



## **From Then Until Now**

By Raya Mantver

Written 1982 by Raya Tehilim Mantver  
Polish-Hebrew translation 1982 by Zvi Yashiv  
Hebrew editing 2004 by Bilha Alon  
Hebrew-English translation 2022 by Fern Levitt

Preface:

In 1982, when my daughter Ziva turned 40, I wrote the story of our family during the Shoah through the death of my husband in 1972. The story was written in Polish and translated by our friend Zvi Yashiv into Hebrew.

When I turned 90 in 2004, we re-edited the story with no additions or updates. Since then the family has grown and expanded with the births of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

My intention was and remains to tell for future generations what happened to my family during the Shoa, so that they will know and remember.

Raya Mantver  
Ramat Ef'al  
October 2004

*To my dear daughter, Ziva, I dedicate this memoir in honor of your fortieth birthday.*

You were born on March 15, 1942 in the Dubno ghetto. It was a period of terrible war and for us, the Jews, it was especially horrible, a Holocaust, the likes of which the world has never known. That day there was an *aktzia* (operation). The Gestapo visited abuse on the people of the ghetto. We were afraid that the murderers would find out about the birth. That day, as I lay there, nothing else interested me. I was surprised that no one congratulated me on the birth of my daughter. When I asked your grandfather Eliezer, may his memory be for a blessing, whether he was dissatisfied that it was a girl, he smiled in pain and said, “She should only be healthy! It’s good that she is a girl and not a boy! She will have an easier time during this period and will live longer.” “But I deserve a ‘mazel tov,’” I said. And this is what he said: “May she be healthy and may God allow us to remain alive together during this terrible period. God only knows what awaits us. The Gestapo is now entering the ghetto, and its men have been hanging around here since this morning.”

I gave birth to you at 2:40 p.m. on a Sunday and this conversation with Grandfather took place in the evening. His anxiety knew no bounds. I will never forget the expression on his face when he cried and said these words: “This is my son’s first child, and it is so hard for me to see her born into this. But let’s hope that we will see you together, happy.”

I didn’t think through these words, I was preoccupied with my little one and nothing that was going on around me interested me. And then, Grandfather sat beside me, and told me this story: in Novograd-Volinsk (where your father was born, my darling) lived a very wealthy family and only after they had been married for eight years was their first daughter born. Her birth was difficult and complicated and had to be done by Caesarian. The young mother was happy for a while with her child but the doctors decided that they had to reopen her stomach, because they had forgotten something inside, and there was no other choice. They could not give her anesthesia because it would have endangered her. What should they do? One of the doctors decided to lay the child down beside the mother, and to reopen the belly, and so they did. The young mother was so happy about the baby girl lying by her, and she put the little one to nurse for the first time, and the incident passed without mishap. The mother recovered after a while. The joy of motherhood overcomes any physical pain and enables the mother to ignore what is happening around her. For the young mother, there is only her newly created child. This was an allegory: and indeed, I paid no attention to what was happening around me. For me, only you existed, my dearest one.

I remember the day on which the murderers captured our city, Dubno. It was the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 1941, a Tuesday. The next day they harnessed an elderly Jewish man to a tank. It was Mr. Nechtman, who had an egg storehouse. They hung a picture of Stalin around his neck, and while they whipped him, they ordered him to pull the tank, until, covered in blood, he gave up his soul. It is impossible to forget this sight. 41 years have passed since then, but that picture is impossible to erase from my memory.

The criminal German gang started to use ever harsher means towards the Jews. They closed us in the ghetto, ordered us to wear a Star of David to differentiate us from Poles or Ukrainians. In truth, the others also got a taste of what our lives were like. They murdered and burned houses of gentiles as well, because the slogan of the Hitlerites was: Germany above all. But that was their problem. We had our own disasters landing on us one after another. Every day there was a new decree. For

example: to turn in to the regional police all radios, money, rings, bracelets, and all valuables. The Gestapo would come to the houses of Jews, rob everything they felt like taking, and as they left, they would say, "The rest belongs to us too, but at the moment we are leaving it for caretaking in your hands. The day will come when all of this will be in ours. We will slaughter all of you and not one of you will remain alive." And that is in fact what they did. No one believed what they said and everyone thought that these were mere words. Who could have imagined that a cultured nation like the Germans would be capable of killing others for no justified reason?

The day that the gang of Hitler's murderers captured our city, I was pregnant with you. Every day they stood us in a line and led us many kilometers away to work. We served Hitler's thugs, the "army." We washed floors and mainly toilets that were so filthy that I would come back from this work fearing that I would die of nausea.

As stated before, the day they arrived was a Tuesday. Rumors were going around that thirty people had been taken to work but that they had not returned home, and had been shot for no reason at all. Always someone had seen what had happened and the news reached the ghetto. And this is what they said about the murder: they stood them with their faces to the wall in the yard of their barracks and each one got a bullet in his neck. Some were busy digging pits, and those who had been shot were buried in the Jewish cemetery. This operation was called "the Small Aktzia." ("Aktzia" is Hebrew for a roundup.)

I have to add here one detail to clarify the events that followed. We were the owners of a wine and mead factory before the Second World War. We had a domestic and imported wine and schnapps store, and a cooling cellar that belonged to us. Your father, may his memory be for a blessing, was a real expert. He himself produced wine, and was an excellent "keeper." (We used the term "keeper" to mean a person who tastes the wine, liqueur, or other alcoholic beverage and determines its value based on the fruits and amount of alcohol it contains.) When the Soviets conquered the city in 1939, your father worked as chief engineer and director of production. When the Hitlerites took over the city, they hung a sign on the door "Wehrmacht Betrieb," or "Army Business: For Army Use," and they ordered us to continue production, but they stole what was produced for the army. Many were saved thanks to the certificate called Fachscheinausweis, meaning required professionals, that the German Kommandatura (military headquarters) issued. Abba would present the list of workers, and we would get a certificate stating that Mr. Ploni works in a required job and should not be taken to work outside of the boundaries of the ghetto. To our regret, it was possible to employ a maximum of forty people. Otherwise, we would have paid with our lives. Everything was under the control of the authorities.

They demanded that crates of various alcoholic drinks be brought to their offices. Two crates were carried by three people. There were no vehicles, and they required that the crates be lugged a long way. We went along with their demands because it enabled us to stay alive. But leaving the ghetto and returning to it was one big nightmare. Not everyone who left returned safe and sound. They were always cruelly and viciously beaten on the way. No one wanted to be the one to deliver the merchandise, and Abba always had to be one of the threesome that carried the crates, because that's what the despicable Germans wanted.

One day, Abba returned so badly injured and beaten that he was barely conscious. We thought he would lose his left eye. Blood dripped from his nose and his eye and his teeth were broken. Two Germans threw him onto the road and trampled his body and face under their boots. In those days people did not live like human beings, they turned us into rags. I can't even find the words to describe how, in the twentieth century, these beasts-in-human-form lived.

On Thursday there was another aktzia. Work in the factory had continued at full capacity. Orders for the army had to be supplied without delay. I was sitting in the office, preparing a honey liqueur called "Bärenfang" ("bear catcher") especially for the commander of the district. Suddenly I heard desperate cries from the cellar. I went downstairs and heard Saba yelling in a voice unlike his own, "I won't give you people! Kill me. We have to finish this order for the army." Ukrainian "schutzmen" (local policemen collaborating with the Germans) had come to take people who worked in the factory, ostensibly to work for them. I can't describe the panic of the workers. They didn't know what they should do. Saba, seeing me at the threshold, yelled, "Raya, run to the police and tell them that they're not letting us work, and the order for the army has to be delivered on time!" It was a good distance to the police station but I reached it in a few minutes. As I ran along the road, I could see Ukrainians catching Jews and loading them onto trucks. I understood that the situation was dire and that the Ukrainians were "kidnapping" Jews. I ran to the office that had once been the district headquarters. The waiting room and the stairs were full of people. I will never forget their terrified faces. I knocked on a door. Before they opened it, familiar voices around me called out, "Today there are Gestapo there, there are no local police in the office, don't knock because they will kill you!" Just then a tall man in a hat with the Gestapo insignia opened the door, with wasted eyes and the smell of vodka wafting from him. I started to explain what was happening, that the Ukrainians weren't letting us work on the order that had to be done on time. But he yelled, "Get out of here!" and reached for his pistol. I ran. I ran towards the house without taking a breath, and at the nearest intersection – Rovno Street – two steps from the door of our apartment, three Ukrainians attacked me. One hit me in the face, I felt how my cheek was swelling and burning. The second beat me with his stick on the shoulders and started to drag me toward the town. On the way, they beat me and screamed. My hair, that had been in braids, came loose and was all over. They chased after me and beat me. On the way, I saw older women, and I called to them, "Go tell Mr. Mantver that they are taking his son's wife." Within a few minutes I saw Abba coming with two police officers. I thought that I would be saved, but, suddenly, several Gestapo came and sent away the officers, and while continuing to beat us, they led us in the direction of the castle (fortress). The streets stretched like rays toward the center of the city, and we could see people being led along the lengths of all the streets. Along the way, I saw members of the Judenrat being taken in, their heads being beaten with rubber clubs. I will never forget their screams and the expressions on the faces of those elders. Among them was Mr. Horvitz from the mill and others. Abba said, "There's nothing to be done. We are going to death together." I felt guilty that, because of me, Abba had left the factory, but there was nothing I could do. I had tried to help, but things had turned out badly.

The Gestapo cruelly abused everyone. The shouts and cries were unceasing. The throng got closer to the entrance, where Ukrainians stood, throwing the people inside. I managed to duck away from one of these murderers. I pulled Abba after me but they

didn't let go of him. He was put inside and I started to run for home. I was then in my fifth month. I had just gotten away from the fortress and two Ukrainians appeared. "Where are you running? Go back there!" they ordered. I said, "I was there and the Germans let me go." And then one of them pushed me hard and I fell down. I got up and kept running, with all the breath I had. But I realized that, unfortunately, though I wanted to hurry home, running when I was beaten, bleeding, and wild-haired raised the suspicion of the Ukrainians that I was an escaping criminal. I couldn't run, I had to walk. Suddenly I noticed an outhouse in the yard of one of the houses. I managed to open the door and go inside, and I waited there until it got dark and there were fewer people outside. The problem was that there was an evening curfew (sperrstunden), when it was forbidden to be outside. However, I had no choice but to keep running, to be saved and to try to somehow rescue Abba. But my feet wouldn't obey me. I had an attack of nerves and couldn't move from where I was. I couldn't move at all. I had to step, heel then toe, until I really crawled home. For three weeks I, a pregnant woman, was so beaten up that I couldn't lie down, due to the pain in my shoulders.

In the factory, the people were working anxiously, and Saba and Savta were crying and upset. When they saw me in the state I was in, they sobbed even harder. By the time I told them what had happened – Abba arrived. He had escaped by force from the murderers during the time that they stood them in foursomes to load them onto trucks. He told us that no one had resisted. They told them to get on the trucks and everyone did it obediently, while Abba got away. He explained that the army was waiting for wine, and he, as production manager, must be present when the work was being done. In response to his claims, he was hit in the face a few times, but he didn't give up until one of the Gestapo yelled, "Get out of here!"

Thus, we were both able to get home - beaten, humiliated, crushed – but alive. One of the other survivors of the aktzia, Bibe Lerner, our neighbor who worked with us as an accountant, who also managed to escape from imprisonment, told us about the rest of the aktzia: the trucks took the people to the prison where a gang of Hitlerites sat behind a table and wrote down, in turn, the age, name, profession etc. of each person. They sent one to stand on the right (Rechts), and the next on the left (Links). No one knew what this meaning was of the separation into the two lines. Everyone was in such fear that no one knew what was happening around him. No one managed to understand what was occurring and what they were doing to him. It turned out that one side meant death and the other, life. The people in the second group were sent through two columns of Ukrainians, and they beat them with sticks everywhere they could reach, and the Germans yelled, "Run away from here!" and so, as she was escaping from the two murderous columns, they broke her arms and legs, and broke her watch. The beatings were so strong that they all returned severely injured. The next day, after the killings and beatings, it became known that 1,000 Jews had been killed. These were mostly men, a few women, and a father with his son.

Every day a new order was issued. The Germans hung announcements with orders directed at the Jews. After they evacuated people from their apartments and distributed miserable food according to ration tickets, they demanded, under threat, to be given coffee – which was impossible to get. Coffee could be found only outside the Jewish area. Members of the Judenrat somehow managed to get some coffee from Christian acquaintances, paid a fortune for it, to satisfy the desires of the murderers. When they didn't get what they demanded, ten Jews were shot. In one case, they

demanded ten liters of the honey liqueur Bärenfang. Until we figured out a way to produce this drink by reading in the professional literature, we almost died of fright.

One day an order was received: to close in the area with a high fence to create a ghetto, and to leave only an entry gate. All the Jews were commanded to put a yellow patch of a certain size, one on the left side of their chest and one on their right shoulder. Whoever disobeyed this command was shot and killed. And thus they closed us into the ghetto. We had to cover the windows and doors facing the Aryan side with boards, so that no one could enter or leave the ghetto except through the gate, where a guard post was manned by the Jewish police, who were responsible for everyone who entered or left. It is hard to describe this sight: a ball of Satanic masks, we looked like clowns. The yellow patches in front and back shone out: we are criminals. We cried to see the approaching clowns. The pain was so deep that everyone who passed shed tears at the appearance of his friends.

On the Aryan side, life was bustling. They, who saw us through the part of the fence that was made of iron frames, laughed at the sight of how we were dressed, pointed and giggled. We tried not to pay any attention, but it hurt. Jewish people had lost their humanity. And so, from one day to the next, we were under Nazi occupation. The atmosphere was suffused with the smell of death, that followed our every step. Every day there was an aktzia. People went to work and never returned. Vague information was collected about acts of murder, but no one knew exactly how, where, and by whom. One day Abba got an order to go out to work, in a nearby farm. He was away for two days. I thought I would go out of my mind until the Germans brought him home, thank God.

One day I heard that Ukrainians were traveling to Rovno, the capital of the district, to bring a truckload of sugar. I was then in my fifth month of pregnancy. I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to see my parents, who had stayed in that city alone. My brothers were in Russia, the older of them Shlomo (Syomah) had been drafted, and the younger, Mendel, who had been studying philosophy in the University of Lvov, had the opportunity to travel east to Kiev. Mendel I saw last in Dubno, on his way to Kiev. Shlomo I last saw when he was drafted and sent to Tula in Russia. And so my two brothers disappeared over the horizon.

I was, therefore, happy for the opportunity to see my parents, because during that time, it was a futile wish, since the Germans had forbidden travel between cities, even for Aryans. For us Jews it was forbidden to leave the ghetto, they always threatened us with being shot. It was a daily occurrence. I myself didn't believe that I had succeeded. In Rovno, the Jewish neighborhood was still open. It is hard to describe the meeting with my parents' neighbors. They all asked me, "What is happening in Dubno? What can be done to be saved? The Germans are threatening to kill everyone." I told them about the aktzia of Thursday. There was a mood of mourning, crying and screaming. My visit was very short. After loading the sugar onto the truck, they came to pick me up to return to Dubno. I sat on top, with the sacks of sugar. My father, may his memory be for a blessing, trembled with fear for my safety. Even now I see his face, pale and frightened, and I hear his anxious voice, "Make sure you don't fall off! The truck is swaying, and you...may God help you!"

And so, with God's help, I returned to Dubno, like someone who had fallen from the moon. No one believed I had dared to do that. And again, the exchange of information. "What's happening in Rovno?" And the answer: "Like in Dubno. Germans everywhere, using the same means as here, everywhere the same terrorizing and intimidation, and no one knows what to do."

Having seen that my parents were starving, we decided to send them a food package. But how? Sending a letter via a Ukrainian messenger (runner), and getting back an answer, cost ten gold rubles. No one thought twice about the money. Everyone helped each other, concerned only that they should survive. There were people who didn't have the courage to leave the ghetto, or to try to manage outside its walls; they had despaired and expected only death.

One day, when we had crossed out of the ghetto, we heard a conversation between two Jewish boys, Yankele aged two and Moshele aged three: "Give me that toy you're holding." "I'll give it to you tomorrow." And the answer, that upset us and brought us to tears, "Who knows what will happen tomorrow?" I can't forget the pale little faces, their shining black eyes.

Then we found out how we could get a package to my parents.

When we arrived home, we found Germans from the Sonderdienst, the special service, who had come to pick up wine to take to Rovno. We asked them if they were ready to take a crate with some food to my parents. They agreed to take the crate with a letter.

We gathered meat, potatoes, onions, garlic, bread, fruit, etc. We packed everything we could. The Germans promised to bring back a reply letter from my parents. We were so happy that we had managed to do this. But disaster struck. We found out two days later that there had been an aktzia in Rovno in which they had killed all the Jews of the city in Sosonki, (the pine-forested area by Rovno), among them my parents. The despicable Germans, who had taken the crate, knew they were traveling to the "show" to be in on the aktzia, but they didn't tell us anything and took part in the terrible slaughter. They knew the purpose of their trip, but to us – not a murmur.

I was then, as I've mentioned, in my fifth month of pregnancy. It's hard to describe the hysteria and sobbing I experienced. My mother and father gone in the same day. They had been rushed into their graves, when they were only 48-49 years old. No one could comfort me. For several weeks, I screamed and cried many times every day.

My dear daughter! I am sure that some of my pain and sadness passed through to you. I couldn't control my mood. My despair was boundless. We had given one of our rooms to a friend, Dr. Stern, a dentist. His wife tried to calm me down, saying, "What do you want from your unborn baby? Why does it deserve this stress? You must calm down, at all costs, so you don't miscarry." These words made me calm down. If I lived, it was certainly for the sake of the baby. My dear daughter! I saved you from the killers' hands, but thanks to you we both stayed alive. You were the reason that you and I were both saved. You and I were a single whole that couldn't be separated. And so events occurred until the liberation was complete.

The birth started during the night, at 2:00 Saturday night, March 14, 1942. We could only contact the obstetrician, Dr. Greenzweig, at 8:00 in the morning. So I labored all night. Believe me, I didn't let out a single shout. I suffered with stoic pride. What was happening around us was many times more painful than my labor pains. All the rest had no meaning.

At 14:30 I heard your voice for the first time, as you came into the world. I was sorry that the world was so inhuman, at such a low ebb and so plundered; that you had come into the world during wartime, the Second World War. So many dead and wounded; and we, the Jews, closed in the ghetto, beaten and humiliated in subhuman conditions. Death everywhere, with no compassion, helpless, not knowing what to do. And into all this a sweet daughter was born to me. I so much wanted a daughter and God granted me one. I am so grateful to you, God, for that.

Your birth gave me courage and confidence. My tiny daughter restored to me the faith that we would stay alive, that it was not in vain that I had given birth to you (four years after the wedding). Had you been born just to perish? Absolutely not! We would stay alive! This was not a rational thought, but it was this that awakened in me the drive to resist, to fight, to perform acts of bravery so as to keep us alive.

My beloved!!! When you were only two weeks old, they laid siege to our house where we had the cellar where we produced wine. By a nearby house, they placed guards and we didn't know what was happening; we thought that the final aktzia had come to the remnants of the Jewish community, to reach the state the Nazis called "Judenrein" (cleaned of Jews). Your father and grandfather thought that the end had come. I wrapped you in a wool blanket, and Abba helped me to take you down to the cellar and said, "Probably the aktzia has already started nearby, and the end is near." I sat with you until nightfall in the cellar, damp and cold, and I heard everything going on around us. You fell asleep, you slept sweetly, and this instilled the hope in me that all would end well. Your peacefulness had a healing influence on me. I heard the shouts of the Germans all around us, how they loaded the trucks with wines, liqueurs, filters, barrels, sugar, and through it all they were rushing Abba, shouting "Frantz, schnell!" (they called him Frantz) – "Frantz, faster!" Then they said, "What's your name? Avraham? You will be the last Avraham." It was a kind of consolation – that he would be the last.

That evening, when the transport had moved out, I could go home with you. We thanked God that they hadn't hurt us. The elimination of the wine factory meant that we weren't needed any more, and the disturbing question remained: What will happen to us? What is coming?

For me, none of this existed. I came back and said to myself that it would all end okay, the nightmare would pass and we would remain alive. How would this happen? I didn't have an answer to that, except that as events had developed, justice was on my side, and God was helping me. I don't know if it was this event or fate. I can't grasp it to this day. After the nightmarish day of the dismantling of the wine factory, that night, you came down with a fever. You caught a cold in the cellar. In the morning, we called Dr. Roitman, who diagnosed that you had pneumonia. It was hard to get medicines, and we didn't know what to do. The doctor advised us to heat oil



and to wet a piece of flannel, and to wrap you in wool, and to nurse you every three hours. We managed to save you and you started to develop satisfactorily.

Until you were six weeks old (and here I have to say that the time did not fly by, as I am describing it now), we experienced difficult troubles. Many people were murdered, abuse was rampant and terror reigned. One night Government Inspector Visa (Regierung) appeared, accompanied by drunk Germans. They demanded to be supplied with young, pretty women, among others Tonya Zimmerman, the doctor's wife. They liked her and wanted her – and if they didn't get what they wanted, they would kill ten men. Laughing wildly, they said, "You Jews, cowards, why do you sit like herrings at home? We'll kill you all. None of you will remain alive, and you hear this, and don't react – cowards, cowards." They shouted and left.

And again, we found out one day that the Gestapo was in town and that an aktzia was scheduled. We could never know what was going to happen. We knew that everything would get worse when the Gestapo got wild in Dubno.

After the factory was destroyed, we lived in the house to its right, that looked like a fortress. This was with our former neighbors who had lived over the fence. Their house was fortified, with huge cellars. There, in one of the cellars, Abba built a strong hidden iron door. The outside of the door looked like the wall of immovable bricks, but it could be moved on a track with wheels. His calculations on how to construct it were amazing, and behind the door was a large room which would be our hiding place from the murderers in case of an aktzia. In one corner Abba built a small room, two meters on each side, of wooden boards covered inside and outside with blankets for sound insulation. This was a shelter for you, my dear daughter. We knew we had to set it up so that they would not hear the sound of your crying.

When we found out that the Gestapo were in town, about fifty of us hid behind the door. I put you into the special little room. Instead of a crib there was a wooden bed that I stood on a table. When I rocked it – you fell asleep. But the candle alongside went out. I lit a match and it went out too. We hadn't taken a source of oxygen into account. I noticed that you were breathing with difficulty, I opened the door and saw that you were suffocating. I took you out of the hiding place and you burst into tears. I called for them to open the door, because I wanted to bring out the child who was suffering for lack of oxygen and I didn't want you to suffocate, God forbid! All the others yelled, "Because of you, Raya, 50 people will die!" I didn't want to listen to them, and I kept shouting, "Let me out!"

They opened the door for me and I went out with you, and Saba joined us. Abba and Savta stayed inside. I saw on the balcony and held you in my arms. Saba sat next to us and said, "Such a little bird, and she has to experience such awful things, Raya. And what will happen when the Gestapo comes?" "We'll die together," I answered, "It's not just a prank to give birth, any peasant woman can do that. What is required is a moral commitment. What will happen to me, will happen to my child. I am her mother, and I am responsible for her."

In the evening, we heard that the Gestapo had left the town. It seemed that the goal of the aktzia had only been to get flour, cereal and other food and they hadn't touched the people this time. We went back to the room in the evening, and during the night,

Abba woke me, with panic in his eyes, saying, “Raya, run to the hiding place, the Gestapo is back.” I replied, “It’s quiet outside. You must have been dreaming.” And he insisted “Save yourself, escape!” When his parents heard this they tried to reassure him. It took a long time for him to calm down. So passed sleepless nightmarish nights. We took turns keeping watch all night. No one could close his eyes.

The aktzia on Shavuot too place when you were only ten weeks old. The spring was in full force. Everything was blooming, nature was waking up to life. Birds were chirping, and only we, the Jews, had no place in the world. The murderers pursued us to the grave. A rumor reached the ghetto that they were digging pits and preparing lime. We knew there would be an aktzia in the near future and that they would kill us. What should we do? How should we hide?

A friend from the Gymnasia came to us, Reba Charav. She consulted with us about whether she should move from Melinov, the town where she lived, to our Dubno. Who could know which place would be better? She slept over at her relatives’ home in Dubno and, in the evening, was getting ready to go back to Melinov, to her daughter. That evening you and I slept over at my friend’s, Yonit Morel. Abba came back from work late. We were all at the Morel family’s. At 4:00 a.m. we heard a shout by the window: “Morel, wake up! The ghetto is burning! They’ve turned everyone out of their homes, the Gestapo and many schutzmen are positioned all along Granichna Street. They’ve divided the ghetto in half and the police aren’t allowing anyone to cross from one half to the other. They’re loading people onto trucks, no one knows to where. Get dressed! Maybe we can do something!”

We were on our feet, our nerves raw, shaking with fear. What should we do? The answer was, there was nothing to be done. Only the endless despair and tears remained. We reached Granichna Street, where the police blocked the road and wouldn’t let us pass.

Only toward evening everything quieted down and became as silent as a graveyard. Policeman Papka appeared on a white horse and looked for the manager of the wine cellar Mantver. Abba went out and asked what he wanted, and with his Satanic laugh he said, “They’ve taken some of the people to work.” Abba requested that they release Craolnik’s sister, Tussia, our friend, and he replied, “Too late.”

The next day, we went to work, and on the way we had to go through the other half of the ghetto, the “dead half,” because not even a single soul had survived there, they had all been taken and murdered. The graves were ready with lime beside them; it was a slaughter. No one offered help – not the Russians and not the Americans. And here perished defenseless people, and no one intervened to help them. The people came obediently to their graves, each lay down on the body murdered before them, and waited for a bullet in the back of the neck. Young children were thrown into a separate pit and killed with hand grenades. “We wouldn’t want to waste bullets,” the Germans shouted.

Why was God silent? Why weren’t they hit by lightning?

In the morning we reached the homes of the murdered: their beds were left as they had jumped out of them, and the pillows still had hollows where their heads had rested, when only a few hours before, they had slept the sleep of the righteous.

It is impossible to forget that slaughter, though forty years have passed. I am attacked by dizziness and heartache when I am reminded of those nightmares, and of the people who committed terrible beastlike, criminal acts like Miss Vapler, elegant, Satanic and beautiful, who drowned in a barrel the three-week-old daughter of Mrs. Vilner, who had not had children for years, and davka in the ghetto her first child had been born. This abominable devil lives today in West Germany, in Dortmund, a mother of three children. Should it be that way? How can such contemptibility survive? Why didn't the earth open up to swallow such people?

The day after the aktzia a barefoot young woman reached us, dressed only in a white nightgown, bleeding. I will never forget the face of this miserable woman, whose laugh was not of this world. She looked all around with a clouded stare, and asked, "Have you seen my children? Have you seen my husband? They were in the grave with me, where are they now? Take them out of there! I couldn't do it. They threw earth on top of me, but I crawled out and managed to get here. Where are my children? Bring them here! I'm waiting for them! I'm their mother!" and burst into bitter tears. Her sobs turned into uncontrollable laughter. How can one forget such a horror show? I will never be able to forget it!

And with all that, we had to think how to get out of this hell, where our hiding place wasn't safe, where life was hanging on this lull. Our personal situation was degenerating and we couldn't foresee any end to these tortures.

We started to think how we could arrange for your care, my darling, so that we could escape to the forest when we had to. You had a mark by which we could identify you: on the nape of your neck you have a birthmark in the shape of an exclamation point. This mark gave me great hope that you would remain alive. So I always said we should act accordingly. And that's how we were saved.

Before the war broke out, we had had a devoted cleaning lady named Helena. She was already an old woman; her daughter had worked for us in more recent years, and with the outbreak of war – her granddaughter. One afternoon, I heard a knock on the door. I asked who it was, and heard "Helena!" I checked that there was no one behind her and opened the door. She had come to suggest that she take you to her house for as long as the period of horrors we were going through lasted, to save whomever it was possible to save. Abba traveled then, illegally, to the town of Redzivilov, to arrange forged documents, so that we could escape from the ghetto. Saba and Savta were in favor of giving you to Helena. With my heart aching, I agreed that she should take you for a walk to the Aryan side, in the meantime, and afterwards - we would see. You were then only 4 ½ months old. I dressed you in modest clothes, like a peasant's child would wear, and Helena left with you. I closed the door and started to cry. Saba and Savta comforted me and said, "This way all of us will be saved! Otherwise – we will all die."

I hadn't calmed down, hadn't even sat down yet, when I heard knocking on the window. I opened the shade and saw a Ukrainian schutzman who ordered, "The mother of the baby should come outside!" I left the window open, went back into the

room and called, “They’ve already discovered that I tried to get the girl out, soon they’ll shoot both of us.” Savta suggested that I run away to the other side of the ghetto. I went into a house and wanted to kill myself. “Kill me,” I shouted, “Why did I let others convince me to give up the girl?” After a few hours, the girl was again in my arms. My happiness had no limits. I will never forget your look at Helena, at the policeman, and at the window. You were glued to my chest as if you hadn’t eaten for days. I whispered, “My little one, I will never give you to anyone again! Either we survive together or we perish together.”

Poor Helena, who was beaten, was taken to the police station. Saba saw that there were people gathering by the window, and went outside. They told him what was happening. He ran straight to the police and told them that she had just taken the child for a walk, for some fresh air. “There’s enough air in the ghetto. Why did she take the girl out of the ghetto?” they told him, and he pleaded that they release her. They did what he asked, and let her go. Otherwise she would have paid with her life.

Later, we found out what had happened: as I have mentioned, our house was at the edge of the ghetto, and a Russian family lived on the other side. When they saw a woman taking a baby out of the ghetto, they informed on her to the police, probably out of hatred of Jews. As a result of that tattling, the schutzman had come to harass Helena, who was holding you. Thank God, we managed that time to save you from the murderers, my dearest.

We had, finally, to consider how to escape. The earth was burning beneath our feet. It was impossible to go on in this hellish life that had become more and more futile. We sensed that the end was approaching. The march of death was drawing nearer to the ghetto and every one of us. Many said, “Save yourselves as best you can, everyone as they are able. Death is lying in ambush for all of us. Escape to the forest, to the train station and take the train to anywhere” – but only a few dared to do anything. I will not forget how Monia Perlmutter, my mother-in-law’s friend, said, “Why run away? They’ll only shoot you! We’re not leaving. We prefer to die in our home and not to venture out to the unknown.” Afterward I heard that they, too, perished in the forest.

Rachilke and Arka Crom, our friends, said, “We don’t have the courage to leave the ghetto, and we have nowhere to go!” They gave their only daughter, Mirotschka, to a gentile woman, who hid the girl. After the liberation, when we went to reclaim the girl in their name, the woman said, “The girl got sick and died.” And to get us to believe this lie, she took us to the “grave” of the girl. How could we verify what had happened to the girl? Only Rachilke could.

I won’t ever forget how she ran around in the open areas of the ghetto, like a crazy woman, bleeding all over, her eyes unfocused. We said to her, “Pull yourself together, run away somewhere, don’t stay here. You will die here.” “I can’t,” she insisted, “I’m afraid, I won’t get away with it. I envy you that you have good intentions and you have the courage to run away. I can’t do it. I await my death here.”

Thus, they sentenced themselves to death. They were found, Arka, Rachilka, and her mother, in their house, with their wrists slashed. That was their horrible end. Arka shouted, “When it’s over, tell the world what injury these murderers did to us. The

world should know about these murderous deeds against us Jews. Demand revenge! Take revenge!”

And other events of that period: the family of the dentist, Dr. Cohen, their daughter and her husband, cut their own veins after they saw that they were being taken to die. This happened in a small village near Dubno. They took the parents out to shoot. They had poison pills. They took them on the way, and fell. The corsetiere, Mrs. Lerner, with her husband and two sons, were found hanged in their own attic. They themselves carried out the death sentence on themselves. In one house, they had a festive dinner, and ate poisoned compote for dessert. The next day they were all found dead in their home.

I started, then, to doubt the existence of God. Tens of thousands had perished into graves covered with lime. You could still hear their shouts, their cries and their last wishes. Bontcha Bronstein begged the Gestapo, “I’m only twenty-something. The world is so beautiful and I so want to live! I beg you,” and she kissed the Gestapo murderer’s foot, she tried to look attractive and pleaded for her life. “No,” answered the murderer, “you are a Jew and we have orders from the authorities to wipe you out. An order is an order. You’re a Jew, and you must die.”

As they took Ben Tzion Shochet and his brother to die (they were among the most religiously observant people in Dubno) when they saw what was happening around them, they called out, “The heavens are empty, there is no God in the sky.” And how could I turn to a God above, I was not better than they were. But I had “God” in my heart, thus, I never became a full doubting atheist.

Some news reached us, making it impossible not to try to escape from the ghetto. The Germans said clearly that they had orders from the high authorities to butcher all the Jews. Under such circumstances – was there any reason to wait? Our conclusion was to run away, come what may, and if death caught up with us – there was no other option. In any case, we had to try.

One Sunday, Abba delivered liquor to the district police. On his way back to the ghetto, a ruddy German bike rider named Prog from the employment office stopped his bike next to the sidewalk, put his foot down on the road, and said, “Avraham, it’s coming (es kommt).” “When?” asked Abba. “Wednesday or Thursday,” he said. “What should we do? How can we be saved?” Abba asked. “Take your wife, ride to the train station. There are daily trains to Russia from Germany. Sit in one of the train cars (it doesn’t matter which direction) and go!” “And what about our daughter and my parents?” “That I don’t know.” He answered, and rode away.

Abba came home confused and couldn’t settle down. “What should we do? What should we do?” was the question. But I decided to leave the ghetto with you, without thinking about the consequences. Abba had had forged documents prepared for himself that said he was an Aryan, and we made the decision: to escape. That day our wanderings started. That day you were six months old. It was September 15, 1942. The only words you babbled were, “Baba, mama,” I can still hear your babbling, and see your sweet baby face, asking to stay alive and be revenged.

So I got up in the morning, dressed in a long, loose velvet dress over a blouse and skirt so I would have something to change into, over double underwear. I tore a sheet into four quarters and put two in my bodice, under a jacket, and I wore a white wool hat. This was more or less how the peasant women dressed. I wrapped you a few times in a warm little blanket, with a little wool hat on your head. Abba and I agreed on the forged documents that he would get and bring to me.

Without saying goodbye to anyone, and to prevent unwanted crying and emotional outbursts, I left through the illegal opening of the ghetto. Abba and Saba opened the door. I left the yellow patch on the front of my jacket and covered it by holding you in my left arm. I had removed the yellow patch from the right shoulder. If they checked me, I could claim that I had lost it.

I had grown my blonde hair long, and I braided it so that I looked like a real Ukrainian. I passed through the streets uneventfully and reached the suburb Zabramaya. I was very calm and sure that I was out of danger. But, to my great sorrow, this was not the case.

As I continue my description of our wanderings it will become evident how many times death faced both of us though only I saw it. On the way, I met a woman named Mrs. Mitzkevitch, and I told her that I was going to her with the child. "I know," I told her, "that there is going to be an aktzia on Thursday." She wasn't very happy with what I said, but answered, "Please, come into my house carefully, my father is at home, it's just that the neighbor on the other side of the wall is a schutzman. It wouldn't be good for him to see you coming into my house." That time, luck was with me, no one was around, everyone was at work. The woman's mother took me into the house with a reasonably accepting attitude.

The apartment was made up of a small hall, with a kitchen and a cubicle on one side and two small rooms on the other. The members of the household allowed me to stay in the second room. It was a bedroom from which a window looked out on the garden. I have to mention here that this woman was not a chance acquaintance, because we had had to prepare for ourselves someone, when the time came, to whom we could turn in time of need; she had been "prepared" with a lot of money, which had no worth to us at that time except to save our lives, and it's a good thing we had the money.

I reached the house of that woman in the afternoon. After a few hours, she came back and gave me instructions how to "behave." I had to try to ensure that they wouldn't hear the voice of the baby, because the schutzman lived on the other side of the wall and he knew that no babies lived in that house. For two days I held you in my arms and you "behaved" as if you knew what was happening. For 48 hours you didn't make a peep. Whenever I saw you starting to open your mouth, I stuck my nipple into it, that, to my sorrow, was empty of milk but full of bitterness.

The first evening, at about nine or ten o'clock, Abba came and brought me the forged documents we needed. It was very brave of him to leave the ghetto then and go the distance of four or five kilometers.

He had gotten you a birth certificate of a Ukrainian villager, obtained from the Russian Orthodox priest for a substantial price in gold. The names on the certificate were typical Ukrainian names: Christina Dovchalok, maiden name Sokolok, that was me; and you appeared in the papers with your real name: Zina, which is not a specifically Jewish name. My certificate bore a picture. The document had been prepared in a nearby town called Redzivilov, where there were a few Jewish experts who had specialized in forging the stamp of the district commander Bruk. It cost an especially high price.

I was very frightened to see Abba arrive and leave at this time of night, as it was after curfew and if a German had seen him, he would have had the right to kill Abba on sight. But the woman came home afterward and reported that Abba had returned safely to the ghetto, and he, Saba, and Savta were preparing to leave the ghetto. They would be sleeping outside the ghetto in Dr. Cohen's clinic.

That was the first night in that woman's house. The second night, between Wednesday and Thursday, was nightmarish. I sat, tense, in the small corner room and heard people running around next to the garden, crying, blows and the cries of Jewish children: "Leave us alone, don't hit me, let us live!" I started to cry and weep inwardly. I trembled with stress at the thought that it was every man for himself, and I, especially as I was responsible for you, could not help anyone else. I couldn't even drink a drop of water. And so I held you in my arms, barefoot. When I saw that you had fallen peacefully asleep, I believed that we would get through this safely. But what about the others? My heart was torn at the thought of what was due to happen. The aktzia they called "Judenrein" (Jew-free) started – the Final Solution to the Jewish question.

We couldn't know then what would happen. We only thought of how to get out of the hell in which everyone perished. It was a night that can't be described in words, in which you had to be silent, and to strangle in your own fear. How ironic that that day in the gentile calendar was the day of "faith, hope, and love." Mrs. Mitzkevitch and I planned how to get across to the other side of the city, to the Kocharevitch family. I didn't know the way, but I had to get there because there was a hiding place there (a stable) where Abba, Saba, Savta, and Chaya Rayavitch, a relative, who we called Marusia, were.

Mrs. Mitzkevitch (whose name was Shura) decided to go out as if she was going for a walk, and that I should follow her at a distance of about ten meters, so that it wouldn't be obvious that we were together. We went out at dark, and I held you close to my chest as the Ukrainian women did, and thus we reached the edges of the city. There was a patrol standing guard. The Ukrainians shined a flashlight over me and asked, "Where are you going?" and I answered, "Home to Sormitche" (the name of that place). When I heard the call "She's not a Jew, she's Ukrainian," I was happy. I have to say honestly that this was a ticket to life for a few moments, because there was no way to know what a day would bring, even what would happen the next few minutes, after leaving the boundaries of the city. My nerves started to collapse and fall apart, and I couldn't go on walking. My feet didn't obey me. The last of my strength deserted me. I felt that I was falling. I made out a few trees in a field, with a ditch beside them. I sat down and put my feet into the ditch. I waited for a Ukrainian to shoot a bullet through my head and put an end to my suffering and wanderings. There

was nothing for the hungry child to nurse from my breasts, and I couldn't help her or myself, not a drop of water was there to slake my thirst and my mouth was dry. The houses around me had light and warmth inside. The smell of food drifted from them and reached my nose, and I envied them for their right to life and happiness, while I, with my small child half-a-year old in my arms, was doomed to suffer. For what and why?

It was impossible to ask for anything or to question why it had to be this way, when the answer would be, "We are Jews!"

Sitting on the damp ground, I pondered: "You will live!" I had to get through this nightmare because I didn't bring you into the world four years after my wedding only for the murderers to put an end to your life. When I had consulted with Dr. Prochorov before your birth, he had diagnosed that I wouldn't be able to give birth at all, and if Nature had caused a miracle to happen, you would live come what may! No force would manage to separate us. Either we would survive together or we would perish together.

And close to us, in the nearby houses, was warmth and serenity with a phonograph that didn't stop playing dances, tango, waltz, foxtrot. The sounds of laughter and fun, at full steam. I mused, "Master of the universe! What a contrast between life and "life." And while sitting there, without counsel and not knowing what other hope I had, I decided to go to the main street and give myself up to the murderers. Suddenly, I heard a voice nearby: "Raya, is that you?" I was sure it was a trap, but I didn't care. I couldn't feel my arms, legs, the girl was almost unconscious. I thought, "I will go to our destruction, I have no other way out."

But it was the voice of the Polish woman, Mrs. Shura Mitzkevitch, who had looked for the Kocharevitch home to which we were supposed to go, to be sure that we would be well-received there. She gave me directions to the house and I got up from my hiding place, and started walking like a drunken woman. After two hours of difficult walking, during which I sometimes fell with the child in my arms, I reached my destination. They opened the door to a warm room in which I lay down the sleeping girl on the sofa and burst into tears as I vomited endlessly. I was given a small gold cross that I hung around my neck, I was given something to drink and told, "Pull yourself together," so that I would appear more calm and collected.

A few minutes later, Savta appeared in the room. Everyone was there in hiding at the Kocharevitch's shelter, that had been especially prepared for 24 people. Savta Sarah burst into restrained, bitter crying, held you to her heart, kissed you endlessly and wished us long life. It was difficult and dangerous to leave the shelter. I fed you, and you immediately fell into a deep, peaceful sleep. Late that night, I went out to meet Abba. His mood was terrible and despairing. He whispered as he left me, "Even if you have to be with a German to save yourself and the girl, do it, just stay alive. Try by all means to stay alive. We are seeing each other now for the last time. We probably won't meet again. Be healthy and save your life." My answer was full of optimism, until today I don't know what was the source of my optimism: "Bazya, relax, you are wrong. I have a feeling that we will remain alive through this terrible period, and we will yet live together for many years. Don't give up, hold your head up, and save yourself to the extent you are able. I don't know from where our help will come, but I



am at peace and feel that we will remain alive and things will go well for us.” To this Abba answered, “It should only be as you say, but things are so difficult, that I don’t see any chance of it. All is lost, we will all die.” And after he kissed me, he went back to the shelter, to the living grave.

It was a Friday that I reached the Kocharevitch family, and that Sunday, a horse-and-cart was ordered to take me to the village of Pochayev. That family of four was guilty of the “crime” of saving Jews. On Sunday morning, I dressed you in a red outfit, sewn from a robe of Angora wool, and we went out together with Mania Kocharevitch. It was a beautiful day. Golden autumn, and on all the posts hung a poster in German letters, “Judenrein” followed by a list of specific points: “Anyone who hides Jews will be shot; anyone who offers them aid will be shot; anyone who feeds them will be shot; anyone who gives them clothes will be shot,” etc. etc.

When I read all this, my blood froze in my veins, my feet failed and it seemed to me that I was about to collapse. But probably the desire to live is stronger than any other emotion. I gathered my courage and, while looking at your dear face and your blonde curls, I dared to keep walking toward the destination I had set myself. Suddenly Mania felt like drinking water, and she turned into the nearby house and asked for water. A young Ukrainian came out and said, “There’s no water!” To this she answered that she just wanted a cup so she could dip up water from the well. But he said, “I don’t have one and I won’t give it to you. In a moment I’m going to take you to the police and then we’ll see who you are.” She was brunette and looked Jewish. I didn’t interest him at all. I said to Mania, “Come, we’ll go to a different house, my relatives are there, and we can get a drink from them.” He shouted, “Go away, get out of here!”

I was happy that we had managed to be saved from that hooligan. We kept walking toward our destination. Mania went to look for the wagon. We had already walked about seven kilometers, with you in my arms. I hadn’t eaten anything because I couldn’t swallow a single morsel. I sat down on a stone by the village well, and I waited about an hour, but Mania didn’t come back. From a small house a young woman came out and asked whom I was waiting for. I told her that my husband was supposed to come with a cart to take me and the girl and that we were traveling to a wedding. “Can I have a little water?” I asked. She took out a cup, stood it next to a bucket of water that she drew up from the well, went straight back into her house, and locked the door.

I was drinking water when, from a distance, I made out an approaching wagon. I climbed into it and sat down, and together with Fedya Kocharevitch, we started off on our way and Mania went home. I breathed a sigh of relief. I held a letter saying that the family invited us to a wedding in Pochayev. The road led through a pine forest, that gave off an intoxicating scent, the sun shone and the air was so fresh and invigorating. “The world is so wide,” I mused, “and there is no place in it for us Jews. They pursue us and sentence us to death.” I burst into tears, my heart was broken, but we had to reach our destination. We had to escape, to be saved, otherwise the murdering hand of the Hitlerites would reach us and destroy us.

Suddenly a gang of Ukrainian schutzmen burst out of the forest and blocked the cart. “Where are you going?” they asked, and Fedya answered, “To a wedding in

Pochayev.” “And where are you coming from?” was the second question. “From Dubno,” we said. “Ah,” they said, “our guys went there to wipe out the little Jews. The Fuehrer said that by the end of 1942 there won’t be a single Jew left in Europe, and his words are holy.” And Fedya said, “We don’t care about them. Let them kill them.” And, turning to the schutzmen, he said, “Come on, my friends, let’s have a glass of schnapps. There’s roast chicken and pork for dessert.” They stuffed themselves and went on their way.

Imagine, my dear daughter, what a comedy I had to act out so that they wouldn’t realize the truth. When we started traveling again I burst into hysterical crying, while covering my mouth with my hand, so the sound wouldn’t echo through the forest. Fedya cursed them, the schutzmen, who were the members of a special school of Hitlerites.

And thus we reached Pochayev.

The church bells were announcing evening prayers. It was a completely different world than that that I had known of late. All around an atmosphere of blessed silence prevailed. The farmers were returning from their fields and sitting down to eat a hot dinner, made up of potatoes, sauerkraut and bread with milk. “What luxuries!” I thought. It seemed to me that I had already forgotten how people eat. I made you some porridge with milk and I got an apple. Fedya introduced me to his family as the wife of a friend of his, who was fighting on the front lines, and told them that he had promised my husband to take care of me after the birth. “They wanted to send the child to an institution and the mother to work in Germany,” he added and explained “but my brother, who is a starosta (head of the village) promised that he would look after them.”

The house had two apartments. In one, to the right, lived the family members in two rooms: Fedya’s brother Paisi, his wife Paisia and three children, Raisa aged eight, Mitka aged ten, and Zhenka aged 5. The other apartment, on the left, belonged to Paisi’s mother. It also had two rooms. The entrance to the apartments was through the kitchen. The front of the house had an entrance through a locked hallway.

They gave me the dining room of the grandmother. The first night, we slept in her second bed. I slept like a corpse after so many sleepless nights, but my sleep was disturbed by nightmares and tension. Now and then your voice woke me.

In the morning I hardly recognized you, you were red as a poppy all over. You had been bitten by bedbugs, who attacked you until they drew blood. In order not to scare you I tried to joke about it.

The next day, I heard that they thought I was Fedya’s lover, and that you were his daughter. This gossip helped me; just so they didn’t suspect that I was a Jew! After all, the goal was to be saved no matter what!

The following day I heard that “koflacovtchim” (underground units named after their commander Koflakov, who fought against Hitler) were running around in Pochayev. When I went out to the kitchen at 6:00 am to prepare your porridge, unfamiliar, pleasant-looking men and women were sitting around the table, eating potatoes and

sauerkraut and drinking “coffee” (a coffee substitute made of chestnuts and sugar beets). From their conversation I gathered that they belonged to a group of “illegals” who had been invited to a meal. After a few minutes, they dispersed and I was left alone, and I understood that these people lived in the forest. I couldn’t confirm any more details about them for reasons of security.

A few days later, I was given the grandmother’s room. They put into it a wooden bed, and a mattress made of sacks of straw. These were true luxuries to me. The room had three windows. One I covered with the blanket I had wrapped you in when I left the ghetto. I wanted to keep the room as warm as possible. Winter was coming. There was a wood-burning stove in the room. For the first time in my life, I chopped wood, that was given to me as long sticks to feed the stove. To my joy, the grandmother, who loved you, kept you busy so that I could cut wood. The winter was hard, the night was long, and there was no kerosene. It was impossible to lie for many hours in the darkness. My thoughts ran wild without direction. I wanted to know whether Abba, Saba and Savta were alive, but I didn’t know how I could find that out.

I had taken with me a bottle of valerian and, now and then, in moments of despair, I drank from the bottle.

One night, I was in a deep sleep when I felt someone tugging at my arm. I opened my eyes and saw a German next to my bed. I froze. The end had come. What should I do? But before I understood what was happening, I looked at you, sleeping beside me. When I saw you sleeping peacefully, I relaxed a little, but my heart was beating so hard I couldn’t sit up. I just heard the words, “Feuer, feuer, starosta” (fire, fire, the head of the village). I answered in Ukrainian that I didn’t understand what he was saying, and I pointed to the sleeping place of the starosta. I went back to my room, shaking as if I had malaria, and I sat there this way all night.

I was sure that someone had reported that a strange woman with a child had come there, and that the German had come to kill us. This was a daily occurrence at that time. But in the morning, they told me that a fire had broken out, and that the German was looking for Kocharevitch the village head, to give him men to pump water and put out the fire.

One winter evening I lit the stove and heated the room. I requested a samovar. I boiled water (I did this once a week; to do it daily was too great a luxury.) I bathed you, and with the same water, I washed myself and washed the clothes we wore. I hung them next to the stove to dry so we would be able to wear them the next day. I would do all this work, and wash the floor, at night. I didn’t have any other time to do this, for reasons that I won’t go into. I got a little oil, that served to light the room. You can imagine the amount of light we had in the room. This is how it was done: they poured the raw oil into bowls, soaked a rag in it, and lit it with splinters of wood (there were no matches, either) and that was the lighting. You had to keep an eye on it and change the rag occasionally, to make sure the fire didn’t go out, because it was very difficult to relight it.

I lay you down in our shared bed, you were a lovely, sweet baby, and you fell asleep without an issue. I finished the work, added wood to the fire in the stove so that the room would stay warm for the rest of the night. It was a big room, on the outside of

the house, and its walls were damp. I only lit the fire twice a week. You can imagine the temperature in that room. I lit the last rag. I lay down close to you and covered us with the blanket that I took down from the window and with my brown coat. I slept in my clothes and we fell into a deep sleep.

I heard you crying during the night. You almost never cried. I woke up, but I couldn't lift my head, my eyes were heavy, and I saw that you were completely black as if you had been covered in ash. I wanted to stand up but I lost my balance and vomited. What should I do? I opened the door to the hall so that the cold but fresh air would come into the room. I immediately felt better. I looked in the small mirror and saw that I was also covered in ash. It was clear that the smoke had almost suffocated us. I prepared some water and we washed, I took some cold potatoes, covered our heads until the grandmother gave me coffee (it was already dawn) and you porridge, and so, the next day, everything returned to normal. We looked as though we had had a serious illness. This event was particularly wearing on us.

The winter was hard. I was afraid that we would die. There was no way to get milk. The Germans robbed the farmers of their flour, so there was also a shortage of bread. The farmers would bake bread from unprocessed flour with bran and they would eat it hot, straight out of the oven. If they let it cool, it would crumble into sand. There was no meat to be had and it wasn't allowed to slaughter animals. There also was no way to buy any supplies. There was no fat. There was only whey, potatoes, cabbage and crude oil. And even these meagre supplies threatened to run out.

A nun named Tyokla lived in the Kocharevitch home, and everyone called her "Babushka." I want to devote a few words to this noble woman, in whose hands I entrusted you afterwards. She was a religious Russian Orthodox woman from Warsaw. Before she became a nun, she had had a husband and son. When the son was ten years old, he became ill with scarlet fever and died. The photograph of her son in his coffin hung in her room next to pictures of saints. Her husband was so affected by his son's death that he lost his mind and died a year later. She, on the other hand, decided to leave behind everything she had in Warsaw and to move to Pochayev, and that is what she did.

The Kocharevitch family took her in willingly and she helped them manage their household. They were so fond of her that they let her add a little apartment to the house, with a small bedroom and a kitchen in the corner. From the little kitchen was a passage to a small room about three meters by two meters. It held a bed, small table, two chairs and a stool. By the wall was a stove that heated the apartment. The window faced the yard, and in the corner were pictures of saints and the photo of her son. A small light always burned in front of the pictures, and the shelf was covered in an embroidered cloth. She was an ideal homemaker from all points of view. She was bright and had my appreciation and affection. I think that, until today, despite my having taken you from her when you were two years old, you still remember her little home; you yourself told me more than once, and I listened in wonder and amazement, that you remembered details like these from such a tender age.

This dear and pleasant woman, whom I loved very much, helped me a lot. When I needed to do various household tasks, or I was busy with work in the field, she entertained you. She had a white chicken in her house, who laid eggs. I would get two

eggs from her every week and prepare from them two dishes. We ate the yolk with bread and I whipped the white with beets to make a kind of sweet. Every day I tried to take you out for fresh air in the garden. The Kocharevitch family had a large fruit orchard, and there was room there to go walking. From the yarn of the hat I took with me when I left the ghetto, I knitted you a hat and socks. From my leather belt I sewed you shoes. When I went out with you for a walk in the garden (I didn't go out to the street for obvious reasons), I would wrap you in a blanket, and cover your head with a hood. I put your socks on my hands like gloves, so I could hold you in my arms, and thus I would go out twice a day to breathe some fresh air.

One day, when I was returning from my walk with you, I found the head of the house in the kitchen with a stranger. I went into my room and started to undress you. Then Paisi came in and said, "The man who's sitting in the kitchen wants to talk with you! He claims that he knows you." I answered, "I don't know him, and I am not interested in talking with him." I wondered to myself whether he knew who I was. He could do whatever he wanted, I wouldn't go to him! My heart hammered. What should I do? Run away? But they chased runaways, it was better not to react.

I sat down, therefore, with you, doing nothing, for almost an hour in my room. You fell asleep in my arms and, as always, it was a sign to me that everything would turn out alright. Your calmness had a good influence on me. After an hour, Paisi came and started to ask me questions about where the visitor knew me from and what was actually going on. After all, he knew from his brother Fedya that I was the wife of his friend. And what did the man want to talk to me about? Again I answered that I had no interest in that man or what he wanted.

The head of the house went on to tell me that he had told the stranger that he had already sold him the rest of his crop, and he had nothing to come back for. I didn't react to this, but I was pleasantly surprised that he had wisely resolved this complex matter. The issue bothered me, it upset me and I couldn't forget it for a moment. "What's going to be?" I wondered. There was a risk that the man would keep after me. He had said that he was from Dubno and used to buy wine from us. If so, it was true that he recognized me.

That evening, when Paisi was resting in his room, and no one else was home but us, I dared to go in and tell him that he should not be surprised if I wasn't there in the morning. I had decided to leave. "Why and where to?" he asked, "What happened?" I told him that I had escaped from the Dubno ghetto, that I was a Jew, and that Fedya knew my family and my real identity. I didn't know the visitor, but if he claimed that he bought wine from us, it was true, he recognized me, and therefore I couldn't stay there in Paisi's house.

"He won't come back," he replied. And I said, "You are all so dear to me that I can't risk your lives, and I don't want them to put you to death because of me. My daughter and I have been sentenced to death, but I won't let them destroy your family because you have offered us help. Never! I will go to the forest, I will sit on a tree stump with the little one, the frost is powerful, and we will freeze to death, and that's the end of that."

“No,” Paisi exclaimed, “You are like family to me. I have only one request of you. Don’t tell this to anyone else. It will be our secret, and however I can help you, I will help to save you, so that you can get through this nightmarish time.” I left his room, and fortunately no one else was home. I went into my room. You, my daughter, were still sleeping, and I cried from a mixture of pain and relief.

It was before Christmas 1942. You were then eight months old. Suddenly, Paisi came to my room, frightened. “What should we do?” he said, “Some man has come from another village and wants to see you. He knows that you are called Cristina Dovchaluk, and his name is Vasil.” I said, “I know Vasil, let him come in.” I was so happy to see him that I burst into tears of joy. His first words were, “Everyone is alive!” It was the first news I had had about Abba. “Who is ‘everyone’?” I asked. He said, “Bazia, his parents, and Marusia.”

My happiness was boundless. Just imagine! In these terrible circumstances, to hear from the mouth of Vasil such news. Vasil Michashchuk was one of our customers, who lived in the small village of Milchemala, 15 kilometers from Dubno. He bought wine, schnapps and other alcoholic beverages from us for many years, and through him other residents became our steady customers. He would often sleep over at our home, and we helped him make all kinds of arrangements in the Polish government offices, over a period of many years (ed note: until the Germans took over the eastern part of Poland in the partition agreement of 1939). His family saw us as close friends. He used to say, “The fact that I slept at your home and you helped me with the government institutions – for that I am eternally grateful to you. But the fact that you invited me to sit down at the table, and you saw me as of equal worth, when you hosted the Polish deputy minister at a meal – that I will never forget in my life.”

Indeed, Vasil brought me regards from my relatives, and then I started to believe that we would survive and be together again, and he brought me things that our family sent to us: Savta had sewn you a little jacket padded with cotton with white threads that she had extracted from a sheet, and she had gotten the fabric, jacket lining, from Vasil’s sister. Inside, your name “Zinotchka” was embroidered in Russian. That jacket kept you warm. Also, they sent me 25 gold rubles. Abba said I should wean you, so that in a moment of danger I would be able to leave you and escape, to save our lives, because nothing would happen to you if you were alone. They would probably only shoot us if we were together.

Vasil also brought with him large homemade pita breads from white flour and yeast. He wasn’t very happy about giving them to me and asked me to give them to the priests when I went to church. I decided to enjoy this rare food myself, and I chewed pieces, as long as they lasted, every day.

A few days later we got news that in Dubno, at Mania Kocharevitch’s, the shelter where three Jews were hiding had been discovered and the Germans had arrested Fedya. Therefore, I had to go away for a few days on the pretext that I was going to visit relatives.

I traveled with you to Andrei and Vasil’s sister. She didn’t know me and I claimed that I was an acquaintance of Vasil, and asked her to send a message to the nearby village Milchemala that I was waiting for Vasil. She sent her daughter; Vasil only

came to see me the following morning. All that night I was tense and couldn't close my eyes. You, Zivaleh, slept the sleep of the just, which always put me in a more positive frame of mind. If you could sleep in peace, everything would go smoothly, that's what I always thought. That's how I always acted. It was a terrible night. The Ukrainians burned the villages of Poles, who set fire to the Ukrainian villages. It was a civil war, on top of the general larger war.

No one in the house closed his eyes. The tension was awful. At about midnight, farmers suddenly burst into the house and tried to convince me to go outside with them. "We have something important to tell you," they said. "Tell me here. My child is sleeping, she will wake up and cry," I told them. They said "Nothing will happen to your daughter." But luckily I didn't give in.

In the morning, when Vasil arrived, he told me that the farmers suspected me of being a Pole. They had dug a pit, they had brought a pistol with them, and they intended to shoot me and bury me. The next morning I saw the pit.

I was not far from my family but I couldn't see them due to the terrible danger it would have caused. The next morning, I returned to Pochayev with the child in a wagon. In Pochayev they were happy that the child and I had come back safely. So the gray days continued in the village of Pochayev. But, despite everything, I felt that I must stay there because I had nowhere else to go, and no other option to be rescued. I was inside the four walls of the Kocharevitch family's home, I helped with the housework, I assisted the children with their homework, and you, Ziva, were the source of my encouragement to stay alive.

One day, Paisia persuaded me to go out for a walk to see Lipova Street. It was the first time I had been out of the house for a walk, to the nearby village, Yuridika. It was something to see. From the wide boulevard emanated the scent of lime trees (Lipa) but behind the boulevard, she told me that they had dug a long trench to which they brought all the local Jews, and there they shot them all, including a woman named Roza, married to a gentile doctor, who had converted to Christianity and married in a church.

Paisia told me that one of the neighbors had had a Jewish friend and tried to save him. He built a false wall in his house, behind which he hid his Jewish friend. The wall bordered on the other side on a stable, where horses were kept. Near the water trough was an opening through which the neighbor gave him food. Someone reported on this to the police, who killed the Jew and arrested the friend that had hid him. For many months he was under arrest, and in the end they managed to ransom him for a huge sum.

I pretended that none of this interested me, to protect my personal security. "When Zinotchka" (i.e. you) "grows up, she won't even know that there were once Jews in the world," Paisia concluded.

I was happy when I was with you alone, back in our room. You slept and I cried bitterly. I cried for every child who was buried there. The place was plowed over and there was no sign to indicate the barbaric acts that had been carried out there.

It's hard, today, to believe this or to describe what happened. At that time, a civil war started among the Ukrainians, between the "Independent" ("Free") Ukrainians and Hitler's supporters. They killed and shot, lit houses on fire, attacked, robbed. Every day they burned, killed, hanged. During the nights I would sit next to the fireplace, a spot that was safely positioned against bullets, because two walls separated me from the outdoors. At that time, gunfire was a daily occupation of theirs, and it was easy for bullets to pierce the thin walls. I decided that it was both warm and safe next to the fireplace, thanks to the two walls.

In the morning we heard that a certain Ukrainian had hanged his father, who was a police officer, whom I had stood next to the previous Sunday in church. He was a tall man, healthy. I couldn't imagine how someone could do that to his father.

In that place, they saw me as a Russian, and as time went on, even that became dangerous. "Velasovtzi" (collaborators with the Germans, followers of Velasov) came, who said, "What's the difference whom we're killing for? First we served Stalin, and now we kill for Hitler." I heard this with my own ears.

Once a car came in the afternoon, stopped, and from it bounded a big dog, followed by two Germans who walked in the direction of my door. My heart stopped beating. I froze. "They're coming toward us," I thought, "we are lost." But suddenly they turned around and drove away. Again I felt that I had had a reprieve from danger.

But a new danger was always hanging over me. I didn't know what to do and I had no one with whom I could consult. I had to decide by myself about everything. I had to wean the girl, so I could leave her in an emergency. You were then nine months old. I started to feed you food that, to my sorrow, wasn't suitable for you. I got a little barley, I ground and sieved the grains. I cooked it with water into a gruel. There was no milk. I got a little suet that slightly enriched the watery gruel. The result was: you and I both became ill. All night I didn't close my eyes, I had a high fever. My breasts were engorged and hard as rock, and my left breast was infected, and you vomited constantly and had bloody diarrhea. "What will be? Probably we'll die from this," I thought. I had only four diapers, that I couldn't even wash. My shoulders hurt, and you were already unresponsive. Your mouth was black and the vomiting was terrible.

With the last of my strength, I wrapped you in a blanket, dressed with great effort and though I could barely stand on my feet, I took you in my arms and walked to the church. The frost crunched under my feet, and probably the temperature was 30 degrees below zero. Everything was covered with snow, my shoes were torn, and the way to the church was uphill and slippery. With difficulty I reached the church, where there was a German army hospital. Fearlessly, and without thinking much, I went in the main door and asked if there was a doctor there. Miraculously – a doctor stood before me. "This is an army hospital," he said, "What are you doing here?" "I beg you, save my child, she is dying," I said, "I won't let her die without medical help."

"Calm down," he said, "The Germans are all around everywhere here. I will examine her. I'll do whatever is possible that I can. My name is Dr. Katchor, I'm Czech. I want to help you. The girl is sick with rubella (German measles), almost cholera. She needs a French injection and everything will be fine." I said, "But I don't have even a piece



of bread. Where will I get such an injection? Only in my dreams. I'll never be able to get such a thing."

I cried bitterly as I held you in my arms. Dr. Katchor left his room and I was apathetic about our fate. I suspected that he had gone to bring the Gestapo. A moment later he returned with a syringe in his hand and injected you with the needed injection. I couldn't believe my eyes. He looked to me like an angel that had been sent from heaven. I then got from him a bottle of liquid medicine and 50 grams of rice. Unbelievable. You were saved. And I believe in that angel. I wanted to thank him but didn't know how. I had brought a few apples I had received of the "Zohari" species and I took them out of the basket and asked him to accept them. He put them back into my basket and said, "Cook them for the baby," and thanked me.

"Doctor, how can I thank you? You have saved the life of my child," I asked. "That is the most important thing to me," he answered. I left him with tears of joy flooding my cheeks. When I reached home it was already dark and I started to give you the medicine. I cooked the rice and gave it to you with the medicine. I got all of this into you with my last strength. Kocharevitch, when he saw me forcing you to swallow the medicine, said, "Don't torture the child, let her die in peace, you are still young and you will have other children." I had no answer to these foolish comments. I did what I had to according to the instructions of Dr. Katchor.

It was my ninth night without sleep. That should give you an idea how I was feeling. I myself was sick and I had to also take care of a sick child, with no help from anyone. That night, after our visit to the doctor, we fell asleep so soundly that I wasn't even aware of the night passing. A terrible nightmare woke me. I dreamed that my late mother came into my room and wept as she kissed me, and when I wept with her, I woke up. And there, by the bed, was standing the Kocharevitch grandmother crossing herself. She heard me crying and came into my room because she thought that you, may you live to 120, had died. "No," I told her, "she is healthy. I dreamt of my late mother, she brought the child health, and she will recover."

And so it was. You recovered your strength. I managed to get a few chicken wings, I made soup out of them, that restored your strength. Then I had to deal with my own illness. I decided not to go to the doctor, no matter what.

An uncertified doctor (feldsher) would come to treat the Kocharevitches' cows, who were due to give birth any day. I asked him whether cows also suffered from hardness in their udders, and what he did for it. He answered, "Yes, I take red clay, mix it with whey, and with this mixture I prepare cold bandages, that I put on the udders." That's what I did, I got whey, dug up a little clay, mixed the clay and whey in a bowl, and I put bandages dipped in this mixture on myself. To my wonder, within 24 hours the redness and hardness disappeared. The fever passed and we were both miraculously saved.

You were a sweet child, 11 months old, with curly blonde hair and intelligent black eyes. One evening, when we were in the kitchen, you started to walk your first steps in the white shoes that I had sewed with my own hands from my leather belt. My joy was boundless. Everyone rejoiced with me: Paisia, the grandmother, Babushka, Mitka, Zhenka, Raika and Paisi. I was so excited: my daughter had started to walk.

Christmas put me a little bit back on my feet. There were a few ingredients to celebrate the holiday. They baked cakes. There was yellow sugar, homemade sausage, meat – that they prepared in secret. In one word: luxuries. The cows gave birth and so there was a little butter, cheese, etc. All this was only for the holidays. Afterward I was happy if I managed to get a little milk and an egg for you.

The worst time was the fast before their holidays. Only on the days of the holiday did we eat anything and you – Ziva – began to walk and eat independently. The Christmas tree was wonderful. I decorated it with the children of the family, we made many colorful toys and stars. The “happiness” was short-lived. No sooner had the holidays passed, than Velasov’s men and the Germans resumed their unrestrained vandalism, destruction and killing. During Christmas the family members didn’t leave me alone and I had to go to church at least once, to mass. I always claimed that I couldn’t leave the child alone, and that I didn’t have anything to wear in this intensely cold winter. But this time the grandmother lent me a wool shawl and high shoes to wear. I got dressed, despite the intense frost, and went. In the church were many people crying and sobbing, I among them. I faced a corner, wrapped myself in the shawl, and silently recited the Shema, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one! May his great name be blessed forever and ever.” I repeated this countless times until the abbot passed me with the oil, I crossed myself and went home with everyone. When I got home I found you sleeping peacefully. I lay down next to you and fell asleep.

The hunger and fear tormented me until the fast after the holidays. The fast was very hard. Imagine, my daughter, that I always suffered, sometimes for myself and sometimes on your behalf, and it took its toll of me. I was 29 years old, and I looked like a woman of 50, gaunt, wrinkled, pale, frightened, and I had no way of knowing how long this situation would go on. Ten months of hunger and fear – and what next? Who knew? And again Easter – something to eat, and afterward the hunger returns. The worst thing was the lack of bread, milk, fat. And you, who were growing, needed all this. Instead, we had hunger, tension, upsetting experiences, fear.

I lived a few meters from the Kolovov family. On their harvest festival, I opened the window and couldn’t believe my eyes. A cart had come to the village, driven by a “feldsher” and a gypsy, who used to buy from us in the summer and came to our home twice a week. They knew me like the palm of their hand. I hoped that they wouldn’t recognize me, that perhaps I had changed so much that only my closest relatives would recognize me. I closed the window and stayed in the house like a prisoner. The weather was lovely and I wanted to go out with you for a walk but couldn’t budge from my spot. But neither could I hide in the house, because you kept going outside, and I was afraid you would wander away. That was all I needed! I trembled with fear but I was happy when the cart departed and I stayed in the house to get you ready for bed.

The Germans kept up their pressure. Every night they went from house to house and checked who was living there. If by chance there was a new person, the question arose, “Where did this person come from?” They needed little pretext to murder. And here, before Easter, they issued a closure order on all the churches, so that people wouldn’t gather in public places. They probably started to sense that their end was

near. Everywhere it was known that they were losing the war, and so they abused the local population as much as they could.

On Easter they usually go to confession at four in the morning. I was supposed to go to this confession, and must admit that I deeply feared that I might fail this “test,” God forbid. The evening before, it was a Wednesday, Paisi came home upset, and reported that the Germans had forbidden congregating and prayer. “Their audacity has exceeded all limits,” he declared. When I heard this I was inwardly relieved, and I thought to myself, “Here is another sign that everything will go well.” I have to admit that, despite my life being so difficult and miserable, I was in an optimistic mood about the future. I believed that everything that was happening was temporary. “It will work out fine, it will be okay,” I whispered to myself. I silently sang you the Jewish folk lullaby, “Sleep, my child, in a bad world, in a world of war, it will yet be good, and therefore I beg you, Master of the Universe, to make it good when you grow up.” I repeated the chorus a few times, and you would fall asleep in my arms.

One day I got up in the morning and said to Babushka, “I had a strange dream.” “Tell me your dream,” she said. I told her, “I was walking in the field between sheaves of wheat, taller than me, and the sun was shining so brightly that it lit up the paths between the fields. And I saw my husband between the paths. What could it mean?” “It’s the best dream,” she said, “Things will turn out well for you. The wheat is a sign of life and the sun will shine on you.” It was a good interpretation of the dream, and I thought, “It should only come true.”

A few days later, I had another dream that Abba brought me a gold watch for a present. “Look how beautiful it is,” I said. I put my ear to the watch to hear it ticking. I woke up and thought, “It was as real as if I were awake. I can’t believe it was a dream.” She interpreted that dream, “You will have golden days and a good life.”

But, to my anguish, the third dream warned me that I was in danger and that I should leave Pochayev to save our lives. I grieved when I thought about being separated from you, but I knew that if I didn’t go, we would both die.

As I mentioned before, Velasov’s followers were taking the law into their own hands in Pochayev. Every day they executed men, women and children for no reason. They took them out to the field and shot them in the head. I sensed that my turn was approaching, especially since I was an “illegal” guest and was not registered. The dream warned of an evil season coming. I dreamt that I was standing in the Kocharevitch family’s kitchen and a German shepherd named Harap appeared in the window. He stood with his paws on the window sill, gnashing his teeth and barking at me. I climbed the ladder leading to the attic, but the dog followed me, barking.

When I awoke, I thought, “It’s time to get away from here. If I dream that a German dog is chasing me, it’s a sign that I must run away.” Every night I heard the heavy thud of German boots. Each time, my heart froze in fear. I heard how they passed by the house. They went into the village; we lived in the house on the boundary between Pochayev and the village Yuridika.

The next day, everyone they visited told whom they had taken out and whom they had hanged, and whom shot. Such a fate awaited me too. I decided, therefore that the

moment had come that I had to decide how to move on to the next stage of survival. Not to ignore the warnings. Like every night before going to sleep, I said the prayer “Modeh ani” (I give thanks), and afterwards formed a plan about what to do and how to act. In the morning I got up with the plan that I would say I had to travel to relatives, to help them with the harvest. I discussed it with Paisi and made clear to him that the earth was burning under my feet and that I must escape. He acknowledged that I was right. “Madam,” he said to me, “I don’t want you to think that you are not welcome to stay in my home, but you yourself see that the situation is deteriorating. Help me to rent a wagon and a blind horse, because otherwise, they’ll confiscate it.” I decided, therefore, to travel away from there and to leave you, my darling. It’s easy to write about this now, but then – I felt it was a terrible tragedy.

It's hard to describe how many tears I shed, and it all had to be done in secret and you, you were so “wise” (at 16 months) that you didn’t want to look at me or to be held in my arms. You probably sensed that to save both of us, we had to separate. It’s hard to understand your child’s intuition.

On July 20, 1943 I put you to sleep in the bed. You sunk into a deep sleep. I left the room and knocked on Tyokla’s door. She asked, “Who is it?” and asked me to come in. I found her kneeling in prayer. I waited for her to finish praying and started to cry. “What’s happened?” she asked, “How is the girl?” I have to mention again that she loved you very much. I told her, “The situation is bleak, they’re murdering everywhere. My husband is away in the war and I’m not registered here. The Velasovtzi are looking for any excuse to kill people. If I stay here even a few more days, our turn will come. Everyone wants to live, true?” “So what’s the solution?” she asked. And I replied, “With heartache, I must leave the girl and run away to my family, and to do that, the only person I can leave her with is you, no one else. Only you, who are devout and faithful, in your hands the girl will be as if she is with me. I have full faith in you. Otherwise, if I stay, Velasov’s men will come and kill us.”

Tyokla (I will never forget this) answered, “If two people’s lives depend on me, how can I refuse? I have become so fond of you and have become accustomed to you, and I couldn’t live if something bad happened to you. Leave the girl with me and let your mind be at peace! She is like my own granddaughter. Go in peace and save your life!”

I brought all the belongings I had to her room (not many, I’m afraid). I gave her ten gold rubles, paid 15 to the wagon driver, and I kept five in case I would need them.

At first she refused to accept any money. I explained that she would probably need to make some arrangements urgently, and that the war was raging and the times were not normal. She finally agreed, and wished me a successful journey, and I left in tears. “It will be alright, everything will be okay,” she encouraged me, “I will take as good care of the girl as you would. I love her.”

Tyokla was then 80 years old, she would pray four times a day. Warm-hearted, orderly, admirably tidy and responsible.

All night, I didn’t close my eyes. I kissed you and the tears flowed endlessly. I tried to calm down and convince myself that I had to do this for both of our goods, otherwise we would die. Staying here would mean unavoidable death.

The hour came, four in the morning. The church bells rang for morning prayers. It was the holiday of “The Holy Mother of <ⲓⲣⲏⲗⲉ>” (July 21, 1943). I had ordered the wagon for that time. I put a chair next to the bed so you wouldn’t fall out, God forbid, kissed you again and left the room without looking back. Tyokla was outside when I got into the wagon and said, “I’m going to my family, to help with the harvest.”

The wagon started off and my heart beat like hammers. Every moment I tormented myself that I shouldn’t have left you, and that I should have stayed with you. Even so, I realized that by irrational selfishness and acting on my emotions I was likely to cause both of our deaths; this way, hope remained that we would survive and live on.

In the afternoon we reached the village where Shura lived, the sister of Andrei and Vasil Michashtchuk. She knew me from the previous visit, and received me warmly. The wagon driver watered the horses, himself drank some milk and ate some bread, and departed to return to Pochayev. I can’t describe my feelings then, as if something had torn in my heart. I wanted to cry, to scream, to chase after the returning wagon and go back with it. I sobbed, as the last chance of physical connection with you, my daughter, disappeared.

How I didn’t have a heart attack, or lose my mind – I don’t know. I was now alone, but why had I left you? It was a crime. My face was flushed and my heart hammered. Even as I write this, today, I feel again how I felt then, though 38 years have passed. I see my situation then so clearly before my eyes, and I am amazed: how could I do that, from where did I find that courage? Probably a divine force guided me.

Michashchuk’s sister immediately sent her daughter to Milchemala, a village five kilometers away, to inform Andrei that I was waiting at her home. Soon Andrei came to his sister’s house. We sat for an hour and then set out on foot. On the way, I told him what had induced me to leave my child and escape. He was impressed by my courage and decisiveness. “Now there is hope that you will both remain alive, otherwise, you were likely to die. The Velasoftzi are worse than the Germans. You acted wisely. Nothing will happen to the girl. She is in good hands. The woman is a decent old lady and very pious. In this case you must not let your emotions rule you, rather do what is necessary to save your lives.” So we passed through four kilometers of fields. Andrei led me to the cemetery, which was one kilometer from his village. He advised me to stay by one of the graves, to kneel and wait until they came to take me home.

I waited until three in the morning. I wasn’t afraid of the dead, but of the living. I knelt next to a grave with a headstone on which was engraved the name “Kolovov.” I wondered if this was the same family that were neighbors of the Kocharevitch family in Pochayev. Indeed, I found out later that they were. At three o’clock, I heard someone come into the cemetery. I relaxed when I heard, “Raya, where are you?” A young village girl stood next to me, with a sack of fodder for the cows on her shoulder. “I’m Capitonka and I’ve come to take you to our house.” We embraced and sat for half an hour at the edge of the cemetery, and waited for the light to go out in one of the nearby houses. Around us prevailed the silence of death.

Only when everyone was asleep did we head out. We reached the stables. Your grandfather Saba Eliezer opened the door for me and started to kiss me through his tears: "Come to our shelter. This is our home now." The stable was completely dark but I heard the clucking of the chickens, the grunting of the pigs, the horses chewing their feed, the cows mooing. And so, in the dark, overcoming tears, I came to a square opening in the ground. "Come in," someone said. "How?" I asked. Saba crouched down, and I followed. Savta Sarah, Abba, and Marusia greeted me as we all cried, and Saba held a pillow over his mouth, to dampen the sound of his sobbing, as it was critical that not even the slightest human sound from the stable escape and be heard in the nearby fields.

Abba recovered first. "But you look like a skeleton, like you've just been taken down from the cross." "It doesn't matter," I said, "the main thing is that I'm alive, that we are all alive, and that we have hope that we will remain alive. We have a lovely daughter," I said, "and we all must live for her sake. And now, I want to know what has happened to you since we parted."

In a whisper Abba related what had happened. "The same night that I brought you your documents, I didn't go back to the ghetto. The ghetto was under siege by the Gestapo and schotzmen, and my parents and Marusia were outside the ghetto in the dentist Dr. Kagan's house. He was the father of our friend Doda Kagan (married name Lilienthal). I joined them. The mood was utter despair. We decided to go to Sormicha. We arrived. Our steps were tentative on unfamiliar, winding roads. It was dark. A few times we fell and hurt our knees. It was especially hard for my parents. They walked together, separate from us, so we wouldn't look like a big group and draw attention. Kocharevitch took us into his shelter, and that was our last meeting since we left the ghetto."

"You see?" I said, "Then, you were sure that we wouldn't meet again. Now we have to hope that we will stay alive and be together with the girl and things will be turn out alright. I felt that things would turn out alright."

Abba continued his story. They were 24 people in the shelter. After a few days, Fedya came at night and told them that one of the neighbors had complained that he saw or heard that Fedya was hiding Jews. The police had come and told him that they would be coming to do a thorough search, and if they found even a trace of a hiding place, they would kill everyone and burn down the house. Everyone scattered in a different direction. It was a horror show. Everyone parted crying bitterly, and wished each other that they might meet again. Fedya gave Abba his peasant's jacket and hat. He accompanied them four by four to the road leading to Milchemala.

At the light of dawn it was impossible to continue walking. They hid in some bushes, frozen and starving, and there they sat the whole day without talking, communicating only in sign language. They heard the cries of Jews being chased, the voices of children that the police caught and were taking to kill. To their great sorrow, it was impossible to help them. When it was completely dark and everything was quiet, they continued walking, and then they felt plowed ground under their feet, and realized that they had reached a field. Abba didn't lose his head, he told his parents and Marusia to wait, and he went on by himself and groped his way to find hard ground. It was so dark, you couldn't even see someone standing right next to you. And so, after an hour

of crawling on the ground, he reached solid ground, and then they realized that it was the wagon track to Milche.

So they arrived, before dawn, to a small village, and they asked people where the house was of the Michashchuk family. Abba himself went into a hut, since he spoke good Ukrainian and no one suspected anything. Luckily, Vasil was in the yard and asked them to go into the cow barn. Starved and exhausted, they went into the barn and finally lay down on the straw, after two days in which they had covered about twenty kilometers on foot. After a few minutes, Vasil came and asked them to climb up to the hayloft, gave them blankets to cover themselves, and brought them bread and a bucket of warm milk. “We were saved, a miracle has occurred,” they exclaimed. “This is our deliverance!”

For two weeks there was a discussion in the family whether to let them stay, and if so – how, so that no one would find out they were there. One day someone came to the hayloft to tell them that, whatever might happen, they could stay.

Planning started for how to accomplish this. Abba suggested to do this in a corner where they collected bales of hay. “We will remove a few bales of hay,” he said, “until we reach the ground. Then we will dig an opening of one square meter, and we will reach a depth of two meters, where we will dig a “room” two meters on each side and two meters tall.”

It took a few nights to dig, because they had to dump the dirt they had dug out in way that they neighbors wouldn’t notice. The dirt was taken out to the field in buckets, and there they scattered it. It was hard work, especially because everything was done in an atmosphere of indescribable tension and terror. Finally they completed the underground room. The walls and ceiling were covered in straw to insulate the space somewhat from dampness. They made an opening where they stored a lamp, plate, and a few similar items. They also opened vents in the corners, and installed a hall or tunnel out to the fields through which they could escape, in a moment of danger. The most important thing was the camouflage over the entrance. Abba installed a one-meter square of boards, mixed dirt with water and covered the square with this mixture. When it was dry, he placed this hatch to block the entrance, and covered it with straw.

We spent most of the hours of the day sitting in this shelter. At night, when the work hours in the field were over, we would open the hatch, which was very heavy; only Abba could lift it. The walls of the stable were made of rough wood and there were cracks between the boards, through which you could see the fields, the sky, and in winter, the snow, etc. In the winter it was warm. We were there, five people, for eight months, from July 21, 1943 to March 19, 1944. Until I came, four people had lived there for ten months, meaning that they were in that shelter for 18 full months.

Conditions were bad in all respects, but the will to live was alive in us. In the evenings rats ran around on the floor collecting seeds. It was impossible to bear all of this. It was revolting and disgusting. Frogs hopped around. More than once a frog crawled across my face. More than once I burst into tears when I saw how low an enslaved human being could sink. The lice and fleas bit us and sucked our blood. The toilet was a bucket. You could choke from the smell. Only at two o’clock in the morning could

we dump it outside, but it was hard to hold it because of the diarrhea we suffered. We ate hot potatoes in their peels morning and evening, when Capitonka the gentile brought food to the pigs. Sometimes they threw down to us hard-boiled eggs, sometimes we got pig suet, for which we paid in gold. But, often, it happened that we paid money but didn't receive food, and we had to let it pass without complaining. We would get hot water only once a week, and sometimes we changed our clothes. We all bathed in the same bucket of water. The men often wore dresses, because there were no pants and shirts to change into. When I first saw Saba wearing a dress, I burst into tears. We accepted everything with love because the main thing, then, was to just remain alive.

The lack of human compassion in those days was boundless. Vasil wanted to know where the front was, and what was happening in the world, but there was no radio, no newspapers and no mail. We didn't know anything that was going on. We lived from day to day, thankful for every moment that passed. One day, Vasil brought us a German weekly newspaper, and that was our "culture." That's how we found out that the front was then near Kharkov. The Germans had conquered that city, and afterward retreated. When they reconquered it, Saba stopped talking, he could only say "yes" or "no" and held a pillow to his face to muffle his coughing, so no one outside would hear it.

I worked all day in silence. I unraveled an old sweater of Saba's and, from the yarn, knit a pair of pants for you. There was no more yarn. I hung the pants on the wall and hoped that, one day soon, I would dress you in them. But, to my distress, the waiting stretched over eight months.

The first days in the underground pit, I thought I would lose my mind. I suffered from having left you, but I knew that that was the only salvation for both of us. I wanted to run away from the pit to Pochayev, and they all restrained me from leaving – God forbid – the safety of that place.

At four o'clock on the morning of January 21, 1944, we heard planes bombing all around us. We felt as though a bomb had dropped directly on us. We heard the crash of plates and cups breaking and the lamp went out. We called to each other in the dark, and thank God, everyone answered. All of us were alive. We kept sitting there, waiting for what would happen next. We were tense and didn't know what was happening. Three hours later, we hear Vasil's voice, "Mantver, are you alive?" "Yes," we answered, "what happened?" "Don't ask, the Germans bombed the whole village. Many homes are destroyed, many people were killed, and only our house remained in one piece. I'll come to you in the evening and tell you everything in more detail."

And indeed, in the evening, Vasil came to us. He first had to remove the dirt that had covered the hatch to the pit, and us with it, and he brought us a lamp and replacement dishes.

We worked all night. I remember that it was an extended fast. Not a drop of water reached our mouths. Vasil started to list the names of the farmers who used to buy wine from us, and now hadn't a roof over their heads. "It's hard to keep track of all of them. The Germans destroyed three quarters of the village." "And what is the reason for this crime? The Germans claim that the farmers didn't supply them with food



promptly. But it's a lie," Vasily insisted, "everyone gave them whatever they asked for." That was their evil behavior, in keeping with their slogan, "Germany above all."

"They won't control this area any more," Vasily said, "they behave like bandits, and they'll get their comeuppance. I am sure that God protected us because we are hiding you. It's a miracle that our house on a hill remained whole with the entire family in it."

We realized that the whole stable had been flattened. A half-ton bomb had fallen on the right-hand side of the stable but we were under the left-hand side. It had destroyed the entire stable. All the animals – the cows, the pigs – had been killed. The roof had collapsed and made it very hard to get in and out of our shelter. You had to crawl on your stomach to reach us.

For understandable reasons, it was impossible to repair all of this, as a war was going on and we couldn't arouse suspicion. Everything had to remain as it was. Conditions became even more difficult. We couldn't leave the shelter to go up to the demolished stable during the night, because as the walls no longer enclosed it, strangers might have noticed that someone was moving around inside. Snow covered everything, including the approach to our shelter. Capitonka had to crawl under the fallen roof beams to bring us a little food: potatoes, bread and milk, whatever they could get. Once a week, she would also bring hot water for washing. We felt strange after the bombing that we could see the sky, the stars and snow, after having sat for so long in a dark "grave."

We had an agreed signal with Capitonka and the master of the house. In case of danger, when we had to close up our shelter hermetically, she would call out, "A-kish." Then we couldn't talk and she would cover the hatch with straw, so no one could discern its existence from the outside.

One afternoon, we heard Capitonka's nervous call, "A-kish!" We hid immediately and closed the entrance to our den, and Capitonka immediately camouflaged the cover. Then we heard German voices. "We are lost, there is no escape," we thought. We gathered by the tunnel for emergency exit and waited. We heard the Germans gathering hay and heard the rustling getting closer. "Death is upon us. They'll soon take us out and shoot us," the thought passed through our heads. And suddenly a miracle happened, a true miracle. We heard Capitonka's voice talking with the Germans, "What are you doing? Why are you taking wet hay? The horses will get sick, they'll cough and exhaust themselves. Wait, let me throw out the wet, rotten hay, and I'll give you better, dry hay for your horses."

We heard her covering our entrance hatch with hay and heard almost nothing else; we didn't know what was happening outside. Suddenly we heard our savior's sweet voice: "Kashana," meaning, the danger has passed, you can open the hatch over the entrance.

It's hard to describe our joy, after having our lives hanging by a hair. How bright this farmgirl was. A simple but bright idea occurred to her, to cover us, at the very moment they were about to discover our hiding place. She gave the Germans straw davka from the other end of the stable and they praised her, "Here is a loyal

Ukrainian, worrying about giving us the best possible straw. If there were more like her, we would win this war.” With a look of gratitude the Germans left.

So we carried on, after our miraculous delivery, with our difficult lives. I missed you, my dear one, but under these conditions, only in my wildest imagination could I dream of a meeting between us. But I had faith that the day would come that I would hug you, hold you in my arms and you would be with me again.

After this frightening experience, I dreamt that I was in Pochayev, and Raika Kocharevitch told me that you are not alive, and we should hurry to bury you in the cemetery. I woke up crying. It was the worst of all the dreams I had. I tried to believe that it was only a dream, and that the truth was just the opposite: you were alive and well, and why should I believe in this nonsense. After all – it was only a dream!

The days passed quietly. We tried to communicate with gestures. I had important work to do then: knitting. During the eight months I knit gloves, hats, scarves, and more. This activity saved me.

Capitonka supplied us dry sheep’s wool to our shelter, and everyone helped me in preparing the yarn and winding the skeins. When the wool was ready, I started to fill orders. This work had a therapeutic effect on me.

Our hosts were happy with my products, and I was happy that I had something to keep me busy. Sometimes Savta was amazed with how I had the patience to knit in these most critical times.

Sometimes the days and nights ran ahead quickly, and sometimes they dragged on, long and hopeless. When would our redemption finally come? But from the German weekly newspapers, between the lines and the death notices (that contained sentences like “near Kharkov,” “after the withdrawal from Kharkov,” etc.) we learned that Kharkov had twice been in German hands. The dates mentioned in the weekly papers told us a lot, and from this we drew strategic conclusions, and figured out that the Germans were losing the war. There was evidence of this: they stopped driving through the villages in their cars, and confiscated wagons. It was clear that their end was near, and the main thing was that we would reach that time and be healthy when we returned to our destroyed home. Abba fell ill with carbuncles (pus-filled sores). He had a large infected sore on his left arm, and immediately his fever went up to 40 degrees. Capitonka brought flour, oil and honey. Savta made a mixture of this with which she covered the wound and this caused the pus to drain. Thus, we healed the wound without cutting, and without antibiotics. Is that not a miracle?

Abba made a calendar by the moon’s cycles and figured out when Passover would be. We cleaned everything in the shelter, didn’t bring bread there, and we ate only eggs and potatoes in their jackets for the eight days of the holiday. I must admit that everyone got sick of this, but it passed.

In March the winter was still at full strength and the freezing nights were long. In the morning hours, we suddenly heard the roar of engines above our heads, and the voices of people placing big guns above our heads (our hiding place was at the foot of a hill).

Listening carefully, we couldn't believe our ears – they were speaking Russian! “Vanka,” called one to the other, “Move it closer!” and the other answered, “Okay.”

It turned out that the Russians were above our heads. But we had no contact with anyone. The Michashchuk family members didn't come to us. The sound of shooting outside was awful.

The next morning, March 19, 1944, Vasil came at four in the morning and told us: “The Germans have retreated, the Soviets are now here. You have to decide what to do, whether to stay and wait here with us, or to go toward Dubno. The way is very difficult through the fields; the snow underfoot is melting, and it is 15 kilometers away. If you stay – there is a chance that the Germans will come back. It would be a shame for you to continue to live underground; who knows what's going to happen? Do as you see fit.”

Of course we decided to move. We said goodbye to Vasily, who wished us a successful journey, and set off.

We greeted the first Soviet soldiers, who were busy digging trenches and taking positions. We decided to walk in single file, since there were still exchanges of shooting between the Germans and Russians. Actually, they shot at us, and the shots whistled over our heads. Miraculously we survived the walk over a number of kilometers. We came to a village and went to the home of a farmer that we knew. He welcomed us warmly and invited us into his house. We looked terrible, in torn shoes and clothes, our feet and all the clothing we wore were wet. Saba and Abba were unshaven, and Saba in particular was as pale as a ghost. His white beard hung down to his knees. Savta Sarah's feet were swollen and she walked slowly and with difficulty. Probably eighteen months in a “living grave” under the ground with no light or air, had their impact. I sat with them “only” for eight months, so I was less exhausted than they were.

Sitting at a table, like a normal person, after such a long period of living an abnormal life, was a delight to us. I will never forget that breakfast, with “delicacies” like fresh bread, butter, omelet, coffee with milk and honey. We ate our fill, and it was hard to get up and leave to continue our journey. The farmer, whose name I don't remember, explained that he would gladly have us stay to sleep the night, but given that we had survived this long, he didn't think we should take the risk because there were Bandera men making trouble in the village, and he didn't know what might happen. “Your best plan is to reach Dubno,” he advised us, “the Soviets are already in power there, and it will be safest for you there.”

We went on our way. We still had about eight kilometers to go. The way was hard, we heard shooting, the whistling of airplanes, and the field was simply covered with dead bodies, arms, legs, heads, horses with burst stomachs. Everywhere there was blood and stink.

We reached Dubno at evening time. It was dark, quiet and we could only hear the sound of soldiers walking in step. I approached one and asked, “Comrade, where can we stay? Are any civilians living anywhere here?” “The Germans took them all away,” answered the soldier. “Take any apartment, as you see fit.” I saw a light only

in one house next to the church. “Knock on the door,” the soldier said, “maybe they’ll open to you.”

We walked a few steps closer to the house, and there really was light there. We knocked on the door, and a man’s voice asked, “Who is it?” We answered that we were looking for Jews from Dubno who had survived. The door opened and we saw Mr. Fisher and Mr. Leitzman: “The Mantvers are alive, listen everyone, they were saved!” they called to the people in the house. The crying and yelling went on and on. We were worn out and exhausted, but we couldn’t yet lie down to sleep.

After the destruction that had emptied Dubno and other cities, only a few Jews remained. Each one in turn told their own story. Mrs. Fisher asked me about your fate. We didn’t have an answer, only believed that you were alright, given that we knew nothing about what had happened to you since I had left Pochayev. My heart ached but we had no choice except to wait until things settled down.

The most terrible story was told by one young man, who sat in a corner, cried and wrung his hands. I was worried about the fate of this man who sat in the corner weeping. Not that only he was crying, everyone cried and wept, but his case was especially tragic. He related that he had survived the German occupation with his family in a hidden underground shelter in a village called Kalshtchiche. When they heard the Soviet tanks approaching overhead, he said, “If it’s my fate to die, it’s better not to die from the firing of Germans, but from a Soviet tank.” That moment, as if to order, a Soviet tank approached, drove over and demolished one corner of the underground shelter – the corner in which the man’s young wife and child were standing. They were killed instantly. The next day they were buried in the Jewish cemetery, next to the grave of the “Thursday aktzia” victims, in which were buried a thousand people who were murdered by the Germans.

In the morning, we were still deathly exhausted, having a hard time believing we were finally in Dubno, among Jews; we decided we could lie down to sleep. Our eyes were closing by themselves but we simply couldn’t lie on a bed or a sofa – we had become unaccustomed to them. I couldn’t fall asleep that way, so I took a blanket and went to sleep on the floor. I slept so deeply that I didn’t hear how Saba and Savta couldn’t find any rest due to the pain in their legs. Their legs were swollen and could no longer carry their weight. There was no medical help available, of course.

Suddenly the news came that all young men were being drafted and sent to the front. What should we do? Abba couldn’t even stand on his feet. I decided, therefore, to travel to Rovno (the district capital) and do something. It’s easy to say this, but to travel the 40 kilometers that separated between us was near impossible. I took with me “smogonka” (home-made schnapps) that people gave us. I got on an army freight train traveling to Rovno, I paid in schnapps and I reached the office of the authorities there.

Rovno was demolished. I walked through the city streets crying. I didn’t meet anyone I knew. Everything was strange and unfamiliar. The old building of the district governor was now the headquarters of the “Ogol Ispolkum,” the local head office of the Communist party. When I reached it, I asked the soldier who stood guard next to the entrance, “Where is Ivan Ivanovitch Rafichenko?” He was a man I had known

before the war; three years before, our families had been very close friends. The guard gave me the room number of an office on the first floor. A few minutes later, I was sitting in the secretary's room, waiting my turn to be received. I was the last in line. Reception hours ended just as my turn arrived. I crossed the threshold of his office and sat down on the chair facing Rafichenko. "What are you here about?" he asked. But I couldn't even speak. He repeated his question. In a broken voice, I answered, "Don't you recognize me?" "No," he answered, "I don't know you, who are you? What are you here for?" "I am Raisa Mantver, do you remember a woman by that name?" "Is that you, Raya?" he answered, and started to ask, "Who is alive?..." "What great happiness that you survived," he said after I told him who was still alive. "I am happy to see you," and he invited me to lunch. There I told him a synopsis of what had happened. I immediately received a referral to Raikom in Dubno: to release Abba from the draft to the army, and to appoint him as the technological engineer and managing director of wine production, to provide him with workers and suitable housing. Also, to supply furniture and a food allowance for the whole family.

This was the best solution for the family, and I was profoundly grateful for this arrangement, and thanked him profusely. But he refused my words of gratitude and said, "It is only a humane act, there's nothing to thank me for!" When he took me to a car that was driving back to Dubno, he gave me 300 rubles. I didn't want to take it because I didn't know how I would repay him, how I would return this debt when we didn't have a single penny. By force, he slid the money into my pocket and wished me a successful journey, and promised to visit us. The road to Dubno, although it wasn't long, seemed to me to drag on endlessly. I wanted to share with my family as quickly as possible what I had managed to obtain for us. Of course there was great joy. What a noble person was this Ivan Ivanovitch!

We found another apartment to live in - not ours, though it was empty. We didn't want to live in what had been the ghetto. It was too painful to be reminded of the tragic events that had taken place there only a few years before. No one familiar was there any more. The horror of death was all around. Everyone who had lived there was buried in the ground. I didn't have the emotional strength to live in that place. On Varoshilov Street was a small three-room house with a nice garden. "We will live here," we decided. There was a small garden, and would be nice for the girl - so I thought to myself. I would be overcome by tears when I remembered that I still didn't know anything at all about your fate. The war was still going on at full strength, bombing and shooting. During the night we had to go down to the shelter. We felt the close proximity of the front. Despite this, we decided to set up house there. Life started to somehow fall into place. It was hard to get anything, there was a shortage of clothing. We received a very little from HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) but not as much as we needed; a miserly amount. A journey to Pochayev to find out how you were was still only a dream.

After we had been back in Dubno for about two weeks, at the beginning of April, when I was passing Alexandrovitch Street, a young woman approached me and asked, "Are you Mrs. Mantver?" I replied positively. "Do you know that your daughter is living in Pochayev?" she asked. Overcome with emotion, I asked her how she knew that, and she answered, "A woman is sitting at the shoemaker's who says you have a lovely daughter, and she's looking for you."

I can't describe how fast I ran home to share this outstandingly joyful news. We all cried and laughed in turn. It was the happiest day of my life.

I decided to travel to Pochayev. But how? Civilians were not allowed to travel in that direction, where battles were still taking place. The shooting of cannons and firearms there was constant. How would I get there? Saba started to ask around how to travel there. Through a man named Schwartz, I found out that soldiers were driving a truck to Kremnitz, and from there it was easy to reach Pochayev.

The next morning, with the help of Mr. Schwartz, I reached Kremnitz, planning to travel on from there. The way was hard. We heard constant shots and explosions, as the front was nearby. I was very nervous. I hadn't seen you for eight unbearable months. My heart wrenched and I broke into tears every time I remembered that I was about to see you. I wondered how you would react to me. May I at least find you healthy. And what if they didn't want to give you back to me? It is hard to describe the despair and the pain of a worried mother, longing for her daughter. I thought that I had done you an injustice, but, as I have already written, it was the only way to save our lives.

In the evening, we reached the decimated Kremnitz. The city I had known before the war was almost unrecognizable. I went to the home of a gentile woman who had hidden a few Jews, so I could sleep there. The house was full of about twenty Jews who had been saved, from the city and surrounding area. During the night, until about six in the morning, we sat together and everyone told his story. In the morning I spoke with a soldier, who would take me to Pochayev.

I want to tell here one of the stories that were heard that night. One of the people present approached me and asked whether I was going to Pochayev, and why? Of course he wished me a good meeting with my daughter. He asked me how old I thought he was. He had a long beard and he looked to be 42-45. "I'm only 25," he said, "I escaped from the burning ghetto. We sat in a hiding place that the Germans discovered. The last to leave the shelter ahead of me were my two-year-old son and my wife. I was last. I still hear the echo of my son, 'What, Abba isn't going with us?' They went out, and the place was covered and I couldn't get out. I was buried alive there. Suddenly I noticed a way to get out from the other side. I went outside. It was at night, the flames of the burning ghetto lit up the area, as bright as daylight. I saw a wagon passing with barrels of water. I jumped onto the wagon and asked the driver to take me aside to a darker place. I jumped off the wagon and found myself on the road leading to Mount Kashishova. I climbed until I reached the top, hungry and frightened. In the morning I found a cave. I lay down and slept for a long time. When I woke, it was already dark again. All I had with me was a pocketknife. I found a branch and started to fashion a kind of a rifle for myself. I thought I would have to fight for my life. How? To become a bandit. Only by force! I started to put my plan into action, so I wouldn't die of cold and hunger. During the night I approached the neighboring village, I knocked on the window of the first house I came to, and I yelled, 'Give me food or I'll shoot!' Immediately I got bread, milk, butter, eggs, matches, candles – everything you could imagine. I closed the door, walked far away, and afterward returned to blur my footsteps so they wouldn't be able to follow and catch me. I reached the cave and started to get organized. Imagine, in that freezing season I was warm, clean and well-fed. There I spent my time alone. Sometimes I

feared that I would become mute, so I started to talk to myself. In the winter, when it snowed, I thought I should get a sieve to scatter the snow and cover my footsteps. My will to live was that strong. And that was also how I knew what was happening until the liberation day.”

At 6:00 that morning, I got a few walnuts and apples and I went to find the soldier who would take me to Pochayev. On the way I saw human corpses and horse carcasses. It was shocking to see what the war left in its wake. We reached Pochayev in the afternoon, and I went to the Kocharevitch’s house. I greeted them all, and I felt that they knew the reason for my visit. They received me warmly. I went immediately to the house of Tyokla, the woman with whom I had left you, and after exchanging greetings, we both started to cry. You were sleeping peacefully. I looked at you and you looked like a picture, your rounded mouth, headful of blonde curls, pink cheeks. You were already a little girl, no longer a baby – two years and one month old. I had left you when you were only 16 months old. Probably the sound of our talking woke you, and you opened your black eyes. I wanted to hug you to my heart and kiss you. But I had to keep in mind the fact that, at this moment, in your eyes – I was a stranger.

When you saw me, you closed your eyes again. You lay there without acknowledging me. I asked Tyokla, “Who is this girl?” and my heart pounded. “This is my granddaughter,” said the woman. “What’s her name?” I asked. “Zinotchke,” she replied. “Come to me, I have apples and nuts for you,” I offered. You immediately reached out your hand, and so I accomplished my goal. I held you in my arms, pressed you to my heart and kissed every part of you – your mouth, hands, legs, and more. “Zinotchke,” I said, “this is your babushka, and where are your mother and father?” “I have no parents,” you said, “I only have Babushka.” These words brought me to tears. So that I wouldn’t frighten you, I averted my eyes and said, “I’m your mother, and you have a father too, and we love you very much.” “No,” you insisted, “I only have Babushka.” And with these words, you slid out of my lap and went to Tyokla.

Tyokla dressed you and the three of us went out for a walk. I stopped by an army truck, that was traveling to Dubno in the morning. I explained the situation to the soldier and asked him for a seat in the cabin. He agreed to give us a ride in the cabin if it was possible, if his commander didn’t drive with him. In any event, he promised to drive me in the morning. I promised him a reward once we reached Dubno if he kept his word. When we returned from our walk, you held Tyokla’s hand and didn’t leave her for a second. You probably sensed the nearing separation from her. Tyokla put you to bed after supper and told me to lie down next to you while you fell asleep, and she herself lay down on the bench. There was no other bed in the little room. During the night you called out for Babushka, and touched my face with your hands. You felt that they were not your Babushka’s cheeks and started to call for her. We changed places, and next to Tyokla, you instantly went back to sleep.

In the morning, we went out to the street. The truck was waiting for us. We said goodbye and then, for the first time in your life, you sat in a truck. The crying was mutual. “Babushka” cried bitterly, and you also cried and wanted her to come with us. I promised you that Babushka would come and be with us. Then, I had to give up our place in the cabin and move up to the body of the truck. I remember that there were many empty gasoline barrels. I sat on a crate among them and held you in my arms.

The barrels rattled constantly and you were scared, you cried, and asked me, “Auntie, you won’t do anything bad to me? I want my babushka.” I kissed you and promised you that I was your mother, but you didn’t believe me.

We finally arrived in Dubno. You stayed very close to me. You didn’t let Abba, Saba, or Savta approach you. So passed a week or two of missing Babushka, and of sleepless nights.

I have to describe how you looked. You were wearing shoes that were about four sizes too big for you, you wore a long dress, a little apron, a sweater that Savta had knit for you and a kerchief tied in the Ukrainian style, in front and in back, a real gentile village girl, and you spoke Ukrainian as if from birth. Next to our house was a church, and more than once, after a long search, we would find you there.

Two weeks after we came home Babushka, who missed you very much, came from Pochayev and brought you a sweater that she had knitted from white wool. The Kocharevitches also visited us often, and we them. In short – family.

In 1947, we left Dubno for Poland as part of “repatriation” and we settled in Wroclaw. Your brother Arnon was then two years old (born June 1, 1945), three weeks after the war ended.

In Wroclaw we lived with Saba Eliezer. Savta Sarah, to our sorrow, had died in a car accident in Militaino, near Lvov, on October 16, 1946. She had traveled to Lvov to arrange some documents relating to our exit to Poland, but on the way back the car turned over and she was killed on the spot. It was a tragedy – to survive that terrible war, and afterward – in perfect health – to be killed in an accident. She was buried in Dubno.

Mourning and depressed, we traveled to Wroclaw. Abba immediately investigated setting up a factory. In Warsaw, he got all the necessary documents; in both the ministry and the excise tax office they had known him since before the war. He rented a place on Novoveiska Street. I have always saved the floorplan of this factory, and I give it to you as a souvenir. The factory prospered. We lived a comfortable life, with two servants in our home. We traveled to expensive resorts. In Kodova we stayed in the Polonia Hotel, and there we met for the first time the Israeli envoy and his wife. We were happy, and Saba, who came also, cried in joy that we had gotten a state of our own. He said in excitement, “We have our own Israel, our own consul.” We already had papers prepared for making Aliyah to Israel, although, from a material point of view, our situation was excellent.

To our sorrow, Saba fell ill in 1949. After the Yom Kippur fast, his heart started to fail and he died March 19, 1950.

In Shaar Ha’aliya, near Haifa, we spent a few difficult weeks. Conditions were hard, but we knew that it was temporary. From there, we were transferred to Beit Ha’olim in Ein Shemer, where conditions were also hard. In January we arrived for settlement in Kiryat Ono. I won’t forget that house. I was happy that we had two rooms with a kitchen and bathroom and a yard with a garden, which was very important in those times. An agricultural counselor would periodically come around, and she explained



how to run a small agricultural plot, when to sow, to plant, how to raise chickens (we had 20) and similar tasks. I was happy that I was in my homeland, I occupied myself with different kinds of gardening, and the main thing was that everything had turned out alright. There was a lot of work to do in the house and garden, taking care of the family, but the outcomes were good and it gave me a lot of satisfaction and pleasure.

I properly educated my three children and, together with my beloved and devoted husband, we lived happily. Dear Ziva! You were a wonderful daughter to me, good, obedient, a good student. It pained me only that you were physically weak and your health was not in order. It was because of the cursed followers of Hitler.

At the end of 1957 we moved to Petach Tikva. Abba z"l got the concession to run a factory making juice, syrups and jams. We worked hard, but earned well. On May 25, 1962 we married you to the man you loved, Dani Golan. The wedding was very festive and Abba told the guests in his speech that this was the wedding of a girl who was miraculously saved in the terrible war. To our sorrow, few of those children remained alive.

Abba was a big patriot. In 1963, Abba fell ill and, after his surgery, it became evident that it was kidney cancer that had been removed. I had to close the factory and care for ailing Abba.

After dear Abba's surgery, sadness and disquiet filled our home. Arnon was not much at home; he was living in Jerusalem, where he studied social and political science. Eli was studying in the agricultural school Hakfar Hayarok, and you lived with your family in Neve Oz, where you still live today.

After we closed down the factory, Abba and I started to work in Magen David Adom in Petach Tikva. He was not supposed to be out in direct sunlight, so he took night shifts. The work didn't suit him, but he had to do something that was appropriate given his health condition.

In March 1967, I was in Germany as a witness from the Dubno Ghetto and testified against our murderers. The Dortmund police, near Dusseldorf, took my testimony. That was where the file was on the criminals who ran the activities in the Dubno ghetto: the "Gvits-Commisar" (regional commander) Bruk, the Shtabs-liter Halita, the Regierung (Government Inspector) Visa, and the "doll" Miss Vapler, Hammerstein from the work office and the policeman Papka – all these murderers live today in Dusseldorf in West Germany. I also brought to the Israeli police an album, in which I found pictures of German anti-ghetto criminals, but to this day nothing has been done against them, and nothing happened to them. They live well, work, have families – and have reached – to our sorrow- old age, while our sweet, innocent children were murdered by their hand in the most bestial and cruel way, and buried in mass graves. That's how the world works.

After I came back from Germany, on May 11, 1967 your brother Arnon got married. Their first child on June 13, 1970 was a girl, Elinoar, and on February 15, 1972 their second child, Uriah, was born. In the morning Abba got a phone call from Arnon, "Abba, our son has been born in mazal tov." Abba answered, "Mazal tov!" and burst into tears. "This is the first male Mantver of the third generation." At the end of the

conversation, he turned to me and asked that they call the child by his name, Avraham. "After all, I'm going to die," he said, "I want the child to carry my name." "I don't agree to that," I said, "you are alive, and in our tradition that is forbidden."

Then Abba phoned Rabbi Frankel, explained the situation, and asked him for permission to call the newborn boy by his name. "If you are Ashkenazi," answered the rabbi, "that is forbidden. It is not allowed to anticipate what hasn't yet happened." And Abba responded, "If everyone is against it, may the boy be healthy, and call him whatever you want." He was named Uriah.

"Raya," he said to me, "this is the beginning of the end for me."  
To my sorrow he was right. He died on March 19, 1972.

And now, note the dates: on March 19, 1944 we came out of our underground hiding place. On the same day in 1950, Saba died. On March 19, 1951 Eli was born, may he have a long life, and on the same date, in 1972, Abba died.

May this date be for us a day of happiness, joy, and retelling.

You and Dani have brought to the world three lovely sons: Tamir, Ofer, and Ron, and just now, the oldest, Tamir, has been drafted into the Israel Defense Forces. How happy I am that we have reached this joyous moment.

I wish you all the best,  
Your mother, Raya Mantver