundup they took also old people and young children. My favourite brother Bebe hid among the cows and horses. The Ukrainian police found him. Bebe jumped onto one of the grazing horses, and started off in the direction of the fields, but a policeman, on horseback too, caught him.

Those captured, and Bebe among them, were killed and all buried together in one pit. I had loved my brother Bebe very much and could not calm down. In my heart of hearts I believed that perhaps he was still alive. In the middle of the night, I took my cousin, and the two of us stole away to the pit. We heard the sighs and the groans of the dying, and I even recognized some of their faces. We did not find Bebe. We returned depressed and in despair. We did not dare tell our parents what we had done.

A Ukrainian family with whom we had been friendly, Tomashevitz, lived in the neighbourhood. Kola, the son, had come to ask how he could help us. Mother suggested that he join the police, and from there he would be able to help us. It was Kola who told us that all those captured, and among them Bebe, had been killed. He told us and he cried.

My brother Leibel who had escaped from the disintegrating Soviet army was captured immediately on his return to Rozhishch and nothing more has ever been heard of him.



## THE ROZHISHCH GHETTO

### Berl Schneider

After about four months of the German conquest, all the Jews were expelled from their homes and concentrated into a ghetto in the northern part of town, Oifen Barg, in conditions of inhuman crowding.

One morning the Germans came with a demand for 100 labourers. There were no longer many illusions. All understood that the intention was to kill those who reported. Policemen combed the houses, rounding up about 300 men. I was among these. They brought us to a yard and arranged us in two rows. The row on the left was ordered to run home, and those on the right ordered to remain. I was in the left hand row. We were chased by the Ukrainian policemen who beat us cruelly with their rifle butts. Those in the other line were taken away by train and never heard from again.

The food allocation in the ghetto was fifty grams of bread per person per day and nothing more. There were those who endangered themselves in order to obtain a loaf of bread and paid for this with their lives.

I looked for ways to obtain food to help save my family and as many as possible of those imprisoned in the ghetto from death by starvation. With a few friends, I organized a special operation which somewhat improved our economic situation. The two sons of Leibish Chaves and Benny Bronstein would steal out of the ghetto at nights in carts and go to Kovel. With the money we gave them, they bought items such as needles, thread, pins, etc. and other small but important commodities which had disappeared on the local market and were therefore, in great demand by the local villagers.

The people leaving the ghetto for work each morning would exchange these goods for bread and other foodstuffs, which they smuggled back into the ghetto in the evening at great risk. These foodstuffs saved many people from death by starvation.

One day the commandant came and demanded that he be given fifty rubles per person. As there were about 4,000 people in the ghetto, 20,000 rubles had to be collected. We went out in pairs to collect from those whom we knew to have money. The required sum was obtained, some people giving freely, others under a little pressure. I collected together with Reb Eliahu Pfeffer. At a meeting attended by many of the local notables, it was decided to bring 18,000 rubles to the commandant for fear that he would come forth with further demands if the entire sum was given him so easily.

When the money was brought to him, he immediately demanded another 20,000 rubles, and that in silver and gold coins. The Judenrat was forced to obtain this sum, too. When they brought it to him, the commandant told them that the money was all right but that they were not. And that night all the members of the Judenrat except Avrahamchik Geller and Yankel Krochmal were killed. The ghetto lasted for about eighteen months.



Berl Shneider with daughter.

## IN THE GHETTO

Zvi Roiter

People wandered the streets of the ghetto swollen with starvation. On being expelled to the ghetto we were permitted to take only what we could carry. All our property remained in our abandoned homes. Our family lived in Grandmother Kayla's house, together with another about 60 people. Those who were able to leave the ghetto in the mornings for enforced labour improved their lot because they came into contact with the Gentiles and sometimes received food in exchange for goods. It was forbidden to bring food of any kind in on returning to the ghetto, however, many took the risk and sometimes managed to bring in a loaf of bread or something.

Mother managed to have me join twelve labourers who had received permission to work in Baruch Priegal's Untern Brick wool factory. We would leave the ghetto in the morning and return in the evening. It was forbidden for Jews to walk on the sidewalks. We walked on the road marked with patches on our clothing.

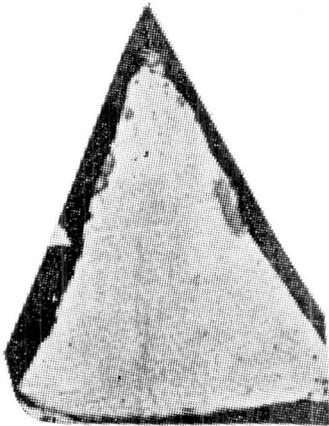
I would sometimes sell a ring, a garment or cloth to the Gentiles and in exchange for this I would bring in a slice of bread, a little flour, some oil. Once I tried to bring two bottles of oil hidden in the sleeves of my coat into the ghetto. A Ukrainian policeman found the oil, beat me and took me to the police station. At the entrance to the station, I had to pass between two rows of policemen who beat me cruelly with their sticks, and afterwards I was thrown, injured, to the cellar.

During the night, the cellar gate was suddenly opened and I heard someone calling me. It was Kola, our Ukrainian friend now serving with the police. He took me out of the cellar, put me on his bike and brought me back to the ghetto. He had saved me from certain death.

Kola, who was a real friend to our family would warn us of what was about to happen. One day when we returned from work we noticed suspicious movement among the Ukrainian police. When I passed Kola's house, he came out and told me to run away. He said that I should tell those in the ghetto that this was their last day.

This knowledge spread through the ghetto and many tried to escape. But they encountered the guard which had already encircled the ghetto and shot anyone approaching the fence. It was announced over the loudspeakers that all were to gather at the Village Council House (Gmina).

Kola came, put my sister on his bike and brought her to the attic of his home. He later returned and took my mother to a village bordering the ghetto. Together with Mottel Dolgopoluk and his two brothers-in-law and the Priegal family, I managed to reach the banks of the Styr. Although there was a heavy guard on the bridge, Lozer Priegal and I managed to drag a boat which was under the bridge. We transported people, some of whom did not know



how to swim, to the other side of the Styr. That night we hid in the wool in the attic of the factory.

At dawn we started to flee to the fields in the direction of the village of Dubishtsh. We heard the Gentiles saying, "Today we will bury the Jews."

## DESTRUCTION OF THE GHETTO

### Berl Schneider

Every morning I would leave the ghetto for work. My six year old daughter asked me many times to take her with me. On the Friday before the destruction of the ghetto, my daughter again begged me to take her with me, and my wife, too, urged me to do so. I took her, but left her in the village of Kopachivka at the home of a Polish farmer because her feet had blistered badly during the long walk. When I came to pick her up to take her home, the Pole suggested that we spend the night there, as the child was unable to walk. During the night, the Pole came to me and told me that "something bad" was about to happen. That they had taken people to dig a pit. I ran back in the direction of the ghetto to try to rescue my wife and two other children who were there.

When I reached the railway crossing, I met several Jews who had fled the ghetto. They told me not to go into the fire, but to return to the girl, as I would be unable to help at all in the ghetto. I was torn in two. I did not know what to do. If I were to return to the ghetto and be lost with my wife and two children what would happen to the girl. If I were to go to the girl, perhaps I could save her and remain alive. I returned to my daughter.

The Pole treated us well, but was afraid to keep us as this would be dangerous both for us and for him. I took the child and went towards the village of Zalistitz and entered the nearby forest, but the child did not want to stay there. That night we came to the home of Gentile acquaintances who gave us food, but were not prepared to hide us. They were afraid. One said to me: "Hitler will destroy all the Jews. Go back to the ghetto and rest together with all your family in one grave."

I roamed around with the child without sleep and without rest.



## THE BITTER END

### Eva Tuzhinska Trauenstein

On March 11, 1940 I received work at Pharmacy No. 8 in Rozhishch. This was under the Soviet regime and again it seemed as though we were quite settled. I could keep the family modestly with my salary. My husband, too, received work as a bookkeeper in a restaurant. Our son, Lunek, five years old and developed beyond his age, started studying with a private tutor.

One evening, I was sent for to come to the police station where a policeman told me that I was to submit details to the NKVD of what went on at the pharmacy. The policeman, whose pistol was lying on the table in front of him so that I should understand the hint, added that things would not be good if I did not fill this role and did not keep what I was doing secret.

I returned home broken. They wanted to force me to be an informer. A few times, I was forced by threats to come to the police station late at night. I was very frightened, but they did not manage to get anything out of me. Finally, the rude policeman started cursing and insulting me, spat on the floor and threw me out of the room.

One morning, a woman came to the pharmacy weeping bitterly and asked for nitroglycerine for her husband who was very ill. This medicine had been out of stock for some time, and without knowing who her husband was, I decided to travel to the distant Lvov against the advice of the manager of the pharmacy and contrary to my husband's wishes, and in spite of the difficulties involved in travel in those days, to try to obtain the medicine and save the patient.

I learned afterwards that the patient was a Pole, Dobrovolski, who raised pigs and earned very little.

That very evening I went by train to Lvov, and with great effort I obtained the medicine and returned to Rozhishch, arriving at four in the morning. I brought the medicine to the patient who lay in bed, mortally ill.

A few days afterwards an old man, tall and toothless except for one tooth, prominent in his upper jaw, entered the pharmacy, gave me his hand and said, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will never forget what you did for me. I will try to pay you back for that."

At the time I didn't attribute any importance to what he said, however I quickly found out how fateful this event was to prove to be.

On June 21, 1940 bombs fell. A new war had broken out between Germany and Russia. When, two days later Germans appeared on the streets, we were all overcome with fear. Our friends advised us to flee to the USSR, but my husband, my mother and I too, were afraid of suffering and starvation and we didn't

**Eva Tuzhinska Trauenstein** — a pharmacist from Galicia who had escaped with her family on the approach of the Germans, and who, after much suffering reached Rozhishch, where her uncle worked as a pharmacist. Here, under the Soviet regime, she received work in a pharmacy. Her story is registered in Yad V'Shem in Jerusalem. The following is the section of it dealing with her sojourn in Rozhishch.

have the strength to start wandering again. We decided to remain in Rozhishch.

On the third day of the German occupation, the pharmacy was re-opened. At noon that day, a tall German in uniform entered. I stood in panic. It seemed that his face was familiar, but I couldn't place it. Suddenly, he opened his mouth. I saw the one tooth, prominent on his upper jaw. I knew this was the husband of the woman who had so desperately cried for help. He spoke to me in German and told me not to be afraid, that he had come to tell me that he would keep his promise, as I had rescued him from death. He said I was to come to him should I be in distress. His name was Forst and it turned that he was Volksdeutsch and was now the district commandant (Kreisleiter).

From time to time shooting was heard in the streets. An SS man occasionally came into the shop ordering us to give him eggs, eau de cologne and other goods and he would say in faltering Polish that people would be taken away to do forced labour, that things would be very bad, but only for the Jews. His words rang in my ears incessantly.

One day two Germans burst into our house shouting, "Where are the men?" We replied that they had run away a long time ago and that we were Polish. My husband was sitting in his hiding place all this time. It became more and more difficult to obtain food.

Rumours started reaching us that all the Jews were going to be concentrated in one part of the town, in a ghetto. The Nazis made searches, expropriating furs, valuables and shoe leather, and afterwards an order was issued to move to the ghetto within two hours. Everyone was permitted to take with him as many clothes and other articles as he could carry. Nothing more. We took what we could and my husband, my mother, my son and I arrived at the ghetto gate.

We saw German soldiers beating, kicking and torturing the Jews as they arrived. I was overcome with terror that one of my family would be hurt. Then I saw Forst on horseback, looking at us. I don't know how it happened, but we passed through the gate without being touched by the German soldiers.

We entered the small house to which we were allocated. It had one room and a kitchen and was crowded with people. There wasn't even room to stand up. My mother cried. My husband and I stood up the whole night, leaning on the wall. We eventually were given a room in the building where the Judenrat was located. Here too, several families lived, but nonetheless the crowding was less intense.

I was ordered to go back to work in the pharmacy. Every day I walked the long road from the ghetto to the town, dressed in my coat with its yellow patch. In the evening I would return with baskets laden with food and we would distribute it among all the "residents" of the room, more than twenty people, not counting the children. Smuggling food in was dangerous and difficult. Once



Eva Tuzhinska-Trauenstein

Forst came to the ghetto. He gave us a loaf of bread and some sugar. Sometimes he would visit the pharmacy as well, and he always brought some foodstuffs with him.

From time to time the Judenrat was ordered to provide people to be sent to "labour", however, many did not return and the rumour was that they had been shot and killed. I decided to take my mother and son out of the ghetto and to hide them in the pharmacy. Mother left the ghetto with a group of women sweeping the streets, and we smuggled my son out after dark under the barbed wire fence. Miraculously, he was not shot at. I returned to the ghetto each evening with my husband.

The Judenrat was fined for not having supplied the required quota of people for work. The sum was enormous, and the Jews, in despair, gave their last resources. In the meanwhile, the Germans had taken the members of the Judenrat hostage as a guarantee that the sum would be found. Among those being led away I recognized Spector, Bruner, Klimbord and Kleisman. At the end of the file was my husband, who was not a member of the Judenrat, but had been working in their office by chance. He was taken together with the rest.



The Nazis raised the sum of the "contribution", and demanded a large quantity of shoe leather and goods. I ran to the district commandant to try to have my husband released, but could not find him. I went to the new Judenrat, but they told me that they must try to liberate all their members and not just my husband.

I even managed to get into the basement of the jail and to talk with my husband. Days of great tension passed. The money and the gold were found. On August 10, 1942, they managed to bring the required quantity of leather from the surrounding villages.

At the police station I was told that my husband and all the prisoners would be released the following day. However the next day I learned that all of them had been shot. And my husband along with all the rest.

"You no longer have a father," I told my son. He did not cry. He said, "Just you and me, me and you, are left in this world." And the boy, aged six and a half, threw himself on my neck.

Broken-hearted and in despair, I ran to the police and although it was forbidden for me to enter, they could not hold me back. I asked that they at least release my husband's body to me so that I could bury him. But they refused telling me that in another few days everything would be over.

The following day a German came to the pharmacy, and asked for a medicine for the police commander. He told me that the commander had extracted the gold teeth from the mouths of the members of the Judenrat, and was hurt while extracting a full set of gold teeth which he found on the upper jaw of one of them. The bottle of medicine fell out of my hands. My husband had a full set of gold upper teeth.

August 20th, 1942 — 2:00 a.m. I awoke to the sound of people walking. I went to the window and saw a long, long line of figures plodding ahead. In the dark I could not ascertain whether they were soldiers or civilians. The "walk" lasted a long time, and with the light of morning I recognized the Jews of the ghetto walking with their children, with pickaxes and small spades in their hands, walking quietly — for that was the order. My blood froze at this sight. At 3:30 a.m., the walk ended and in about an hour the sound of machine gun fire reached my ears. At 11 a.m. I saw some eight or ten trucks coming from the direction of the ghetto, loaded with clothing and shoes.

When Forst came to the pharmacy that day he asked me why I was not in the ghetto with all my family. I replied that although I had been married to a Jew, I was not a Jewess. I don't know where I found the strength to make that reply with such calm and assurance. My mother and son were hidden in the basement and from time to time I brought them bread and tea. They sat in the dark, unable to move.

The following day a German came to take me in a wagon to Lutsk to buy more medicines for the pharmacy. When we had gone a few kilometers out of town, I saw a long hillock of ash at the roadside. I heard sighs of people and I saw the earth of the hillock shudder...

The German who was with me in the cart said, "The Jews of the ghetto were exterminated here. They are still sighing, gasping and moving in their places."

Terrible days passed. I was strenuously interrogated about my son. I claimed that he was not Jewish, that his real father was a Christian.

On December 22, Forst came to me in secret and told me that he had been thinking of how to repay me for having saved his life. He said that the time had now come. "On December 26th, they are going to kill your son. Save yourself, get out of here."

He prepared a cart for us and on the evening of December 24th, we left Rozhishch to start on a new road of tribulations.

On 10 Elul, towards the end of August, 1942, the Rozhishch ghetto was annihilated and with it, almost its entire Jewish population. Those escaping this fate were few, and had done so under extraordinary circumstances. There were the few who were serving in the Red Army or the Polish Free Army which was organized in Russia, and those whose escape had been a matter of mere chance, as in the cases of Zvi Roiter, Avraham Prigal, Berl Schneider, Faige Sher and some others. After the ghetto had been destroyed those few individuals who remained had nowhere to go, no sources of sustenance, and were in constant search for shelter of the most rudimentary nature. They were constantly being hunted like wild animals by the local Ukrainians as well as by the dreaded Nazis. Their lives became one series of fear, degradation, humiliation, dread, anguish and sheer physical danger. Those who managed to survive did so because of their strong desire to remain alive, and they were sometimes assisted by those few among the local Gentiles who were willing to help them. They became nomads of the desolation which was Poland under Nazi occupation, fleeing from one hideout to the next like hunted animals.

## THE LAST KOL NIDRE IN TROCHIMBROD

**Avraham Prigal** — As Yom Kippur approached, my parents decided to come out of our hiding place in the woods and to go and pray at the Trochimbrod Synagogue come what may. The ghetto in Trochimbrod had not yet been destroyed. We arrived at the Synagogue shortly before Kol Nidre and were received unwillingly by the local Jews. They feared that their fate would be endangered by the coming of so many Jews from their various hiding places to the town. All of whom had felt the need to be united with Jews on this solemn occasion.

**Zvi Roiter** — The Yom Kippur sermon, given by Shimon the Shochet was "May we not go like lambs to the slaughter. May there still be some who will rise up."

Suddenly, a girl was heard to shout, "Jews, the Germans have surrounded us." Panic followed, and people started scattering in all directions. Shortly afterwards they returned to the Synagogue, as there were no Germans in the vicinity. It had been a false alarm.

**Avraham** — That night we saw that the town had been surrounded by Germans and their Ukrainian assistants, My parents told me, my brother, and Zvi to run away. We had just left the yard when my brother was hit with a bullet which tore the flesh from his arm.

The following morning German and Ukrainian policemen came and took a group of several tens of people. I was among the group. We were given shovels and led to a spot at a distance from the town. A German drew the hole which we were to dig.

While we were being led away, one boy tried to organize resistance. He told us that when the Germans ordered us to dig, we should resist. When the order was given, this boy did not dig, but raised his pickaxe, hit the policeman in the face with it and downed him. He took the policeman's rifle away from him and shot at a German policeman on horseback. Great confusion ensued, with Germans, Jews and Ukrainians all mixed together. This prevented the Germans with machine guns from firing into the group.

**Zvi** — We fled in the direction of the forest, with some forty of the fifty people in the group reaching it. The boy who had sparked the rebellion was killed before reaching safety. But thanks to his act of bravery, some forty people who had already dug graves for themselves were saved.

## IN HIDING

### Zvi Roiter



At night, we managed to reach the fields, where we paid a Gentile of our acquaintance to take us hidden in a hay-filled wagon to the village of Olyshkevitsch. We stole into the hay in a barn. Towards morning, we were discovered by a servant. The shock was so great that I was unable to speak. The servant approached me, and left. Shortly afterwards he returned to the hayloft bringing with him my sister, Mindel, who fainted on seeing me. By sheer chance, we had arrived at the place where Kola had found safety for Mindel.

When Kola, our Ukrainian friend, had found that he was no longer able to keep my sister safely at his home, he had brought her to the Soltys (elder) of the village, a German, and had paid him some of the money we had given him so that the elder would keep Mindel safely.

It took me six days to recover from the shock. We were now three, Avraham, Mindel and myself. One Sunday morning we heard shots. Two wagonloads of Ukrainians entered the farmyard and told the Soltys that they had heard that he was sheltering Jews. At the time we were hiding in a hole in the yard which the servant had covered with garbage. The owner plied his "visitors" with drink until they became quite drunk, after which they made a perfunctory examination of the hay loft, and convinced that no Jews were there, left the farm. We later learned that Kola had been among them, and that it had been he who had fired the shots before entering the yard, with the intention of giving us a warning signal. This hideout, we then realized, had become dangerous both for us and the owner, and we departed to look for another shelter.

We returned to our former home, which was now occupied by Ukrainians, whom we knew to be Jew-haters. However, we persuaded them to accept payment to hide us in a pit under their floor. We remained there for about two weeks until we overheard the owner plotting to kill us, and so at night we ran away, looking for still another shelter.

We went to the village of Kirilucha, where the Ukrainians were reputed to treat Jews well. There we went to the home of an acquaintance who was pleased to learn that we were still alive. He agreed to provide a hiding place for my sister. It later turned out that hiding in his home was a "German deserter". This "German deserter" was Baruch Kleinman, a Jew from Katovitz, and he is now my brother-in-law, married to my sister Mindel.

Avraham and I moved on through various places where, here we were given food, there shelter, all in exchange for payment, until we came to a Polish village where there were partisans. Here we cooperated with the Poles in their revenge actions against the Germans. It was here too that I learned my mother's fate. A Ukrainian who had agreed to hide her for payment, took the money and her belongings and then killed her in a field.

And so the years passed, with our moving from one shelter to the other. Finally, the Red Army defeated the Germans and I returned to Rozhishch. I, together with another few boys enlisted in the National Guard.

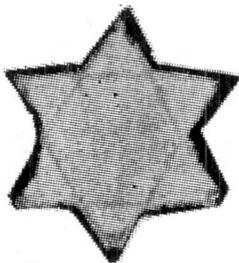
A group of seven of us who had still been children when the Nazis came, formed a revenge organization. We were encouraged by Bukin, a Jew from Kiev who was the deputy commander of Rozhishch. With his informal approval we borrowed horses from the NKVD, and at nights we would hound those whom we knew had been especially vicious to the Jews, burning their houses and forcing them into hiding. Later, the government put a stop to these activities, having their own means of dealing with the nationalists and collaborators.



## WANDERING

### Zipporah Rosen (Faige Sher)

When the ghetto was destroyed, I was working together with my daughter Rachel and my seven year old son, Kuni, gathering turf which was being dried and sent to Germany as heating fuel. One day the Soltys of the village in which we were working ordered all the Jews to gather together in one house. Immediately afterwards a truck filled with German and Ukrainian policemen arrived. We realized that destruction was in the offing, as there had already been rumours of the liquidation of Jewish communities in the surrounding area. When I saw the trucks approach, I called to the two children to quickly hide in the grain fields, where I, too, hid. When the trucks with the murderers had passed, I came out of hiding in shock and started running through the night looking for my children. The next morning I found Rachel near the village dairy, but Kuni, aged seven, was nowhere. He had been taken by the murderers.



Now our period of wandering began. Most of the Gentiles did not want to give us shelter or food. Most of them chased, threatened, and murdered Jews hiding in the fields or the woods. But there were a few, who despite the great risk and self-sacrifice sometimes involved helped as much as they could. We suffered many disappointments. Former "friends" turned their backs on us, but we did find encouragement here and there. The Seventh Day Adventists, generally speaking, were sympathetic towards us and gave us help, as did those with a communist past, who opposed the Nazis with all their hearts.

With the assistance of these few sympathetic Gentiles, we were able to manage to survive, sometimes hiding in the granary of one farm, sometimes in the forest, sometimes elsewhere, always moving when it was suspected that the Germans had learned of our hiding places. When we had no shelter, we slept in the fields. We would steal out at nights and forage a few vegetables from gardens. This was our only source of food. We were afraid to pump water from the wells for fear that the creaking of the wheels would give us away.

While we were staying in the fields outside the village of Libtsch, sleeping among the bushes, the German and Ukrainian policemen conducted searches by torchlight at night. We would lean as close as possible to the trees without moving. This was hard in the fierce cold and snow of the winter, without warm clothing or shoes.

For nearly three years we lived like animals, chased by hunters, without clothes, without shoes, without the possibility of washing, without the hope that this nightmare would ever end.

Finally after the war, I was able to renew communication with members of my family who had emigrated from Poland before the war; with my mother and sister and brother in the United States and

with my brothers in Brazil and in Eretz Israel. My brother, Avner Rachmieli, was at that time a soldier in the Jewish Brigade serving in Italy. He sent people to bring us from Poland to Austria and from Austria to Italy. From Naples he put us on an "illegal immigration" ship which brought us finally to Eretz Israel.

## PERSECUTION BY UKRAINIANS

### Sarah Zuckerman

My mother, who in the days of the ghetto worked as a cook for the Germans in charge of roadworks, was warned by a slightly human German that the ghetto was about to be annihilated. Therefore she, my brother Asher and my cousin Sarah and I fled to the Ouzhovo forest where many Jews were in hiding, among them a couple, the Baumels. This couple had given their small daughter to a Polish family for safe-keeping. She lives with them to this day, her parents having been killed in the forest.

The Ukrainians used to chase the escaping Jews, take their clothing and valuables from them and afterwards stab them to death or turn them over to the Germans. The Jews dispersed in small groups, looking for ways of joining the Jewish partisans known to be in the region. My brother, Asher, also joined them. Mother and I hid in the barn of a Pole, whom we paid with clothing. I would knit for his family in the winter, and mother worked in their fields in exchange for a little food.

When the struggle between the nationalist Ukrainians and the Poles started, owners of Polish farms would flee to town for safety at night, leaving us and other Jews to guard the farm and defend it in case of attack. One of the village people worked as a translator for the Germans, and he would bring us information of what was about to happen. Therefore, whenever a roundup was in the offing, we were able to find another hiding place for that particular day. And so we managed to remain alive.



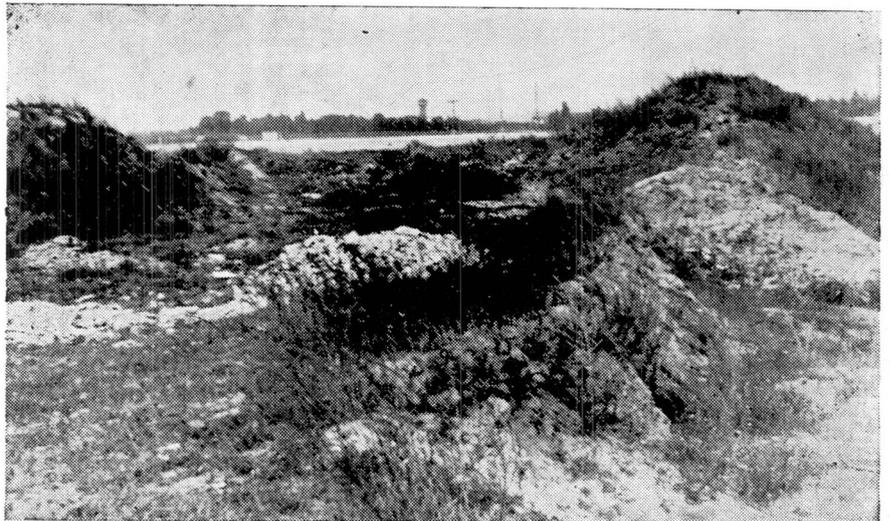
## MY SISTER CHARNA

### Shoshana Hadash

After my parents had been killed, only I and my older sister, Charna, who looked after me and kept me going, remained. We had lost all that was dear to us and continued living without hope. We looked for hiding places among the bushes in the forests. At night we would go foraging for a little food. We suffered starvation. The cold of winter was very hard on us. We would hide in piles of hay, hunted by both Germans and Ukrainians.

We continued existing in this way for more than two years, suffering without hope, because we fiercely wanted to remain alive. And indeed, we did live to see the Soviets return, and we believed that the end of our troubles and tribulations had come. But fate was cruel to us.

After the return of the Russians, Charna went to retrieve the family belongings from the Ukrainian family friend with whom they had been entrusted. The Ukrainian refused to return them, and apprehensive of further claims, cold-bloodedly murdered my sister Charna.



Common grave of the Jews of Rozhishch shot to their death, a few kilometers outside of town.

# The Extermination of the Jews in the Villages

## KOPACHIVKE

### By Moshe Rabin and a lady survivor

**Moshe Rabin** — The small Jewish community of Kopachivke consisted of some eighty families; merchants, storekeepers, small craftsmen, and even some landowners. They had a Rabbi, a shochet, and a local synagogue. The relations between the Jews and the local Gentile population, which was mostly Polish, had been very good until the outbreak of the war. In the days of the Soviets, the shops were all expropriated and the Jews became civil servants on a monthly salary.

**Lady survivor** — On the first day that the Germans came to our village, they came to our home, took my father and two other men and killed them beside the windmill. Later, we learned that before being shot they had been forced to dig themselves a pit with their own hands. All the Jews of Kopachivke ran away from their homes into the forest nearby.

The Ukrainians, who had been promised independence by the Germans, surrounded the forest, and started shooting in all directions, killing most of the Jews. Those who remained alive were afterwards sent to work by the village's Judenrat felling trees, digging pits and doing other physical labour. Their supervisors, the Volksdeutsche and the Ukrainians, tortured them and beat them mercilessly.

My sister had left all her property with a rich Pole who had been friendly with our family. When she came out of hiding to ask him for bread, he did give her and her two children shelter in his cowshed for about ten days. Then he went to the Gestapo telling them that Jews had hidden at his farm and were refusing to leave. Ukrainians came and killed them.

## CHETVERTNIA

### Fanya Rosenblatt

Our village was not far from Rozhishch. When the Germans came, they rounded up the Jews from a number of villages in the area and set up a ghetto there. The ghetto was destroyed on October 10, 1942. I am the only survivor of the Chetvertnia ghetto.

On the morning of October 10th, 1942, when my mother woke up, she noticed that policemen were stationed at the entrance to all the houses. The meaning of this was clear to her, and she woke

The fate of the Jews who had lived in the villages near Rozhishch differed only in details from that of the Rozhishch Jews.



us all up. My parents decided to hide me, and convinced me to get inside the sofa which they covered with some cushions. A few moments later, the police entered the house and took everyone out.

Four policemen then combed the house, and of course they found me. The older man among them, convinced the three young policemen to let me go. He told me where the Germans were and advised me to go in the opposite direction.

When I reached the fields, I saw two small girls leading cows to pasture. I picked up a stick and joined them. In this way I crossed the village to the pastures where there were bushes. I sat under the bushes immersed in thought. I was alone, aged 18, with no means of support, and I would have to hide out like a hunted animal. This was the longest day of my life.

As I was sitting, sunk in thought, a Ukrainian Seventh Day Adventist came by, gave me a slice of bread and his hand-woven blanket, and immediately left me. Seventh Day Adventists, too, were not particularly kosher in the eyes of the Germans, because of their reputation of being sympathetic to the Jews.

Previously, in the ghetto, one of the guards had told me that if ever anything should happen, I could turn to him, and perhaps he would be able to help me. As he was known as a drunkard and a brute, and because he had been given the job of guarding the Jews, I had not taken his offer very seriously. But in this moment of despair, I thought of him. Then I knew exactly what I was going to do. I would go to him at nightfall. He would surely turn me over to the Germans, and that was exactly what I wanted at that point. I saw no other way out.

When night came, I put the blanket I had been given over my head, peasant style, and started towards Korney's (his name). Suddenly, I saw a figure advancing towards me. It was Korney. He had been given the task of guarding the property left behind by the Jews. He told me to sit in the bushes until his watch was over when he would come to take me. He took off his fur coat and gave it to me to wear. When he came to fetch me he told me that no one must know that I was with him, and that although he would hide me in his home, he would not even tell his wife and children about me.

He put me in his attic and brought me food and drink every day. He used various pretexts to obtain the food from his neighbours and friends so that he need not take it from his home thus arousing his family's suspicions. As he was a type people feared, he always got what he wanted. I, therefore, had an abundance of food.

One day, he told me he had a good plan for me. He had learned that someone in the neighbouring village had found a girl's passport. The man had agreed to sell it to Korney. As my family had owned a large store, Korney felt that they must have cached something away with someone. We decided to restore some of my family's property in order to pay for the passport.



Fanya Rosenblat.

We waited until night, and left together, I, with my blanket on my head. I went to the village priest, who was very surprised to see me, and who ordered that everything be returned to me. Only in one place did I meet with an absolute refusal. But Korney dealt with that, and my property was restored.

I didn't sleep all that night, wondering whether Korney would succeed in obtaining my document for me. The following morning he brought me the passport. My new name was Nina Fumin. The document bore no photograph and was signed with a thumb impression.

Then Korney unfolded his plan for me. He had an uncle who was a village elder for the Germans in a village some twenty kilometers from Rozhishch. As I didn't look Jewish, he would take me to his uncle, tell him that I was the daughter of his brother who lived in Russia. He would say that I had escaped from a train bringing Russian youth to forced labour in Germany, and that I had made my way to him. As he felt it was unsafe to keep me, for fear that the Germans would question him, he had brought me to his uncle.

To this day, I still wonder why Korney undertook the tremendous risk to help me. I think he regarded it as a challenge which only he was capable of carrying out.

On the way to the village, Korney boned me up on all the family details. My new "aunt and uncle" received me gladly. They were pleased to have a niece, and they needed help on their farm. They congratulated Korney on his good sense at having brought me to them.

Although I knew nothing about farm work, I learned quickly, and when there were things I didn't know, I explained this away by claiming that in Russia we had done things differently.

I continued living with them as their niece, going to church, following all their customs, and being well regarded as a diligent worker.

The summer of 1943 marked a change in the relations between the Germans and the Ukrainians. The latter having organized into nationalistic bands, which acted against both the Germans and the Soviets, with the aim of establishing an independent Ukraine. The Germans enlisted the Poles in an effort to stop the nationalists, and indescribable chaos ensued, with the Ukrainian bands attacking the Poles at night, butchering entire families with knives and axes. The Poles retaliated by burning Ukrainian villages, killing all who chanced in their paths.

And so again I found myself in hiding in the forest. This time, as a Ukrainian. Shortly thereafter, I went to work as a housemaid for the locally born German, Julius, who was a good friend of my "uncle's." This Julius had been appointed by the Nazis to a high ranking position, and was infamous for his attitude to the Jews. When the Julius family moved to Rovno, they took me with them.



In December, 1943, the Germans were on the verge of defeat at the hands of the advancing Red Army. However, the Germans launched a massive counter-attack. That entire winter battles raged in the region. Everything in sight burned, the woods, the villages. The whole district was like a volcano. It was not until the end of March that the Russians finally took over.

I lost no time in leaving for Rozhishch in search of Jewish survivors. I found a number in one house. Most of them had managed to get to Rozhishch back in December when the Russians had taken control of the eastern banks of the Styr. Many were suffering from typhus. When they heard my story and that I had stayed so long working for the dreaded Julius, they found it hard to believe me, for he had been responsible for terrorizing all the Jews of the area.

Although I survived the war, fate was cruel to Korney on my account. Two Jews had met the Seventh Day Adventist who had given me his blanket on my first day alone. He told them that he had seen Korney with that blanket and had concluded that Korney had killed me. After the German retreat, the two Jews charged Korney with my death. Korney assured them that I was alive, but would not tell them of my whereabouts. The men refused to believe him and threatened to avenge my supposed death. Korney, fearing for his life, joined the Red Army. He was killed on the front during the heavy fighting.



The common grave on the road to Kopachivke for the six thousand Jews of Rozhishch and area murdered by the Nazis in 1942. The memorial was laid in 1945 by a group of survivors.

## BEREZOLUP

### Pnina Koren (Torchiniuk)

I was studying at high school in Lutsk when the Germans came. On the morning of June 22, 1941, I was awakened by a thunderous noise. The town was being bombed. My room-mate and I quickly left our rooms. Our teachers, who were all Soviets, told us to wait to be evacuated, but we preferred to return to our families. I went to my sister Hadassah's home. She lived on the other side of the town. The town was being continually bombed and we were under the impression that the Russians had abandoned the local populace, not even having supplied aerial defence.

My sister, who then was in the later stages of pregnancy, and I decided to make our way to our parents' home in Berezolup. There the Ukrainian nationalists were impatiently awaiting the Germans. Immediately after the conquest, they brought the Germans to our home, and all our valuables were confiscated.

The situation worsened from day to day. We were given all sorts of humiliating work to do. The militia men would say, "Up to now we have worked for you. Now we'll see how you work for us." We were forced to wear yellow patches on our backs and chests.

It was in this period that my sister, Hadassah, moved to her sister-in-law's home in Rozhishch, where she gave birth to a son. Unfortunately, the baby was circumcised.

A forced labour camp was soon set up by the Germans to which they brought Jews from a few surrounding villages. The people were housed in small decrepit huts, five families to a hut. The camp was run by Germans, Volksdeutsche and Jew-hating Ukrainians. Impossible to achieve work norms were established in order to provide an excuse for bestial beatings. The food consisted of 80 grams of bread and potato peel soup daily. After long hours of work, we were made to clean the camp in the evenings. When the commandant felt like a little amusement, he would order one of the prisoners to play the accordion, and we were forced to dance with the tools in our hands. This was a degrading, shocking and most painful experience. Particularly since there was no way whatsoever to stand up against it.

From time to time the camp lieutenant would issue a demand for valuables. Once, when all our sources of valuables had run out, he made a further demand for cloth and gold rings. My uncle, Shmuel Oxman, a very likable man with a lot of influence, went to the Lutsk ghetto to ask for help there. Taking our difficult circumstances into consideration, they gave him the things. My uncle was sure that now the Germans would stop harrassing us so much.

This matter of the demands, apparently reached the lieutenant's superiors, and he was reprimanded. Smarting at the rebuke, he called for my uncle and another man, ordered them to dig a hole, and when they had finished, he shot and killed them.



We existed with no connection with the outside world. From the time of my uncle's death, even the trips to the ghetto stopped. We lived in fear and anguish. Some Ukrainians who had known us previously provided us with a little encouragement in the form of food which they sneaked into the camp.

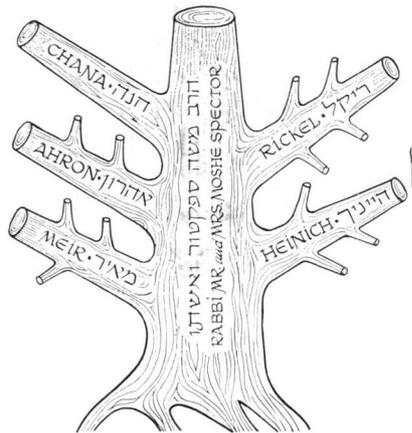
One day, I saw a truck loaded with women and children come from the camp and thought that I recognized my sisters in it. These were the most difficult moments of my life. I started towards the camp. Half-way there, I met my father. He said that my sisters Shoshana and Hadassah had probably hidden in the camp with a Seventh Day Adventist family. That night we found shelter in a stable and at dawn, I went to look for my mother who had the baby and my younger sister Shulamith. After many hours of searching I managed to find them. Afterwards I met my two other sisters on their way to the forest to look for a hide-out.

On my way back to father, I passed by our house, which was a shambles. I took some cloth and rings which mother had cached away, and continued to where my grandparents were living. Because their house was at some distance from the main road, the murderers had not found them. I begged them to come with me to the forest. They refused to move. They didn't want to start a new life of wandering without a future at their advanced age. Grandfather said, "You are a young girl and can be saved. Run away from here quickly." I left them with a broken heart. The following morning from the field where I was hiding I saw a truck approach the house and take my grandparents away.

I returned to father, and we went into hiding in bunkers which had remained in the forest from the First World War. My father had always been a proud man, with hopes, dreams and visions. Now he felt himself degraded, oppressed and desparate. On the other hand, he often tried to awaken the faith in us that the enlightened world and the Jews in Eretz Israel would not abandon us.

Throughout the time we were in hiding in the forest, we were given help in the form of food or clothing by a few Gentiles, sometimes at great risk to themselves. One day while foraging for food, we met a boy from Rozhishch. He was very depressed, a stranger in the area, and he had no place to hide. We brought him back to the granary where we were hiding at the time. When the farmer's wife brought us our food, and saw the boy, she started crying that we had brought her a stranger and another man, and that if she were to be caught, she would pay with her life. The youth left the attic, and started wandering around the village in the light of day. He said that he no longer had anything to lose. And, indeed, two days after this he was killed by the militia.

Slowly, we were overtaken by disasters. In one search, the militia found ten Jews, including my uncle, aunt and their two children and killed them. We started looking for other places of shelter after this. It was bitter cold, and Hadassah's baby never stopped crying. We were afraid he would give us away. We had



The Family Tree of Rabbi Moshe'le Spector. None survived, a fate common to most Jewish families.

no alternative but to return to the forest. On the very day of our return, the militia raided the forest. They found the opening to our bunker and ordered us to come outside. On hearing our name, they told us that they had heard that we were "good Jews" and that they would let us go. We were told to go far from the forest because searches were made there from time to time. Apparently the local peasant girls had mentioned our name favourably to the militia men, begging them not to hurt us.

It was clear to us that we would have to find another hiding place. Mother and Shula went to the village until things calmed down. In the meanwhile we were joined by the Spiegel family and three men from Rozhishch. It was decided that until we could organize properly for the winter, we would remain in the forest. My sister, Shoshana and I went out to the village to scavenge food. Because of a snowstorm we could not return to the forest. We separated and agreed to meet in the evening and then to return to the forest.

When I reached Shoshana with the food, she broke into tears and said that we no longer had anywhere to go back to. She had just been informed that there had been another raid in the forest and that everyone had been killed. I begged her to return with me to the forest to bury them, but she insisted that the Germans were surely in ambush awaiting the return of the other members of the family. She insisted we had better go to tell mother what had happened.

We had great trouble with Hadassah's baby. His fingers and toes froze. He cried a lot. We wandered from place to place, looking for shelter. No one would help us because they were afraid the baby's crying would give them away. After wandering around in this manner for about a month, Mother and Shoshana left the beautiful baby boy, aged one year and two months, asleep on the doorstep of a farm. A short time later, he was taken inside. But neighbours started gossiping about the baby and the matter reached the militia. The woman, on being interrogated, insisted the baby was the son of relatives and that she wanted to adopt him. They were not convinced, and finding the baby had been circumcised, snatched him out of her arms. He was shot just outside the farmhouse.

Of our entire family, only mother, Shula and I survived the holocaust.

