About the Author . . .

Rabbi Leon Thorne, the author of this moving account of the survival of a Jew during the violent Hitler era in Europe, lived most of his life in the area he describes so vividly in *Out of the Ashes*. He was born in Schodnica, near Drohobycz in Poland. His family, deeply pious, owned and operated oil wells in the Carpathian Mountains in Poland for more than 100 years.

Deeply grounded in Jewish learning and scholarship, Rabbi Thorne was ordained as a rabbi at the age of 19. He continued his religious studies at the Jewish Theological Seminaries of Vienna, Austria and Breslau, Germany. He pursued his general education at the universities of Vienna, Breslau and Wuerzburg and earned his Ph.D. at Wuerzburg, Germany. He majored in philosophy, history and pedagogy.

He served as a spiritual leader in Pomerania in Poland and while he led the Jews in that area, he wrote an important volume on Jewish philosophy entitled *Die Eschatologie und Transcendente Vergeltung*.

What Rabbi Thorne had to live through during World War II is vividly depicted in *Out of the Ashes*. Upon his liberation in August 1944, he was commissioned a Captain and served as a Chaplain in the Polish Free Army. He was one of the first members of the "Central Committee of the Jews from Poland" in Lublin. It was the purpose of this organization to rebuild and reconstitute the Jewish communities of Poland that had been destroyed by the Nazis.

From 1946 to 1948, he was the rabbi of the liberated Jews in Frankfort-on-Main in Germany and was an editor of the important Jewish periodical *Jeshurun*. In 1948, Rabbi Thorne emigrated to the United States, where he has continued his rabbinic and literary activities.

OUT OF THE ASHES

the story of a survivor

LEON THORNE

BLOCH

OUT OF THE ASHES

the story of a survivor

by LEON THORNE

$6.95

OUT OF THE ASHES

by Leon Thorne, Ph. D.

You are holding in your hand one of the most remarkable and unforgettable personal narratives to emerge from the Hitler holocaust in Europe.

While there have been literally thousands of books written about and by the life of the Jews during the years when six million Jews were wiped out in concentration and extermination camps, few volumes are as authentic and as stark as *Out of the Ashes*. Rabbi Thorne not only possesses total recall; he owns a literary style which brings to life a period which shall forever be remembered as one of the most dramatic eras in human existence. But this is more than a personal document. It represents the agony of an entire people and even the reader who thinks he knows what happened under Hitler will gasp in amazement at this story of a man who, deeply religious and faithful to the precepts of Orthodox Judaism, manages to retell the tale of a handful of years which saw men, women and children subjected to atrocities beyond human imagination.

Written under the most unusual circumstances—while the author was hidden in a cellar hiding from the Nazis—*Out of the Ashes* contains thousands of dramatic scenes . . . hundreds of stories of Jews, Germans

(Continued on back flap)

and other Europeans who acted out a play which, unhappily, was real and nightmarish. At the same time, there runs through the narrative a thread of triumph in the midst of chaos.

Far broader in its implications than the Anne Frank Diary; more deeply stirring than Meyer Levin's *Eva* and more intensely personal than volumes of history which attempt to cover the entire experience of the Jewish people in those years, *Out of the Ashes* is a story of eternal Jewish faith, victorious in circumstances previously unmatched in the annals of Jewish martyrdom.

You will read in this book of moments of heroism, self-sacrifice and destruction which you will always remember. You will be convinced that this is exactly how it was and you will marvel at how the author managed to survive scores of "Actions" and pogroms. You will wonder how he survived. But at the same time, you will understand how, in surviving, Rabbi Thorne held fast to his belief in the ultimate triumph of the Jewish people.

Although *Out of the Ashes* is full of sadness, it is also replete with stories of the victory of the human spirit. It is a valuable historical document; it is, for sheer story telling, unsurpassed by any other writer who lived through these years. It is the story of one man, of an entire people and of a history which all mankind would do well to ponder.

Out of the Ashes is a major book, a great contribution to the literature of our time.

OUT OF THE ASHES

The Story of a Survivor

By LEON THORNE, Ph.D.

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Contents

This book is dedicated, in deep humility, to those heroic martyrs who were destroyed in the European ghettos and concentration camps because they were Jews and because they lived Jewish lives. They died in obscurity and pain as the world looked passively on. May this book serve to remind mankind of what happened to them—and may they know, in Heaven, that they are remembered, their stories told, their experiences recalled and their heroism admired.

Author's Preface

Sixteen long and eventful years have now passed since the writer emerged from the shadow of death, with a lifetime of experiences etched in his mind, and a battered manuscript written under enormous handicaps and describing in detail the years of the Hitler terror.

Since that time there have been other survivors who have told their stories; there have been thousands of magazine articles and hundreds of books and plays and poems and true-life accounts ghost-written and distributed all over the world.

The story of Anne Frank has captured the imagination of the world. *The Wall* by John Hersey has been a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and it, like the Anne Frank book, has appeared in millions of copies of paperback editions everywhere. Meyer Levin, in his autobiography, *In Search* and in his best-selling novel *Eva*, has told, graphically, the stories of other survivors.

Why, then, another book by another man who happened to live through the war, through the concentration camps and through the harrowing crematoria?

No life is like another and no man has lived another man's life. I feel, with humility and with passion, that what happened to me was different in spirit if not in kind from what others lived through. No professional writer, no

skilled novelist, no gifted poet could lift the limits of his imagination to compete with the facts as they were.

The reader of this narrative may sometimes doubt the events recounted in this tale. But every word is the truth. And where I repeat some stories from hearsay, I have checked the manuscript with survivors in Europe who participated in those events of which I did not have first-hand knowledge.

I saw a generation die—and a new generation come to life. I emerged from the holocaust feeling that I came through, to some extent, because my story had to be told—to a doubting and to a forgetful and an indifferent generation. Men and women and children were wantonly murdered; and I saw it happen. The depths of degradation were witnessed by me and yet I retained my belief in the power of man to survive, to retain his faith in his Lord.

I shall never forget the years during which I existed; existed rather than lived. But I—like thousands of others—remain alive to give evidence of the barbarous treatment man can visit upon his fellow man.

I wrote this manuscript in German and, after years of travel and travail, saw it translated into English, for a new generation to read and ponder. It is obvious today, in reading of the swastika smearings in Germany and elsewhere that my story must be told. For after fifteen years, it is clear that Nazism is not dead. Young boys and girls, now studying in most schools are taught practically nothing about the Hitler years. Their ignorance of the atrocities is abysmal. And this ignorance is world-wide for people in all lands ignore the past and pretend a lack of knowledge of what happened in those years. The world has been shocked by violence against the Jews and Jew-baiting, renewed and revived a decade and a half after the victory over Hitlerism.

Indeed, a new generation must read and ponder this story. I can only wish that the eyes which read this narrative will help the world understand what happened to the people to whom these things were done—and the triumphant conclusion of this tale—triumphant even in the midst of terror and bloodshed. For I am persuaded that the Jewish people shall continue to dismay their enemies through the ages, even though some people continue to give evidence that they are still tainted with hatred and bigotry and violence.

The Jewish people are immortal and my own survival is part of that immortality, and the victory of God.

I owe a special word of gratitude to my good friend Dr. Benjamin Z. Kreitman, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of America, who has taken an affectionate interest in my welfare and has been my faithful guide for many years. Without his friendship and support my life in this country would have been difficult. He has made it easier and I shall always be grateful to him.

I cannot conclude my expressions of appreciation without paying special tribute to my dear wife Rachel, who is intimately acquainted with the events described in these pages and whose love and encouragement have meant much to me during the relatively peaceful years of adjustment in the United States.

And if the reader will gain some insight into the period, some realization of the hell and terror of the Hitler years, I shall consider my work well done.

New York, January, 1961 Leon Thorne

Preface to the Second and Third Editions

"Out of the Ashes" was first published in 1961, several years after my arrival in this country. Since then, quite a few years have passed. A whole new generation has grown to maturity knowing the Nazi Holocaust only from history books. Most parents and grandparents who survived the mass slaughter of European Jewry find it painful to share their memories with their American progeny. Most of the books that were written by Holocaust survivors during the period immediately following World War II are now out of print. The result is that this most tragic era of Jewish history has come to seem increasingly unreal to Jews alive in the free world today.

Accordingly, on the advice of many associates, I decided to publish "Out of the Ashes" once again. I hope that this book, which represents my personal record of how I managed to live through the Holocaust, will help the present generation comprehend the magnitude of the disaster that befell our people and gain a better understanding of the psychological problems which the surviving remnant had to overcome.

1976

L.T.

"X" marks the hiding place

From The Cellar

I am writing these lines under great difficulties, while my life is in danger and with little confidence that I shall survive these terrible years. But I must write, even if these words die with me, for I feel someone must tell the story of how the Jews lived, died—and survived the Hitler years. The despairing cries of my fellow Jews in the ghettos and concentration camps are echoing in my ears.

And their cries shall not go unheard. Will somebody be left to record recent events? Who will describe our tortures for the people of the future, who may be ignorant of what we experienced?

I dare not hope that I shall live through this period, but I must work as though my words *will* come through. I shall act and write as though there were hope for me . . . .

Five of us have been living in a cellar under a stable situated on the premises of an oil well in Schodnica in the Carpathian Mountains in Galicia. In the stable overhead there is a pig, a goat, and about twenty rabbits and some poultry. The cellar is six feet long and about four feet wide and about five feet high. We cannot stand upright, although we can lie down at full length.

I am here with my younger brother, and with Dr. Isidor Friedman, a young lawyer, and two women, Luisa Mahler and Esther Backenroth.

There isn't very much furniture here, but somehow we manage. We have two spring mattresses, a wooden bench, a narrow little table capable of holding no more than two saucepans at most and a small shelf. The spring mattresses are spaced a half-meter apart one from the other, with my brother and me sleeping on one and the two women on the other above us. Dr. Friedman uses the wooden bench for a bed. The floor and the walls of the cellar were constructed out of wooden planks.

For the moment, the only source of light we have is a candle, which burns day and night. Some day it might be possible for us to have electric lights installed by means of camouflaged wiring, but not yet. An airshaft built into the double wall of the stable provides us with our breathing air, but when it is hot outside, we get very little fresh air. In any case, it is becoming intolerably hot in our hideout. At night, the outside air is cooler and helps us breathe.

We have here the luxury of a makeshift toilet. In a corner of the cellar there is a niche, one yard wide, built in for toilet purposes, with a bucket in a box. This is what we all use, men and women alike.

Once every day, in the evening, of course, the well-camouflaged entrance to our hideout is opened for food for the next day, plus a pail of water. Each day there are potatoes, soup, some bread, and on Sunday, a little butter and a bit of sugar. We also receive tobacco, cigarette paper, matches and candles. In return we pass out the pots and pans used the previous day as well as the toilet bucket.

Thanks to two Polish families, we live as we do. Both Stanislaw Nendza and Franz Janiewski are oil workmen who formerly worked for us. Although Poles have been forbidden by the German authorities under penalty of death to aid Jews, these two Polish families have dared help us.

We are grateful to them, naturally, but it should be pointed out that they are not placing themselves in danger

for idealistic reasons alone. They are hiding some of their Jewish acquaintances and employers from the Gestapo for material reasons as well. First, we pay them very well for their cooperation and, in addition, we have promised them, in writing, that half our fortune in the Schodnica oil wells—which we are convinced will be restored to us after the war—will belong to them. The papers have been signed by us and are here in the cellar.

I am writing while lying on my cot, leaning on the bucket of water which is covered by a thick piece of cardboard. This is my desk. Under conditions that can hardly be called human, we are anxiously attempting to preserve our lives and our dignity. It is difficult here, but we are satisfied because up above, in the light and in the sun, where one can stand upright and breathe fresh air, brutal death awaits us. We understand that Jews are being killed systematically and callously, that none are left in the towns, and that even the labor camps have only a few thousand Jews left in them.

We are not at all confident that we shall be able to stay alive down here until the end of the war. A casual word spoken here, a word needlessly spoken too loudly might be heard by peasants or workmen passing by. A cough or a sneeze, any unforeseen incident, may bring us to death.

And so I am determined to see to it that these memoirs shall be seen and read. I will write them with objectivity and without embellishment. I will make my notes in copybooks and send each volume, including my notes made in ghettos and camps, by way of my hosts, to an Aryan friend of mine. Should I live to the end of the war, I plan to retrieve the books from him and arrange for their publication. And if I die, I shall arrange for him to send the copybooks to a Jewish organization in America or Palestine, with a postscript that the author had been shot.

And now, in the name of G—d, I begin to write.

Schodnica

No matter how hard you looked, you would have great difficulty in finding Schodnica on a map. It is buried in the Carpathian Mountains, fifteen kilometers distant from the closest railway station. It had a population of 5,000, of whom about 1,000 were Jewish. But Schodnica is obscure in history, for nothing of any historical significance ever took place there.

Years ago, there was what the Jews of Schodnica called a "revolution," even though this event was too trivial for any historian to record. As a matter of fact, the event under discussion did not really happen! It seems that an Austrian policeman (Galicia then belonged to Austria) had stabbed a non-Jewish loafer in a Jewish cafe and the gathering crowd got out of hand and threatened to storm and destroy the Jewish homes and their inhabitants. But nothing happened for an odd reason: a sudden and strong rain had come pouring down, rapidly drenching the excited natives and driving out of their minds any ideas of violence they had had before nature had decided to permit the rain to fall!

Because it was one of the few exciting moments in the

lives of the Jews, I heard it alluded to frequently during my childhood. Yet, although Schodnica was quiet, it was rather a substantial town. It was the first locality of Eastern Galicia where oil was discovered, more than one hundred years ago, and a Jew played a major role in this important discovery.

His name was Meilich Backenroth, my greatgrandfather. He was digging in his garden for a water well, when suddenly there spurted forth a dark brown, almost black liquid. But he himself was not aware of the value of his find. It was, of course, crude oil, and it was then used as cart grease and for lighting purposes, in a rather crude manner. It was not until a few decades later that Meilich's youngest son, Itzig Backenroth, realized the material significance of his father's discovery. He, is said, to have risked his life to get out of town to get to Vienna with his first bottle of petroleum. And it was that very year that hundreds of engineers came to Schodnica to drill for the liquid brown gold in the black earth. From that time forward, to 1939, the Backenroth family controlled a large part of the oil-boring places. The whole town came alive and, directly and indirectly, oil brought wealth to Schodnica. The Jewish community, while comparatively small, was rich in Jewish traditions, tolerated by the Christians, and permitted to enjoy life. Because the Jews were so aware of their tradition, it is natural that they sought information concerning their people and dreamed of a Zion Reborn.

The entire picture changed radically, violently and bitterly with the outbreak of the German-Polish war in September, 1939. Soviet troops occupied Lemberg, including Schodnica, as a part of East Poland, and almost immediately, all Jewish property was expropriated and the Jews were reduced to the status of beggars.

Two years later, on the thirteenth day after the outbreak

of the German Russian war, on Friday, July 4, 1941—the ninth day of Tammuz 5701 according to the Jewish calendar —a pogrom broke out in the area. The Russian troops had evacuated the sector five days earlier and Ukranians, infamous for the previous pogroms, assaulted Schodnica before the Nazi armies approached the town. The Ukrainians were responsible for murdering half of the Jewish men of Schodnica.

A few days later, the German Wehrmacht invaded the town with Slovakian troops and immediately issued the orders whereby:

1) Every Jew, including men between the ages of 12 and 60 and women between the ages of 18 and 40, were driven into forced labor, and

2) Every Jew, 10 years of age and over, had to wear a white badge, ten centimeters wide, embroidered with the Star of David, eight centimeters wide.

From this period on, the Jews were given dirty, miserable, humiliating work, cleaning sewers and gutters. There was no payment for this work, of course, nor was it physically hard. It was intended only to degrade and humble the Jews. Jews were permited a bread ration of 70 grams; non-Jews got 400 grams.

One month after the pogrom, the Gestapo entered the neighborhood village of Urycz, herded all its Jews into the nearby forest and murdered them all in cold blood, shooting them to death, needlessly, cruelly and thoughtlessly. The only survivor of this massacre was a boy between six and seven years old. His family name was Leichtmann and his father had emigrated to America a few years earlier. The father had sent immigration papers for his wife and two children, but they came too late. A week before they were to have left, the German-Polish war erupted. The mother and brother were killed with the rest of the Jews of Urycz, but the surviving lad managed to escape the Nazis, even

as the Germans persistently hunted the boy in the forest. The Gestapo officer in charge of the killings, a murderer named Monta, had sworn that he would see to it that no Jew in town remained alive. Yet the Leichtmann boy outwitted him, arriving in a terrible state, but safe, in Schodnica, where his uncle lived.

But Monta, a German by origin, who had lived in our region a few years ago, was not appeased by the bloodshed. He arranged for all the Jews of Podhorodce and Dolhe to be shot. It seemed that he had lost a lawsuit to a Jew, Pyrnitzer, at one time and his violent action was his idea of a private act of revenge against Jews. He spared the lives of two Jews—Katz and Weiss—who had been witnesses on his behalf during the trial. It was in this arbitrary, weird and meaningless fashion that Jews died, and lived.

When the shocking news of the massacres reached Schodnica, the large majority of the town's Jews panicked. There were rumors afoot that the Gestapo was coming to kill all Jews in the area. All of us, clutching our remaining possessions, fled to the nearby towns and villages of Borysław, Drohobycz, Sambor and Stryj.

My family and I ran to Sambor.

Sambor

Before the war, Sambor, a town in Eastern Galicia, had 21,000 inhabitants, of which one-third were Jewish. In Jewish religious circles, Sambor was famed as the home of the Rabbi Uri Yolles, the founder of the "Sambor Rabbinic Dynasty." His reputation drew hundreds of his followers to the town. During the time of the Baal-Shem-Tov, a great Talmudist lived there—Rabbi Yitzchok Charif. The Jews of Sambor were especially proud of both spiritual leaders and spokesmen as well as the entire "Sambor Dynasty."

The Nazi Gestapo, operating from the nearby town of Drohobycz, terrorized the Jews, who had been earning their livelihood as grain-dealers or craftsmen. (Two years earlier in 1939, when the Russians permitted the Germans to enter Sambor, the Jews were given four hours to pay the Germans 35,000 zlotys. They managed to obtain the money for otherwise, the entire Jewish Council would be shot.) Nevertheless Jewish life was rather well organized. In an area called the "Bleich," there was a Jewish Council which was a complex and bewildering unit. This Council was not created by the Jews themselves in order to represent their fellow Jews, nor were its members democratically elected. In an indirect way, this Council was appointed by the German military authorities. The newly-elected Mayor of a locality would propose to the military a Jew of his acquaintance as "Obmann" or foreman or chief. This Jew would then select his own colleagues to work with him.

Why was a Jewish Council established? What was its

task? Certainly, it did not represent the local Jews, nor did it heed their petitions. The Council had a single, unpleasant function—to find Jewish workers for the most difficult and dirtiest jobs in the area. All male Jews from the ages of 12 to 60 were eligible, all women, from 18 to 40. The Sambor Jewish Council was headed by a Dr. Samson Schneidscher. His deputy was a Dr. Zausner. Other members were named Dr. Frey, Dr. Halpern, Schnorr, Lehrer, Becker and others.

If the Germans called for 1,500 workmen, the Council would call up about 1,700 or 1,800 and force the additional hundreds to sit around the "Bleich" all day long, in expectation of an emergency call. If an assigned worker did not show up on time, he had to be reported or handed over to the German police. Curiously enough, this Council offered a certain degree of relief to the Jews of the town. It eliminated the former humiliation of Jews being dragged about by German or Ukrainian soldiers who wanted to torture or make fun of innocent Jews. Yet there was not much relief, really, for even after the Council placed the Jewish workers, the German and Ukrainian overseers tortured many Jews during working hours.

Many women and elderly Jews suffered so much that when they came back from their "jobs," they were in no shape to continue at their tasks and the Council released them for a protracted period of time.

The Council had another responsibility—to distribute bread to the Jews. The Germans considered themselves to be too important to handle this chore, and so the task was left to the Council. The bread ration came to four ounces a day per person. The Council opened centers for distribution and this work led to other responsibilities. With each passing week, new claims were made on the Council and, in time, a soup kitchen was opened and, later, an ambulance station, where the finest Jewish doctors contributed their skill and know-how on behalf of their fellow Jews. In order

to settle disputes, a law court was established by the Council, and it included former Jewish judges and lawyers, who rendered legal and fair verdicts which were accepted by the people. Merely by threatening to hand over difficult cases to the Germans, the Jewish Council was able to enforce its sentences and thus give itself a definite authority. The Council even established a prison, which was used occasionally. All these institutions were housed in the Jewish Council Building in the "Bleich."

With all of its new tasks, the Council needed money, so it imposed a tax on all Jews under its authority. A special tax office, with executives, was created. At the beginning of each month, each Jew received his assessment from the tax office, with an order of payment. The Jews themselves had previously informed the office how much they could afford to pay. If, however, the demand was too high, in his opinion, he was permitted to argue his case. If he lost, he had to accede or receive a warrant of distress and a threat to sell his possessions. This, however, happened rarely.

As the Council's activities expanded, it was found necessary to create a Jewish militia, headed by a Jewish commander. This militia was accorded recognition by the district prefect and the militiamen were limited in proportion to the number of Jews in a given area. A member wore no uniform, except a blue cap with a Star of David and a number. Sambor had 40 such militiamen.

In the beginning, decent men belonged to the militia, but, as it was realized that the Germans planned to use the group against the Jews themselves, the better men left its ranks, leaving behind only the disreputable men who were insensible to the sufferings of their fellows. Some of them were sufficiently depraved to take advantage of their victims and live well at their expense. It did not take long before the Jewish militia was unpopular and hated in some quarters.

Nevertheless the Germans issued anti-Jewish ordinances, all of which were aimed at demoralizing, robbing and humiliating the Jews. Homes and real estate were expropriated, although this was less sweeping than it sounds, for the Soviet Government previously had nationalized most of the Jewish houses and properties. All radios and all precious stones, gold, silver, copper and foreign currency had to be yielded up to the Nazis on pain of death. All dray horses, bicycles and other equipment used for moving about had to be surrendered. Domestic animals and poultry, too, were taken away, as were sporting goods and uniforms. There were other harsh orders involving limitations on moving about, a 7 P.M. curfew and the impounding of such goods as furniture and clothing. The Germans, as one could see, were quite thorough.

There were so many orders issued and so much confusion about them, that the Germans themselves were not always sure what the laws were. First there was an edict banning the Jews from walking on the sidewalks; then, another order keeping them from the roads. Under such conditions, where were Jews to walk? This led to a meeting of minds of the security police and the district prefect, and it was decided that Jews could not walk on the sidewalks or on the roads, unless they remained on either extremity of the road; that it to say, not in the middle of the road! That is how ridiculous it became.

On the matter of saluting. If a Jew saluted a German, the Nazi might become enraged because a Jew was being "polite" to a member of the Master Race, and how dare he salute a Nazi? On the other hand, if a Jew walked past a German without saluting him, a whip might beat down on him for refusing to honor a German officer.

These conditions prevailed at a time when the Jewish Council was doing all it could to bribe the German authorties into permitting the Jews to survive as human beings.

Dr. Schneidscher, the chairman of the Council in Sambor, was adroit in his handling of the authorities, bribing the right men at the right time. As a result, there were no Jews killed by the Germans in Sambor for a comparatively long spell. While the Germans were murdering Jews in other towns and cities of Eastern Galicia, Dr. Schneidscher was helping his people survive.

But in December, 1941, his luck seemed to desert him. The Gestapo trucks rumbled through the streets of Sambor and it appeared that death was about to visit the Jews who had, unlike their fellows, escaped their fate. The machine guns mounted on the trucks were silent harbingers of what was soon to come. Yet Dr. Schneidscher's luck had not left him. In desperation, he brought forth for the Gestapo chiefs, who entered the offices of the Jewish Council, heaping piles of treasures which he had been massing for a long period of time. This was the moment, he felt, when he had to do all within his power to dissuade the Germans from their task. Anticipating such a crisis, Dr. Schneidscher had sent young Jews into Jewish homes to collect hundreds of golden wedding rings, —and this final mount of gold saved the day. The Germans collected, and withdrew.

The terrified Jews of Sambor could scarcely believe their ears when they heard the trucks back up and leave the town. But the Gestapo did not rest that day. To waste bullets was not their custom. The Germans drove into the two neighboring towns and proceeded to massacre the Jews there. Sambor had been spared, but Jews were killed that day.

During the first months, the economic situation of the Jews in Sambor was slightly better than that of their fellow Jews in nearby towns. The Poles in the town did not participate in attacks against the Jews with the same intensity as the Ukrainians. In the Winter of 1941-42, however, life became so difficult that Jews died of hunger in the streets,

and soon the Jews everywhere were equally miserable in their unhappy lives.

In the meantime, the war continued. The Germans had not conquered Russia in eight weeks, as they had predicted they would, nor did the offensive of October, 1941 bring the Germans their anticipated successes. We, for our part, were confident that history would repeat itself and, as in the Napoleonic invasion, the Germans would stumble and fall.

When the United States entered the war in December, 1941, it meant, so far as we were able to figure it, certain defeat for Hitler. But we also believed that the possibility of a rapid end to the war was now over. We felt pessimistic for another reason. Now that the Americans had come into the fight, Hitler would no longer feel restrained to go easy in his persecution of the Jews, for American public opinion was no longer a factor to the Germans. Death's grim head could now grin over the thought of killing Jews in ghettos, open streets and concentration camps.

In December, 1941, there was another bit of action which few people in the outside world knew anything about, but which was important to us. The Germans issued their "fur-decrees." This meant that all furs, or fur coats, were to be yielded up to the enemy. The Germans understood that Russian winters were freezing cold and if we gave up our warm coats, not only would we suffer, but the Nazis would be enabled to survive the Russian air. Should we give up our coats and help our deadly foes to escape from a cold death in snow, ice or storm?

The Jews had an answer to this decree, painful though it was. Instead of delivering the furs to the Germans, we burned them! This "fur action" was carried out simultaneously in various towns and villages. Yet not a week went by without a German finding a Jew with furs and shooting him for it. So desperate were the Germans for furs that they became "hotter" properties than gold or diamonds or dollars.

Books in Sambor

It had been our intention to remain in Sambor, if we could, until the end of the war. The Jewish Council had to pay a small sum of money to register us as permanent residents. We were assigned to various tasks and, after I had been given some heavy work, I was re-assigned to a better, cleaner job of sorting out books, in many languages, which had come to Sambor from other towns because Sambor was to be developed by the Soviets into a cultural center for the entire area.

Thousands upon thousands of books—in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish and German—had been collected in Sambor by the Soviets, who intended to make Sambor the cultural heart of the district. When the Russians withdrew in July, 1941, the books fell under German control and the labor office was ordered to assign ten Jews to the task of cataloguing the volumes.

Work was already in full swing when I joined the staff. My colleagues were for the most part teachers and lawyers. I was to be the expert in Jewish literature. This work was the only job I had during the entire occupation which gave

me pleasure, and which involved no torture, humiliation and aggravation. Who can imagine what it means to be an enslaved, humiliated, tormented man, living always in the shadow of death—and finally to be able to fill the void in his heart with books, cultural symbols of the best in humankind?

I enjoyed myself at that time; and it was a rare opportunity I had, in view of the world about me. After a year of literally vegetating under conditions unworthy of human life, I was able to read once more, to study for a few hours every day! I had thousands of books at my fingertips: volumes on technological subjects, medicine, philosophy, sociology, economics, history, the science of war. With an almost unquenchable thirst for knowledge, I became absorbed in many books, and thus I forgot the bitter, dreary reality of my life. My colleagues were like myself. They, too, buried themselves behind and within mountains of books. We sat together and read. Never did I hear them say—although they may have thought it—"We are sitting here, enjoying books while our fellow Jews are subjected to heavy labor and menial and humiliating tasks." The pleasure was too unexpected, too sweet, and men are only human.

The local town commander came by once a week to investigate our progress. But his probing brought with it no particular anxiety or tension. We had to cope with an enormous number of volumes, which five times as many men could not really handle. His weekly visit, therefore, was scarcely enough for him to ascertain our progress. Our regular overseer, a Ukrainian named Wislocki, was a drunkard and he had but one problem facing him endlessly—where to obtain enough money for his liquor, coffee and opium-cigarettes. He gave us no trouble at all, especially when we bribed him with presents every once in a while and gave him our monthly wages, which amounted to 80 zloties. As there were eleven of us, our wages kept him comfortably in drink for a brief spell. In return, he more

or less ignored us and went so far as to "promote" one of our own group—Speiser, a former Austrian officer from Rzeshov ——as our "commandant." Not only were we left in peace under these conditions, but now we had an opportunity to aid the Allies.

What we did was not of key significance, but our lives were so intensely lived that we, at any rate, felt we were doing something of importance. We helped sabotage the German war effort, in our own minds, when we burned the military books that the Nazis asked for. Apparently, the Russians who had stocked the library, had planned to open a military academy nearby and, consequently, filled the town with military volumes. Periodically, we would receive letters—which came to us via Wislocki—asking for reference books on special subjects like "pillbox systems," or "camouflage," or "the technique of winter fighting." When we did manage to discover that we were in posession of such reference books, we burned them.

It must be stated to the credit of my co-workers that not one of them ever entertained the idea of yielding up a single title which might be of value to the Germans. Never did any of them suggest that we play it safe by occasionally "finding" a wanted title so that we should not be suspected of sabotage. On the contrary, we acted in unison, and one day made a large, blazing, happy bonfire out of all the military reference volumes marked "confidential." The fire grew so large and exuded such heat we were sure we would be found out, but Wislocki was, as usual, drunk and we escaped this time.

We did not fool ourselves into believing that we had done anything of real value in the war against the inhuman Nazis. But we did gain a small measure of self-respect, which the enemy had tried to beat out of us by way of humiliations, beatings and torture. We did know that we performed the forbidden act under pain of death. Danger did exist; it

was real and the fact that we succeeded in the face of this danger did help us to reaffirm our self-respect and to fan the flame of belief in our hearts.

There were, in this work, some rather light sides, too. I was occupied with the sorting of several thousand volumes written in Yiddish. Most of these books were school textbooks, although there were also some novels and other titles of creative literature. The local commander of Sambor and his deputy were most anxious to discover the "dark secrets" of the Jewish people and they believed that in these books, piled up and in disorder, they could extract those mysteries which intrigued them. Of course, they had read the Nazi newspapers and listened to their own radio propaganda, which stressed all the evils that the Hitlerites connected with the Jews. Nevertheless, they probably would have felt more secure in their hatred if they could find the books and read them for themselves.

Periodically, the commander and his deputy would stride into my room and stand before the piled-up volumes and look at them curiously and desperately. Here, in front of them, were the Jewish treasures that eluded them and others like them. Here they stood, at the source, as it were, of Judaism, but how were they to learn what lay hidden in these undecipherable pages?

Should we have told these men that the written material was but the product of a morbid imagination? They would not have believed a word of it, for wasn't Hitler making "authentic" statements about the Jews in every speech—and weren't the Nazi newspapers repeating these lies, which were, of course, truths to the Germans?

The commander was convinced that we understood everything in every paper we handled but that we were unwilling to unlock the secrets for him. On his visits, he would look intently at individual volumes, hold them in his hands as though to probe into their innermost secrets. Then, with an

air of resignation, he would lay the book aside.

Once in a while, he would grab a volume, step up to me and bark, "What is this book? Quickly, don't lie! What's in it? What does it say?"

"A textbook for school children," I would reply.

He would pounce on a second volume. "And this?"

"A Jewish song book, sir."

"What! Jews sing songs?" And he would sigh and turn away, convinced that once more he had failed to learn Jewish secrets.

His deputy, however, was a bit more thorough. He chose one of our colleagues, a man named Herz Glaser, to teach him Hebrew. Glaser's father, the noted Rabbi Hirsch Glaser of Przemysl, had been killed by the Nazis, and the deputy warned our friend that he must teach him enough Hebrew in three months so that he could understand even complicated ancient texts. "And if you don't," he warned Glaser, "you will be shot."

To this day, I can still see the haunted eyes of Glaser, for he was aware of the enormity of the task set before him. "How can I do that?" he said to me. "Texts of ancient Hebrew books. Three months? One needs years and years for this." But like other threats, this one, too, did not come to fruition.

What eventually happened to all the books I cannot tell. The occupation came to an end, and after two months, so did our work. The story behind the end of the occupation and our easy days as cultural workers is tragic and came upon us suddenly.

A few days before or after Purim, in 1942, we were awakened in the middle of the night by a loud banging on the window. We saw a few faces behind the window and when the people replied to our questions in Yiddish, we opened the door and let them in. The group consisted of

Dr. Zausner, the vice president of the Jewish Council, Mr. Becker, one of the Council members and a few Jewish policemen.

What had brought them to us in the middle of the night? They told us that a group of Gestapo men from Drohobycz, very drunk, were now in the office of the Judenrat, and had come to take their revenge on the Jews because the Jews, some 2,500 years ago, had killed thousands of Persians during the era when Purim was first celebrated! The Jews who had come to us in the dead of night informed us that when day broke, the Gestapo was prepared to wipe out one half of Sambor Jewry!

I still could not understand why they had come to warn us. If this was true, it was unbelievable. Normally, the Jewish Council members were not this thoughtful. So I asked them the reason for their arrival. And they told me they had specifically come to me because they thought I could supply them with a scientific explanation of Purim which would, in some fashion, omit the killing of the Persians. I had no idea if I could be of help, but I quickly dressed and left my family to go with them. My family was upset at my going and I had no idea whether or not I would see them again.

In the ten minutes it took to go from my house to the headquarters of the Judenrat, I concentrated on the history of Purim and thought hard about what I could say. The only "out" I could think of was to use the approach of the Jewish historian, Heinrich Graetz, who had written that the story of Purim had no historical basis and that the Scroll of Esther, in which the Purim tale is told, was written in the Second Century, B.C.E., in the time of the Maccabeans, so that the Jewish people would be encouraged to maintain their identity. I myself never was persuaded by Graetz. I did not think, furthermore, that Graetz was right, that a piece of fiction could be made up and that the Jewish

people would believe it for thousands of years. Nevertheless, I felt at the moment, that to use the Graetz approach was the best way to handle this problem.

In the dark of night we reached the Jewish Council headquarters. I must admit that although I had been working for months for the German occupation, this was the first time I came into direct contact with the Gestapo. When I was led into the rooms of the president of the Council, there were about a dozen Gestapo men spread out in the two large rooms. Almost immediately I felt that I was in contact with beasts of the forest. Their manner of sitting about and talking inarticulately, made me feel they were beasts.

I stood in the center of a large room surrounded by Gestapo men. In the corners there stood some of the Jewish Council members, including Dr. Schneidscher, the president. The Jews threw me encouraging glances. Then one of the Germans, obviously the leader, asked me about Purim and why the Jews had killed so many Aryans.

I was prepared for the question and proceeded to reply. In my very best German, along the previously planned lines, I explained to them how great a historian Graetz was, and how he had said the entire story was a fabrication. I thought I had done quite well, especially when I sensed that the Jewish Council men were satisfied.

But then the German asked me, "Tell me, Jew, was this great historian you talk about, was he an Aryan or a Jew?"

It was at this time that I realized the tide was turning against us. Our lives depended on what I said. These drunken murderers, armed with machine guns were quite prepared to use them. Dr. Schneidscher was pale and I trembled.

But I replied that Graetz was a Jew, who taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and was a professor at the University of Breslau as well. As soon as I finished,

a man from behind me hit me over the head with a wooden club. Only later did I remember that I had seen the German questioning me make a sign to someone. I fell and finally regained my senses. When I did, the Gestapo spokesman was looking down at me on the floor and shouting, "You bring me proof from a cursed and filthy Jewish historian?"

Afraid that the beating would continue, I thought fast and said quickly as I could, "But I have further proof. There is a great German historian who has written that statistics in the old days are different from today, that numbers were counted differently."

If they believed me, it meant that the death of the thousands of Persians, or Aryans, could also be explained away, at least in part.

"Is he also Jewish?" the German asked.

"No," I assured him.

"What's his name?"

I stumbled for a moment. "I can't recall it. But I'm sure that it begins with a B.

He seemed to be thinking about my answers. Then he took out a pencil and scribbled a few words on a sheet of paper. He turned to me and said, "Listen carefully, Jew. We are going to send this information to the Institute for Jewish Research in Germany. And if you have lied, we will come here and wipe out the entire Jewish community of Sambor. And you and your family will be the first ones to be hanged, you cursed Jewish murderers! Get out!"

I left and a half hour later I saw the Germans leave the headquarters of the Council. The Jewish Council members were very thankful to me and at the break of day I went home with a loaf of bread under my arm, their gift to me.

We never heard again from the Gestapo on the matter of Purim.

The Storm

That trouble was brewing was evident from the rumors we heard and the new orders that had been issued. Late in July, 1942, the District Prefect at Sambor had demanded that there be an increase in the Jewish Ordnungsdienst from 40 to 100 men. Of itself, this edict could have been useful to us. It meant that an additional 60 young folks would be able to work at light jobs instead of heavy tasks. Yet we all realized that the Prefect did not have our benefit in mind. Then there followed a second order. All villages in the area were to be "cleared" of Jews within three days! It was suddenly recalled that six months earlier the Prefect had ordered the members of the Jewish Council to appear before him and had told them that when the time came for transporting the Jews elsewhere, the job would have to be done, in large measure, through the Jews themselves—through the Council. And if any of the German orders were not heeded, the members of the Council as well as the Ordnungsdienst would be hanged in the center of the town.

The day the new order was issued, the Jewish Council hurriedly called together its staff to make up a list of all

the Jews living in the surrounding villages, of which there were almost 100. The only Jews exempted were those working for the Germans.

In the Evidenzburo of the Jewish Council there were accurate lists of Jews living both in the town and in the villages, whereas in the office of the German Registrar the Jews had not been listed at all, for the files had been destroyed early in the occupation.

The Council members worked through the first night and on the morning of the second day the lists were ready. More than 2,000 names were included. The Council hired 100 carts owned by local farmers and sent the entire Ordnungsdienst to each of the villages, with a list of every Jew in that village.

Two days passed. In the afternoon hours of the third day, just a few hours before the three-day deadline came, the carts slowly entered the town from the various villages in the outlying districts. Jews, with their wives, children and meager posessions, had come in the carts.

It was a Friday, toward evening. The rain was falling steadily, drearily, as though the Heavens were lamenting the bitter fate of the village Jews. On the carts, together with the Jews, were mountains of bedding, without sheets; pots and pans, pails and shovels. And among these items were huddled little children, looking out at the world with intelligent but curious eyes. Aged Jewesses wearing kerchiefs, and white-haired and bearded Jews, who had not left their villages for decades, were looking at us with frightened eyes. They seemed to ask us with their eyes why they had been torn away from their homes, the houses in which they have lived for so long. Why had they been driven out in the rain, and where were they being taken?

As I sit now in my hiding place, in the hole under the stable, writing down what happened on that sorry day, I realize that this Friday remains in my mind as one of the

blackest, most miserable moments in my life. The unspeakable distress, the helplessness of these people—and our own impotence—come back to me with a rush of emotion.

The Jews of Sambor were terribly moved by what they had seen and, in an act of solidarity, they were about to take the Jewish families into their own homes—but they were reminded that at the last moment the German authorities had ordered all the incoming Jews to be placed in military barracks to be guarded by Ukrainian militiamen. The town Jews were not permitted to enter the building, with the exception of a few who worked in the soup-kitchen.

The Ordnungsdienst, threatened with the gallows or, at best, the Janover extermination camp, took great pains to carry out whatever orders were issued them. They were to have transported the unfortunate Jews to the town, but they found that the Ukrainians—among whom the village Jews had lived—were eager to drive them out. The Jews, reluctant to carry out their unhappy tasks, discovered that the Ukrainians had already done the job quite well enough.

The human tragedies involved in the mass moving of population were horrible to see. One case remains vivid in my mind. You will recall that Jews who were employed by Germans did not move out of their villages. This, however, was not always a "break" for the men and women concerned. There was a Jewish couple with an infant child and both mother and father worked for the Germans, and as a result, were forced to remain with their employers. Their child, on the other hand, possessed no certificate of occupation and, according to orders, had to leave the village. The mother, hysterical with fear and anger, could not leave with her child, for when any Jew left his place of work, the punishment was death.

The child was taken away from her, but that very night, the mother fled from her village and came to Sambor. With great effort, she was smuggled into the barracks and re-

united with her infant. The tension, however, made the mother temporarily demented and the Ukrainian guard reported her abnormal behavior to the German police. That evening, the Germans led the mother out of the barracks and attempted to pry the child out of her arms. Her violent opposition to the cruel Nazis was so great that they were literally unable to get the child away from her. So they drove the frenzied woman, still clutching her youngster, to the Jewish cemetery.

There, two shots united the mother and child forever

Day by day, the situation of the Jews in the barracks grew worse. Life became more difficult, and the uncertainty of their fate made the Jews depressed and lethargic.

And then the rumors started up again. On Sunday, August 2, 1942, all was quiet, but on Monday, a wild story began to make the rounds. No one knew who had brought the story to Sambor, but everyone was talking about it. On Tuesday, the very next day—it was said—all the Jews were to be slaughtered!

In panic, Jews ran to the headquarters of the Jewish Council in order to learn the truth. But the Council officers refused to talk. Instead, they merely stood in front of the building, looking grave. Before any questions could be put to them, they gesticulated that they knew nothing, but the expression on their faces indicated otherwise. We learned that there were 50 boxcars standing on a siding in the railway station, which were to be used to transport the Sambor Jews to another area to be shot—or at least this is what the Aryan railway workers had told the Jews who had been assigned to the station.

Meanwhile, the hour of the street curfew was approaching, and all Jews had to hurry home. There, they remained in terror, waiting helplessly for word from Council officials. Although the Jews wore their heavy winter coats, they

trembled. What were they to do? Should they remain out-of-doors to avoid the Nazis and thereby gamble that they would not be caught? Or would they be better off to remain at home during the cold night, on the chance that nothing would be attempted until morning?

It was a terrifying period.

We, at that time, were living on the outskirts of town, and I was tense with anxiety, for inactivity in the face of iminent peril is difficult to face. Other Jews were no less upset. At the Council headquarters, the corridors and the offices were crowded with Jews who had hurried there to hide, in spite of the curfew. Council officials themselves were bringing their own wives and children to the building, to hide them in the attic and in the cellar. All signs pointed to a calculated wholesale slaughter of Jews.

Slowly, information began to seep down to all the Jews, and they began to learn what had happened on Monday. At about noon, Dr. Schneidscher, the president of the Council, and his Deputy, Dr. Zausner, as well as other officers of the Council, had been ordered to appear at Police Headquarters. There they found local police officers and Gestapo members, who told them that action was to be taken against 1,000 Sambor Jews. There would be no executions in town. Instead, the Sambor Jews, plus 2,000 Jews from the villages, would be sent to an area already agreed upon by the German authorities. The Council would play no part in assisting the Germans, but the Jewish leaders were being kept informed of developments in order that there should be no breakdown in plans. The Council would be required to list all "criminals," "thieves" and "beggars" to facilitate matters for the Germans. As usual, the Council was threatened with collective hanging if they refused to cooperate with the Nazis.

The Council leaders pleaded for a few hours time for consultation and planning. The Police accepted the plea

and agreed to wait, demanding brandy to help them pass the hours more pleasantly. The Jews of the Council were faced with a difficult dilemma: they were to become murderers or martyrs, and the choice, in either case, was a cruel one.

Time moved with agonizing slowness. Periodically, the phone would ring and the sadistic Gestapo would ask what decision had been taken. Some of the Jewish officials, unable to take a stand, went into hiding themselves so that they would not have to cast a vote.

Eventually, however, the moment of truth had to come. Rationalizing that they could perhaps save other Jews, the Council leaders agreed to compile lists which, they knew, would send fellow Jews to certain death.

No one seriously believed that the Nazis would limit themselves to the names on the lists; it was clear that the lists would indicate the houses in which Jews were living. At that time, Jews were dispersed throughout the area and had not yet been driven into a definite ghetto quarter. It seemed that in yielding to the Germans, the Council spokesmen were attempting to save their own lives and those of their families. It was thought by some that the Council leaders had received pledges that the Germans would have found the Jews no matter what they had decided to do. Thus, the Council leaders could dig for excuses to explain their capitulation.

When I learned what the final decision was, I ran back to my home on Kosharova Street, where my family waited in terror to learn what developments had taken place. Would I bring good news? Or would I be the bearer of evil tidings? I had to tell them the truth, bitter though it was. And I still remember how my youngest brother cried out in anger and desperation, "The damned criminals! Where can I get a gun? Any gun? I'd walk to my death with joy if I could take some of those men along with me! The dogs!"

Something had to be done. We could not simply wait in our room for fate to overtake us. There was no sense in thinking of fighting back. We had no weapons. My wife ran upstairs to our Polish landlady, to ask for permission to hide in her cellar. She was a decent woman of Italian origin and allowed us to use her cellar but warned us that the Ukrainians who lived in the same house must not discover us. Silently, on tiptoe, my family—consisting of more than twenty persons—began to steal down to the cellar. I decided to remain upstairs so that, if necessary, I could run to the Jewish Council if I were needed.

To my dismay and shock, I noticed—when everyone was already in the cellar—that my Ukrainian neighbor had been watching the entire operation. As I walked toward him, he smiled and asked me, "Why are you all creeping into the cellar so late at night?" From the tone of his voice, I realized that he completely understood our desperate situation. I knew Ukrainians too well to allow myself to be deceived, even for an instant, as to their generosity and charity. So I spoke up and said, "You know what is happening. I need help. And I'm willing to pay you for it. If you remain quiet, and tell nobody what you have seen here tonight, I'll pay you well." And then I told him, "I'll give you, right away, two new suits, an overcoat and a gold ring."

He quickly agreed to my terms and promised to do all he could to help me. I trusted him at the time and after I paid him off, we parted on the best of terms. I hurried through the fields back to the headquarters of the Council.

Excitement still reigned at headquarters, for people kept pouring in, regardless of the curfew law. Even the sight of a few dead Jews, shot because they had been caught defying the curfew, had not stopped the majority from coming to the Council. The leaders of the Council stood by, quietly, guilt written on their faces. The entire Council office was nightmarish in its total effect. A detachment of Jewish

militiamen was present, waiting for the awful moment when it would have to help the Germans catch and shoot fellow Jews. On another floor, a handful of officials were compiling lists of Jews to be taken away and murdered. There were 7,000 Jews in the town and 1,000 "criminals" had to be found. Of course, there were no "criminals" among them, and the very Jews crowding into the office would be on the list, innocent Jews, oblivious, at the moment, to their fate at the hands of those compiling the lists.

Then, at about three o'clock in the morning, a sound of trucks was heard in the yard. Everyone became panic-stricken and both town Jews, village Jews and officials tore about senselessly yelling to each other, and to themselves, "Hide! Hide! Quick! Quick!" And then the agonizing cry: "The Gestapo are coming!"

It was true. A long row of military vehicles drove up to the Council building, and in the cars were German police of all variations, well equipped with pistols, rifles and other military gear. Rapidly, the officer in charge jumped from his car, ran into the headquarters and reappeared with the dreaded lists in his hand and distributed them to his men.

In the streets there was a deathly silence.

And in each little Jewish home, the pious, observant Jews still slept, some of them unaware of the horror that was to come upon them.

These Jews had committed but one crime: they believed in one God, the Creator of the world, whose Laws they were to obey at all times. As the morning came, these Jews rose from their beds, said their prayers, as Jews had been reciting them for centuries, and awaited the new day. They did not know how that day was to end. Perhaps they should have been grateful for that innocence.

As I try to put down on paper what occured, I wonder if there were greater horrors. Did the world's breath stop?

Apparently not. But I find it hard even to recreate a portion of those hours.

When morning came, the whole town was surrounded by the police, who held their guns ready for murder. Every street corner was covered; there was no escape.

And the police were thorough. Men, women and children were driven from their homes and hiding places. Many had been torn from their beds, wearing only night clothes and stumbling about bare-footed. Mothers, shocked and disheveled, carried their helpless, innocent children in their arms—and these "criminals" were hunted down with rifle-butts and rubber truncheons and driven to areas where other police rounded them up in groups of forty and fifty. There was no charity shown. It was a bitter, cruel and poisonous exhibition of the bestiality of man.

When Dr. Schneidscher, the head of the Jewish Council, saw, from his window, that the "action" was not going "according to plan," he broke down and ran wildly into the bloody street to argue with the Germans. He did not get very far. He was slugged with a rubber truncheon and collapsed in the gutter. Other Council members carried him back into the building, unconscious. Dr. Zausner, too, was badly beaten by the police, who complained that the Council had warned the Jews that they were coming and, as a result, they had captured only a few hundred victims.

Slowly, the Jewish militiamen returned to the Council, beaten and blood-spattered, exhausted and angry. They had helped the Germans in an ugly job and yet the Germans had mishandled them, too, for the Nazis felt the Jews had not uncovered enough of the hiding places of their fellow Jews.

Similar "actions" took place in other towns as well at the same time. The Gestapo went into action in Turka, Old Sambor and Felschtyn. And they grew violent when they realized they had only caught a comparative handful of

Jews in Sambor. In a short while, new trucks filled with Germans rumbled into town from Lemberg—and the devil dance began anew.

The Gestapo men did not bother searching the Jewish dwellings. Why bother? Hand grenades were quicker and more effective. First a grenade would be thrown into a house, and then the police would enter. If there would be no reply, a second grenade would be tossed into the house, and then a third, until, finally, women and children, in pain and in agony, would emerge to be taken in by the Germans.

Those who could walk, were forced to march to the closest "gathering corner," and from there they were taken away. The infirm and the sick, who could not move quickly enough, were shot on the spot. And those who tried to run away were shot down by Germans who delighted in trapping and killing them.

The murdered Jews lying in the street were dragged away by the Ukrainian militia and were tossed on one grisly heap. Those Jews who still lived, in spite of terrible wounds, asked that they be killed. Instead, the Ukrainians laughed and joked among themselves and dragged the wounded Jews over hedges and ditches and flung them on the mountain of dead Jews.

Secret agents of the police followed the killers around, like hyenas of the battlefield, for when a Jew was killed these brave men would steal all they could from the dwellings of the helpless victims.

Every two hours, the senior officers of the Gestapo drove into Sambor to check on the "action." When photographs were taken of them on street corners where Jews were herded, or in front of a huddled pile of dead Jews, they were extremely proud of themselves.

That searingly painful day and night more than 3,000 Jews were herded together, half-naked, barefoot, beaten, resigned, helpless and unpitied—and led to their death.

I saw the massacre from an attic window of the Jewish Council building. I had been given work to do and had been told on this day that I was to be spared. What I saw shall always live with me. And then, an acquaintance of mine rushed into the building, when calm had seemed to descend and the killing had let up, to tell me that my own family had been driven out of town. He informed me that my wife, my father, my brother and sister, my in-laws, my uncles and aunts and their children—all had been hunted down and driven forward with rubber truncheons and whips. They had been forced to run at the same pace that the police were riding on their bikes; it was agonizing and brutal, and as I heard his tale, told no doubt with good will and in friendly fashion, I could scarcely bear to listen to this dark, unhappy fatal story.

Although the president of the Council, who had eventually regained consciousness, was now assuring us that all was not yet lost, I decided—now that I knew my family had disappeared—to give myself up and permit myself to be sent to the gathering place where my helpless family was and from which area Jews were led to their death.

It was late in the afternoon. As I walked to my fate, a German policeman ordered me to take along with me two young Jewish girls of about nine and six. The children looked at me trustingly and placed their hands in mine. The policeman with a gun and a rubber club drove us and beat us from behind and I was forced to run, clutching the children. I looked into their faces, and never will I forget the expression of their eyes: a blend of unlimited fear and trust in me, a Jew who had, in one moment, lost his entire family and was now running to his own execution. It was in this Jew that they had faith!

As we came close to the execution area—the sports arena, "Korona"—the German policeman called to two Ukrainian militiamen who, without a word, dragged the two girls

away from me. I never saw them again.

I myself was driven to one of two groups in the arena. I looked about me. It was almost quiet, with only the children weeping. The others, about 3,000 men and women, appeared beaten and resigned to their fate. Some stood, others sat.

I saw hundreds of cops and Ukrainian militiamen here, with as many hundreds of Ukrainian spectators hanging on the other side of the high fence and watching our humiliation and agony. The "audience" was not only completely unfeeling about our plight but catcalled and mocked at us again and again. They laughed at us and sneered and called out, "Moishe, leave me your coat. In your grave you'll feel warm enough without it!" And others cried out to a woman, "Malka, give us your shoes. You can walk just as well barefoot when you are dead!"

In the midst of this horror, I looked about desperately for people I might know. Suddenly, I saw on the other side the members of my family in the filled arena. I saw them all together, looking beaten and resigned. My brother was not among them, but as my eyes searched out every corner of the area, I finally saw him, too, in a different direction.

Each time I tried to move forward to my family, police beat me back with their truncheons. One drunken militiaman cursed me and swung at me and did not let me pass. Then there came a terrible outcry, for a hearse from the Jewish cemetery drove into the sports field and the Jews trapped in the arena believed they were about to be slaughtered. Mothers clasped and embraced their children and raised their voices in despair. Children sobbed and fell into the arms of their parents and the police, in the meantime, fired their rifles wildly into the air. It was a scene from out of the nightmarish painter Bosch.

I did not give up in my efforts to catch the eyes of my family. During the tumult and the shouting, I screamed

and waved and finally was noticed by some of my relatives. Their reaction to my presence varied. Some were happy to see me before they died. Others believed I might help them escape, I suppose, for their joy was unbounded. My father, when he set his eyes on me, called out weakly, clapped both of his hands over his head and fell to the ground in a faint. In a few moments, however, he recovered and motioned to me that we were all in the hands of God.

I saw many other friends, distinguished rabbis and their families, men and women I had known for years. When I saw them in the arena, they were more dead than alive, robbed of all their possessions and driven about like cattle. The militiamen had already ordered them to yield their valuables and they had threatened the Jews with torture if their victims withheld anything at all.

And then, at about six o'clock in the evening, a new batch of Jews were driven into the arena—the members of the Jewish Council of Sambor with the Jewish militia. It seemed that the Council had not "cooperated" with the Germans, and, as a result, they, too, were to be punished. As evening fell, dark, heavy clouds started to cover the sky. The unfortunate day of the 21st of Av 5702 was coming to an end. Slowly, the Nazis organized the crowd and started pushing them toward the gate, where they were counted off in groups of 100 and 150 and marched away to appointed railway stations. Eventually, my own relatives were ordered into the fatal march and I saw them as they walked past, knowing that I would never see them again.

When they were about eight steps away from me, my wife was close enough to look at me, to make a gesture with her hands and to toss something toward me. I could not move toward her, but a Gestapo man saw her throw the object and he attacked her like the wild beast he was. His rubber truncheon hit her again and again, and she cried bitterly with pain. He continued to swing at her

and at my other relatives who tried to shield her from his blows. But they continued walking during the attack and soon they vanished from my sight. The German remained angry apparently, for I heard their cries even when I no longer saw them.

I was in a group which was among the very last to leave the arena. We, too, were marched to the last box car standing on a railway siding and when we were ordered into the car, the small area was crammed and then the door was shut behind us. All of us had been taken into custody, except for three or four members of the Council, who were given their "liberty" at the last moment.

Pressed closely together in the car, we heard thunder and saw lightning and soon a raging storm howled across the sky like a keen lamentation. It seemed as though the Heavens were mourning with us that terrible day—August 4, 1942—through which we had lived, and had seen sights and visions that would live with us so long as we ourselves survived.

As I crouched in a corner, with the storm raging on the outside, I heard a fellow Jew break the brooding silence within the box car, "Oh Lord, if it is your will that we be killed with our wives and children, our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, at least, Oh Lord, grant us this wish: kill us alone and not the others, or let us all die in this storm. so that we no longer need bear the agony that faces us."

Slowly, creakingly, like a long, tired dragon, the fifty box cars began to move and were soon swallowed up by the darkness of the night. In the last two cars were 300 men, among whom I was one. We were destined for the Janover Camp.

Janover Camp

"All hope abandon
Ye who enter here."
—Dante: *Divine Comedy*

It was situated behind the Lemberg cemeteries, between sand mountains and surrounded by barbed wire—this place of terror and murder. It was near the Kleperov station at the end of Janover Street, and it was there that the bloom of Jewish youth was crushed.

As we approached it, the rumors we had heard of its nightmarish qualities seemed wild indeed. It appeared to be a harmless place, with a handful of houses for the SS officers near the gate; some wooden barracks and a few small houses and a couple of watchtowers, both within and without the gate. Of course, there were guards; but surely, this was not a dangerous place, in spite of the stories.

Still, as we came closer, we gained—within our sensitive souls—a hint of peril. Why were the wire fences double-barbed? And why were there fences even within the camp, which itself was cut off from the outside world by other fences?

And at the entrance there was a large sign that read: "Zwangsarbeitslager SS und Polizeifuehrer."

Gradually, yet within a brief period of time, the meaning of Janover Camp entered deep into our hearts. For we

soon discovered that the human being was of no value in this God-forsaken area. All the human beings transported here already had been sentenced to death. Without their own awareness of it, they were already in the grave. And the cross-section of humanity was large. Representatives of all the professions were here, as well as craftsmen. There were mechanics, shoemakers and carpenters; tailors, furriers and locksmiths; welders, musicians and veterenarians. And there were, alas, rabbis, lawyers and doctors; poets, druggists and writers. The Germans had been thorough. They had missed up on nobody and nothing.

And the German Police, in their devilish thoroughness, deliberately set about to wipe out all vestiges of dignity and decency within the souls of the inmates. Every Jew's head was shaven, and on his rags were affixed two yellow rags, one on the front and the other on the back of his jacket. The back of the jacket was smeared with a broad stripe, from the collar to the bottom of the jacket, thus distinguishing the victims from their oppressors.

Curiously, the Jews at Janover were forbidden to wear the armlets with the Star of David, for it would then have become possible (the chances were slight, however) for Jews to escape and mingle with Jews still at "liberty", who had to wear the Star of David. Thus, the Janover "insignia" was supposed to preclude escape. In addition, there were non-Jews at Janover—Polish and Ukrainian criminals, who wore red rags, not yellow ones. They, too, were distinguished from the Jews while, at the same time, being separated from the Germans.

We were all put to work, some within the camp grounds; others on the outside. We were organized into brigades which were by no means fixed as to numbers. Some had twenty men; others, more than a hundred. The SS chose a camper as a foreman and called him "Brigadier." The larger brigades had a foreman and one or two deputies.

The camp leader was named Wellhaus. He was tall and lean, in his thirties, and his head was too small for his extremely long neck. His voice was hoarse and always excited. He was an SS man, an Oberscharfuehrer. So was his deputy Rokita, who was about 50 years of age, medium-sized and stout. He had a clean-shaven head and an equally clean-shaven face. He spoke softly and it was rumored that he had been a ragtime musician in the "old days." There were a few others who made their positions felt. One was Scharfuehrer (group leader) Kolanka, who was unable to put together an intelligible sentence in any language, even in German. His companion, Schoenkebach, was a fit friend to him. The rest of the "staff" consisted of unranked SS men.

Each day began cruelly but typically, with the beating of prisoners who still slept in their cots before roll-call. There were no bells, no sirens, no whistling to announce the start of a new day. Instead, the whirring of whips began the day.

No one was safe from this "normal" procedure, for there was no fixed hour for roll-call. Besides, nobody owned a watch any longer. How could we tell the time? Those who slept deeply were rudely and painfully awakened by the blows of the whip; and the early risers did not escape, either, for the SS men did not overlook them. And those who slept out-of-doors because the barracks were too filled with men, (there were 3,000 places for 12,000 people) saw the SS men run through the dusk, swinging their long whips, as though they were—and indeed they truly were—evil shadows come to torture the living.

It did not take long for the barracks to become emptied of men, once the SS troops had swung their way through. It was quick because we never took off our clothes. At the parade grounds, each brigade gathered and the Jewish foremen distributed—with the aid of his deputy—100 grams

(three ounces) of bread per man. And then the roll-call started with the group leader announcing the various work chores. Now and again, the camp leader, in his hoarse voice, called to his dog, Arrow, which liked to scamper through the lines of men. As there were many men with lice and typhus, the leader did not want his dog to become infected.

In front of the parade ground there loomed the execution area, where all punishments were meted out. Penalties were given out for practically any offense. If a man pushed forward a bit in the coffee line; or was caught with a newspaper, or a knife, a lighter or pencil—he was committing a crime. If he talked while working, or sought shelter in the rain, or smoked a cigarette—it was against the existing law. If a prisoner at work saw a cucumber peel on the ground, or picked up a bit of an apple which may have been lying on the ground—this, too, was criminal, and punishable.

Usually, the edict was 25 or 50 strokes, on the bare backside. Two SS men were assigned to the beating, and they delivered their strokes, from opposite sides, with short, hard truncheons. Those who managed to grit their teeth and remain silent under the blows, received the number of blows originally intended for them. On the other hand, if a man cried out, or tried to cover his backside with his hands, in an instinctive gesture of protection, he was given extra blows.

At times, a Jewish "foreman" from the ranks was called upon to help hold down the victims, and if they—in their own distaste at the job—did not grip the prisoners strongly enough, they, too, were beaten.

The "work" of beating Jews was too much of a strain on some of the Germans.

They often became short of breath and had to be relieved by others from their ranks. And once or twice a week, just to frighten the prisoners and keep them in a state of fear,

they selected a man standing at attention when the roll was called and shot him to death.

And why were men shot so indiscriminately? The Germans found causes. Dirty ears, an unwashed neck, and unshaven face—these were cause enough. But, under the conditions that existed, who could wash properly? There was a tube with water barely spouting from the holes, in front of the barracks. Yet it was unlikely that a man could keep himself clean, for the lineup was always long and only ten holes poured forth water. And there was no time to wait because the camp was on a schedule. And if one rose early enough to get into the line for the wash-up, where was he to obtain a cloth to dry himself?

A day never passed during which someone did not die at work. This was quite apart from the regular executions; the tests for the brigades to weed out the weak and the sick; the beatings and the torturing. Every day, as a brigade came back from its work chore, dead men were carried back, and people who saw us carry the corpses wondered why we did so. There was a reason. It was a simple one: the Germans kept a strict count of their prisoners and in the evenings, when the columns of men returned to the camp, the Nazi staff counted the men, both dead and alive, and checked the statistics against the morning roll-call. The dead were laid out and pushed; along side them were those who had collapsed at work that day and were unable to return on their own two feet. Shortly, the exhausted men were "liquidated" and, together, with the corpses, were thrown into a ditch.

The moment when men, innocent men, were chosen from the roll-call lists and indiscriminately selected for death, remains vivid in my mind and can scarcely be believed by those who were not with us. Yet this "hot roll-call," as it was labelled, was a common event, and its grim chronology of events should be put down on paper.

It is dark in the camp and the watchtower reflectors dart their dazzling lights on the brigades returning from their work and now assembling on the parade grounds. SS men carefully examine the men to see if they are "properly" dressed. The camp officials march about, looking important and the commanders give sharp orders. The troops, helmeted and armed, stand at stiff attention. There is a mounted stage, on which the commander moves about and when he barks, "At ease!" to his men, we become rigid with fear—for it is at this moment that the Nazis are to decide how many of us—and which of us—are to be executed.

Four prisoners will be killed for each man who has escaped during this day. The percentages are known to us. There is no mystery about it. It is a terrible moment and we stand in line, sluggish yet aware of the fate that may soon befall us. The men on the stage are the masters of Life and Death. Meanwhile, 12,000 men wait for the Word from the Nazi spokesman. And the pious Jews among us mouth the "Vidui," the Jewish prayer before death, quietly and slowly to themselves. "*. . . Oshamnu . . . bogadnu . . . . . gozalnu . . .*"

Then the camp leader, Wellhaus, stalks along the lines, flanked by his SS men. He approaches the Jewish brigade leader and asks, "How many are missing here?"

In a trembling voice, the leader responds, "Two."

Slowly, Wellhaus strips his glove off his right hand and barks, "Shoot eight!" And then, in his hoarse, excited voice, he cries out, "Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on!"

With each cry, another man is dragged from his group, and then suddenly, eight victims are separated from the rest. And in this same way, the Nazi comes up to every brigade, and the same act is worked out. Men are chosen at random, blindlessly, without cause or reason. Yet the few Polish and Ukrainian brigades are not subjected to this torture,

to this murder. The Nazi leader passes them by. It is enough for him that he has chosen Jews.

The men are marched to the front, to the execution area and they are lined up in military fashion. Meanwhile, five SS men step forward from their own ranks, march to the back of the victims' formation and lift their rifles and point them at the helpless Jews. Five shots ring out in the cold air, and the Jews drop to the ground, dead. Immediately, the SS men fall back into ranks and are followed by another group of five, who, in turn, execute their own orders, killing another five Jews.

And thus it goes, like clockwork. Germans will march and guns will be fired and men will be killed. Yet not all die at once. Some die slowly, agonizingly. Others writhe like worms in their own blood. It is then that Wellhaus approaches the wounded men on the ground. He shoots carefully in the back of the neck, and his bullets quiet the men, sending them to permanent rest.

This is a day of murder, a "hot roll-call."

The special brigade, called the "Death Brigade," under the command of its leader, Scheftelowitz, lay the executed prisoners on stretchers and carried them into the valley behind the camp. First, however, they undressed the corpses completely. Now, free from their torment, the dead Jews were thrown into a ditch, and the execution area was again strewn with sand to absorb the blood, which was still warm.

Why don't the victims fight against their tormentors? Why do they submit so passively to the executions? How do a handful of men control thousands? Surely, this question comes to mind, and there are those who cannot believe the truth of these actual events.

But examine the prisoners, if you will.

They have been starved for a long time. They are emaciated and wretched, stripped of their dignity and of hope.

Many of them are psychologically ready for death, and if there are those who flirt with the idea of revolting, the barbed-wire enclosures, the posted machine guns stop their thoughts, even if they have them, and few do. Remember, again, what has happened to these people. They have been worn down through lack of sleep. They have been beaten, uncared for, dragged out of their homes, their wives and children murdered before their very eyes. They have been existing on a primitive level of life, with self-confidence destroyed and the instinct for self-preservation trampled upon. To what end should a man fight? Death appeared inevitable in any case.

I saw behavior in this camp that is beyond description, for it involved the inhumanity of man to an extraordinary extent. The suffocating air in the barracks; the constant hunger, and the stomach ailments that developed as a result of the putrid food; the robberies, the hygiene problems and the vermin—all these remain in the mind and cannot be projected to the stranger who did not live through our lives.

When a man died at night, the event scarcely excited comment, so immune had we become to death. The boundaries between life and death were wiped away, and at times, the man who remained alive did not even move himself away from what had become a corpse and was no longer a living, breathing human being.

The few dozen Christian prisoners in the camp, (who were murderers who had originally been sentenced to death and were now in for life) were no better off than the rest of us, except that they were not shot—in itself an item of some importance, but not as major as it would seem to an outsider. The Christians, like the Jews, worked hard, were whipped and tortured. They, too, were brought to the execution area; but they survived. If a Christian became seriously ill, he was sent to the tiny camp hospital. The same illness

in a Jew meant the death sentence. The Christians had another "break" in their favor. The Poles and the Ukrainians received packages from Polish and Ukrainian committees, which included some food and cigarettes and notes from home. They had hope for the future, too, for they were sent home from time to time. Who was there to send us greetings and packages? And we had no hope of release, except through death. Did anyone do anything to make us feel that we were human beings? Where were the compassionate hearts? The only comfort we had was that we had not too long to stay in the camp, because how long could we survive this hell?

Adventures of Bathing

Every second and third Saturday of the month, all the victims were taken to the Jewish bathing house in Lemberg. We had to strip ourselves of all our clothing, but in return for our old clothes, we were given clean garments. We wore, as part of our old clothes, only our shoes. Everything else was new and fresh. This might lead the reader to believe that we were happy to prepare for the baths for we were soiled and vermin-ridden, and yet here we were about to be cleaned and washed. It should have been a happy occasion. Instead, it was quite the reverse. Every prisoner felt the spear of fear when he heard he was to be led to the bathing house. Perhaps, a detailed account of what occurred will help to explain the fear.

We would be led to the bathing house, 12,000 strong, guarded by SS men and Askaris.

The Askaris accompanying us as guards were soldiers of the Soviet Army serving under General Wlassov, who betrayed the Soviets and joined with the Germans a few months after the beginning of the German-Russian War in 1941. The Germans had placed them into units as guards

in labor camps to help the SS men. They were no less cruel than their masters and participated as enthusiastically in the atrocities.

Each day, they left the camp with the brigade and guarded it all day long at work and returned with the brigade in the evening. They were also helped by the Jewish militia from Lemberg. The Askaris also guarded the brigades when they were led to their baths.

The streets we passed through on the way to the bathing area had been blocked off and the doors of the houses on the blocks were shut tight. We were pressed closely together in columns and the guards were prepared to shoot down any man who stepped out of line. The Nazis barked their marching orders, but the only other sound was the monotonous clapping of shoes with the wooden soles we wore.

As the columns of prisoners entered the Jewish area in Lemberg where we were to be washed, the SS men snapped a "Sit down!" order and we sat down immediately on the pavements of the streets around the bathing house. We had to sit utterly quiet, for any movement was rewarded by a bullet; sometimes we sat this way for hours at a time.

In the bath-house itself, there were only three rooms for the 12,000 men. In the first room, the prisoners undressed, leaving their clothes and underwear in a heap in the middle of the room. When one left this room, he did not return to it.

The prisoners were allowed to take only their shoes, coffee cups and haversacks. They would never see their clothes again and if they were to try to regain them, they would never live to wear them. In the second room, one took a shower, waiting, with shoes, coffee cup, and haversack in hand, for his turn under the water.

What a pleasure it was to feel the hot water over the dirty and tired body! Yet one could not indulge in joy because there was always the fear that the shoes and other

"possessions" might become sopped, or stolen.

In the third room, fresh underwear and clothing was issued by officials of the Lemberg Jewish Council, and we received a pair of trousers, a jacket, a shirt. For those of us who were veterans, the exchange of clothing meant that we were getting old, used, but clean clothes—a slight improvement over what we had left behind. But for some, the newcomers, it was a comedown; they had yielded up decent clothing and now had disinfected rags. They were clean, but they were still rags. And when one donned them, he looked like everyone else—a Janover Camp inmate.

Those prisoners who had managed always to sleep outside of the barracks kept free of vermin, but now, as they dressed in the new clothes, they picked up lice, for the disinfectant did not kill the lice, only narcotized them. Now, as soon as they came into contact with a human body, they came alive once more.

As we walked out of the third room, Jewish women members of the Lemberg Jewish Council stood near long tables and served us a thick soup with bread. Each prisoner received a full portion of soup and a quarter of a bread. It was this combination of events: the bath, the clean clothes, the soup and the bread, plus a kindly smile and a good word from fellow human beings that made us—for a short spell—seem alive again. One prayed for the friendliness and the smiles more than for the food.

So far, this bathing adventure seems to have been far less perilous than we had heard and imagined. Why, then, did we fear it so?

Weigh the situation for a moment. A group of fifty men at a time entered the small rooms and it took them nearly a half hour to take their bath, or shower. The washing time was fixed from Saturday evening until Monday morning. Within these thirty-two hours, if one hundred men were bathed in an hour, this meant that between 4,000

and 5,000 men could be washed, with the rest of the men unable to clean themselves. Thus, about 7,000 prisoners had to squat about for a day and a half, without moving, without food, sitting like automatons in the open streets. When the bathing period was ended on Monday morning, they had to march directly to work, which meant that 7,000 men had to return to work, still filthy, weakened by the endless sitting, broken in body. And from time to time, men would die either from typhus, from weak hearts aggravated by the steaming heat in the shower room, or from the bullets of the Nazis.

The torture of the bathing period—for that is what it was, in spite of the superficial feeling that it was doing us some good—was not the only torture we experienced. It was difficult for me, and the others, to try to live when all about us was the vision of death. The Angel of Death lurked in every corner, every room of every building—and yet we lived. We saw exchanges between guards and prisoners . . . we became aware of sadists, inhuman guards, and we became cognizant of the baseness of human character, and we saw men die daily, in various and cruel ways.

By this time, I knew about life in the camp, for I now was here a full month. After four weeks, one was an old-timer, and the number of friends and acquaintances diminished daily. At every roll-call one could see other friends being led to the execution area. They stood silent, waiting for their bullets. And following the roll-call, I would return to the area to look at their faces before they were carried to the valley by the unit responsible for getting rid of them. I looked at my friends, and could hardly recognize them any longer.

By this time, too, which was late summer of 1942, the Germans already had gone through the towns of Galicia and had brought back their victims to camps like Janover.

Every evening, a group of newcomers would be led into the parade grounds for the roll-call. It appeared as though the Gestapo and the SS men were in a ghoulish contest to see which one of them could kill off more Jews. We, victims in Janover, were spectators to and participants in, the grim drama.

During August, 1942, more than 50,000 Jews were driven out of the town of Lemberg by the Nazis in a period of two weeks. Janover was the major collecting-point of the Lemberg Jews, and we saw the thousands pouring in—the men, women and children—lined up for execution or work. Families were separated; children were torn away from their mothers; and mothers were beaten with truncheons and tortured as they cried piteously for their children, whom they would never see again. It was the same cycle being re-enacted that we ourselves had lived through. It was not a new story, but this time we were observers and the pain was nearly as great as though we were participants. And in a sense we were.

As I sit and write these lines, my flesh creeps as I recall what happened a year ago. A year! Sometimes it seems to be a long time. And at other moments it seems to me that what happened twelve months ago has just been experienced. My mind flies back to the past, one year ago . . .

I am resigned to death. We are at roll-call, and the camp commander and his SS staff are approaching our brigade to select prisoners for execution. Suddenly, the commander seems to be pointing his finger at me and says, "Come on!" I am convinced that he means me. My time has come! I am not excited, nor am I upset. I am indifferent. But no, he doesn't mean me! He is pointing to some unfortunate behind me. Once again, his finger is pointed at me and I am certain that I am being selected. Yet again I am wrong. Once more, it is another. Meanwhile, the com-

mander steps away for a moment, and everyone thinks that the danger is over, for the time being. Still again he returns to our brigade, stands directly in front of me, looks right into my eyes, and chooses another victim, and another and then another. Three more. With me in front of him. But I am still here.

The prisoners are marched to the execution area and they murmur their final "Shema Yisroel," and we sense that they are being put to death. We heard the guns explode, and we know they are gone. But I have no fear in me, only compassion for the innocent dead. I am not afraid because I stand alone, I know. I have no one in the world and so I am prepared to die . . .

But then I learned that my brother was alive . . . and I found that I was interested in remaining alive, in surviving this hell. And because I had found meaning to my life, the roll-calls became a torment and a torture and I was weak and shaken when I lived through them.

I discovered my brother was alive in this fashion: One day, when I was in the camp for about a month, my friend Aron Halberstamm slipped me a piece of paper on which was written the information of how my brother managed to stay alive. Halberstamm, in handing me the scrap of paper, whispered, "It is from your brother." I could scarcely believe him, and I desperately attempted to find a way to get off by myself to read the paper handed to me. I finally received my opportunity when I was assigned to digging ditches for a sewer. I found a moment to read what I held in my hand.

It developed that my brother had remained with our family until one hour before they had been marched away from the collection-point. The women had become hysterical and tore their hair and shrieked to the heavens, unable and unwilling to face up to death. Only my father had remained calm and consoling. He thanked God for having

given him an additional year to live after the pogrom in our own town in 1941. Father reminded them all that Truth would. in the end, win over Evil. He spoke with deep faith and. in the end, the others became more resigned to their death. My brother wanted to join them and die with them, but the Gestapo men pushed him away from them, for they planned to use him as a worker. He continued pushing toward the family, but our relatives cried out, "Go with them! Maybe you will live!" And they shoved him away from themselves, as though keeping him apart from the death that they were soon to experience. My brother was ordered to join a work column in Sambor and that evening, he sneaked back to our home but discovered that nothing was left intact. What the ravaging police had left behind, our thieving Ukrainian neighbors had stolen.

Yet the knowledge that my brother lived, that I still had a relative on the face of the earth, that I was not alone, and the information—even if horrible—of how my family met death—helped to strengthen me and give me something for which to live. I discovered a meaning in life that I had previously lost. I had given up. Now I was once again alive.

Hope?

What were the hopes of the men and women trapped in Janover Camp? Prisoners who were penniless, friendless and living a miserable life in a hovel, and eating two slices of bread daily and drinking warm, muddy water? Was there anything to look forward to, besides inevitable death? And should we be able to escape, to what end? Where would we go? What would we do?

There was a theory—and I suppose it still exists and can be proved—that Jews always are ready to be of aid to their fellow Jews. Still, the situation was such that one could scarcely depend on other Jews, who themselves were starving, living in ghettos, unable to do anything to help their fellow Jews.

Every passing day dulled the mind, drove out expectations of escape. Each time we saw a prisoner shot or hanged, we banished thoughts of trying to get out of the nightmare in which we were enmeshed.

There were no newspapers in the camp, and so we had no authentic news of what was going on in the outside world. We had heard that the Germans had managed to entrench themselves 1,500 kilometers within Russia and our hopes of a Second Front existed although they were not based on any concrete evidence. We knew that the Jews living in the ghettos could hope and pray for the Second Front with the possibility of surviving. But what of the men in the concentration camps? We—together with the

camps—would be blown to pieces.

A man who lived through a full month in the camp was one with extraordinary willpower, because most inmates yielded to depression and hopelessness within a fortnight. It was not hunger alone that caused mental collapse. One's moral backbone was crushed within two weeks simply through thinking about the bleak future. The roll-calls, the killings, the torture, the sleepless nights—all added to the total breakdown, so it is no wonder that when we thought of the Second Front, we generally excluded ourselves from the calculations. We thought of ourselves as dead.

I once met with a prisoner who had spent two years in Dachau, and he told me that one could endure life there for as long as two years, but not in Janover. He admitted that Janover could break a man in two weeks. The difference was that in Dachau one could nurture the hope of leading a normal life some day. Here in Janover, reality smashed such illusions.

Once, however, we did feel some hope. It was an unusual event.

We were assigned an almost impossible task: to move sand from a hill to an area 100 meters away. For the prisoners, numbering some 11,000 to 12,000, only twenty-five spades were issued and the 200 wheelbarrows that were usable helped us considerably in the work. But woe betide those who were seen without either spade or wheelbarrow. Truncheons were freely used on them and gunshots kept everybody hopping. As the Germans whipped and snarled and shot and swung truncheons, darkness fell and confusion held sway. Panic stumbled into our hearts and practically no work was done. I remember that a Dr. Schorr, from Sambor, grabbed me by the arm and said to me, in a voice full of anger: "The Germans must lose this war! Even if they become ten times stronger than they are today, they

must be defeated! These people are no longer normal. What they are doing to us here is past sadism, past understanding. It is idiotic. They have lost their heads and their end must be in the near future."

As he spoke, one of the SS men strode past us, unseeing. His face was expressionless and his blond hair, falling in wisps before his eyes, gave him an air of concentration. He looked, at least to me, as though he were an idiot.

Suddenly, we heard the camp siren break into a loud, wild moan. The SS men started to scream at us, "Back to the barracks! Hurry! Hurry!" Before checking on us, the SS men fled and we heard the noise of airplanes overhead. Scanning the skies, the prisoners studied the planes and then I heard someone yell "Allied planes! They are ours!" And, in a moment, we all felt better, somehow no longer friendless. We lost our feeling of wretchedness. May the world pity us and help us!

We listened to the engines, and it was the most beautiful music we had ever heard. It was like a cradle song, a great symphony, a song of hope!

The camp leaders, as well as the SS men were so shocked at witnessing the planes that they did not show up for the next morning's roll-call, even though there was no longer any danger of an Allied plane bombing them—and us. Yet the very fact that an enemy plane had been seen over German-occupied territory frightened and disturbed them. We sensed it, and within the next three days more than 400 prisoners managed to escape. The gallows did not hinder their attempts—and they made it. But not entirely. For the Germans assumed that the Jews had hidden out in the Lemberg ghetto. The Nazis, under the pretext that a Jew had murdered an SS man, invaded the ghetto and hanged the leader of the Jewish Council, together with eleven of his co-workers. Twenty-four hours later, the Germans permitted the Jews to cut down the bodies, which hung from the

balconies of their homes, and bury them. Jewish Council offices were broken into and members of the Council shot at their desks. In addition, the SS Police warned the Council leaders—those who remained alive—that if the escaped prisoners were not yielded to them, all the young Jewish children in the city would be sent to the Janover Camp. The threat was a terrible one and succeeded. The Jews gave up not only the escaped prisoners but those who shielded them as well.

Despite this harshness and the double betrayals, escapes still continued. Hope apparently did flare in many hearts, in the face of the horrible life we led and the growing feeling that we were alone. It was the sight of the Allied airplanes that did so much to arouse us and awaken us from our lethargy. The Germans were determined to crush this spark of hope.

It used to be that when a Jew was found with some money, he received twenty-five or fifty strokes in the public execution area. Now, the Germans, in their cruel manner, found another way to torture their victims. If a man was found to possess a large sum of money, he received comparatively few lashes. But if he had very little money, he was given fifty and more lashes. As nearly everybody had very little money, practically every inmate became subject to the beatings. And the Germans grew more and more venomous. By this time, the possession of half a Zloty was tantamount to a death sentence. One day, the entire camp was brought before the camp's office and all day long we were searched and examined for money. During the first two hours, so many of us were found with a few pennies, that it seemed that half the camp would be executed. Every couple of minutes guns exploded and bodies fell. Eventually, the SS men became tired and bored with all the killings and simply quit, leaving the ghoulish task to the Askaris police and to the Jewish police, too.

Pious Prisoners

It is true that hopelessness gnawed at most of us, but I must report that this was not true of the Orthodox Jews in the camp. It should be borne in mind that the vast majority of the 3,500,000 Polish Jews were Orthodox. While some prisoners succumbed to despair and insisted that there was no Higher Power watching over them, most were stubborn in maintaining their belief in God's goodness and justice.

"God will help us," they said. "We do not understand Him, but He will help." And it was the pious Jews who held out more strongly than any of the other Jews. With brave steps they went to their death, when they died, and when they were selected for execution in the daily roll-calls, they went silently, praying all the while and reciting the "Vidui," the prayer spoken as death approaches. All others —doctors, engineers, barbers, musicians, welders, everyone —had melted into a mass of hopelessness. Only the pious Jew retained his individuality. Every morning, the Orthodox Jew recited his prayers and, whenever possible, wore his *Tfillin* when he prayed and then rose to face the horrors of the day.

The pious Jews observed the Jewish holidays as closely as possible and before the major holidays, they did everything they could to maintain the traditions, rituals and customs of their people. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah 5703, we were led to a bathing area near the camp and all

night long we sat in the streets awaiting our turn. Yet at dawn, many of us took whatever prayer books we had and began to recite the prayers for Rosh Hashanah. And when the time came for *Kol Nidre* on Yom Kippur, we arranged a secret meeting in a loft, which was already filled with about twenty men by the time I arrived. A Rabbi placed a tallis, a prayer shawl, around his shoulders, (Where did he get it? There were, at times, ways of finding and obtaining things) and began the *Kol Nidre* prayer, humming the traditional melodies with a broken, tearful voice.

We closed our eyes and saw in our memories the prayer houses in our native towns, overflowing with people. The *Kol Nidre* mood seized us even here, in a pathetic little loft, hidden from the prying eyes of the SS men. The words took on their deepest meanings and we wondered how many of us would be alive eight days hence. But we banished these dark thoughts and carried on with our prayers to God. We had once again participated in an immortal Jewish service at what was, to us, a moment of utter misery for the Jewish people as a collective entity.*

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*Quite accidently, I met this rabbi, who survived the war, in the United States. He is Rabbi Israel Spira, the "Rabbi of Bluzhov," known by this title to his many followers in Brooklyn, N. Y.

How was it possible for such a man to live through his experiences in Janover Camp? The story is almost unbelieveable. And this is it: When he was a youngster of about seven or eight, his parents, who lived in a small Galician town, took him along with them on vacation in Bad-Kissingen, Germany. He played there with many German children, including the son of the owner of the house in which they were staying.

More than thirty years came and went, and the Rabbi was now in Janover Camp. He looked closely at one of the German SS men and had the impression that the German was the boy with whom he played, the son of the owners of the house in which he and his parents vacationed. The Rabbi tried to approach the SS man and talk to him and finally succeeded in meeting him when the German was alone. The Rabbi asked him whether his name was "thus and so" and whether he came from Bad-Kissingen. At first, the German could scarcely credit his ears but eventually realized that the Rabbi was his boyhood companion. And he helped the Rabbi escape from the camp into the ghetto of Lemberg.

From there, the Rabbi was shipped to many other camps and ghettos until he finally arrived in Bergen-Belsen. When the American Army closed in, the SS men packed about 2,800 Jews—men, women, and children—into wagons and drove off for their execution. Somehow, on the road, the Rabbi managed to contact the head of the German Police and promised him that if he helped save the Jews, he, the Rabbi, would speak up on his behalf to the Americans and point out that he had saved 2,800 Jews. The Police Chief, realizing that the Americans would soon break through, agreed to the arrangement. A few hours later, the Americans arrived, and the Jews were saved.

The Persecutions Continue

After working, toiling and suffering for five weeks at the Sknilow Airfield near Lemberg, I was transferred, with many other prisoners, to another area, the Jewish cemetery near our camp. One morning, we were ordered out for a march, and were informed that we would labor at the cemetery. The authorities stressed that in order to destroy all memories of the Jews, all Jewish cemeteries, too, would have to be desecrated and ruined by Jewish hands.

Liquidation was the key word of the Nazis. Just as they were trying to wipe out those Jews who still walked the earth, so they planned to erase every vestige of Judaism. Tombstones, centuries old, were declared to be debris. These monuments, black from the candle wax which had burned for generations, stood in honor of rabbis, and the golden letters engraved on the stone, granite and marble were to have lasted for centuries more. But we had been ordered to break the tombstones, remove them and use the rock for paved streets elsewhere within German territory!

The work was difficult and required many tools, as well as muscle. We used mattocks and spades and hammers. With our spades and mattocks we shovelled under the stones and thus upset them and loosened them from the ground in which they had originally been installed. The hammers were used for breaking the stone, once it was loosened.

Three men worked at each tomb, two wielding the spades and a third with the mattock. There were two units with hammers and four more groups of prisoners placed the stones on a large and growing heap. Not a moment was lost; everything was organized and tens of trucks came around every day to load the debris, which was ground by machines and used to make concrete. Or, if it was crushed, the stones were placed on streets instead of pavement. The Germans found a use for it, while forcing us to destroy Jewish tombstones.

Those of us who were pious recited a prayer for the dead before undertaking the dirty work of desecrating the final resting place of the Jewish dead. We would call out the name of the dead Jew (which we read on the tombstone) asking that he forgive us for disturbing his rest. We would point out that we were working against our will and were being forced to this activity by brutal masters.

Some of the Jews, while wielding their mattocks or spades, murmured the "El Mole Rachamim," the prayer for the dead, and a half hour later no one could recognize that there had once been a tombstone where they had been working. Thus, all traces of long-dead Jews, were wiped away.

At about this period, I became friendly with the watchman of the cemetery, and this relationship stood me in good stead later on in my life. It was important to feel that I had a friend, for the Volks-German, named Adolph, who was in actual charge of our work, was a cruel, mean human being, a master who held a whip in one hand and a wooden stick in the other. Adolph would set one Jew upon another, ordering Jews to beat each other. He roared at the cemetery all day long, barking commands, seeing to it that Jews remained cowering and whipped. It was Adolph who screamed at us, "No sentiment! No sentiment! This is not a cemetery; this is a quarry!" He yelled so frequently that the

cemetery was a quarry that we paid little attention to the name of the dead men on the stones. Once, however, I examined the stone which I was helping to destroy, and it was the grave of the great Gaon, Rabbi Joseph Saul Natanson, the famous rabbi of Lemberg! He was the author of the *Responsa* "Shoul U'meishiv," known to all who studied the Talmud. Jews versed in the Talmud will understand how overwhelmed and shocked I was when I realized what it was that we had been forced to do.

And so, when I became friendly with the watchman, I found it useful to me. There was a sense of humanity again, not inhumanity in relations between men. Curiously enough, I never did learn his name. He was called "The Shammes," or the cemetery watchman, simply enough. Every morning, when he would see me, he would exclaim, "Thank God I see you!" It was a wonderful feeling.

We first became acquainted when he approached me and talked with me about my suit of clothes. He told me that on the following Saturday, we would again be led to the baths and that there was a possibility that I would lose my suit and receive, in return, a far shabbier suit. As it happened, my clothes from home were pretty good and they had not been taken from me during the first two times I went to the bathing area, because I did not bathe at all. Yet the time was bound to come when I would receive rags for my decent garments. The watchman suggested to me that if, through him, I exchanged my clothes for rags now, instead of during the bathing period, I could receive some money for them. I agreed to the transaction, and it was thus that we started to become friends.

The watchman had many jobs in the cemetery. He, his wife and his two daughters had a little room for themselves near the cemetery gate, and his wife ran, in secret, a sort of restaurant for the prisoners from the Janover Camp. One could buy a little soup for only five zloties and even if one

moved around in a bit of extra danger, it was worth getting into trouble to pick up some food which was different from the horrible soup given by the Germans.

My friend also served as a gravedigger and helped transport the dead from Lemberg to the cemetery. Even though the cemetery was in the process of destruction, new bodies were brought to it from the ghetto and buried without headstones or other identification. And when Jews from Janover Camp were executed during the bathing period, he was responsible for bringing them to the graveyard for burial.

I still do not know why the watchman invited me to his room for soup. Surely, he did not need my few zloties; he had enough money of his own, I later learned. But I accepted nonetheless, with pleasure. It was when I came to his room that I saw, for the first time in many weeks, what I looked like. He had a large mirror on the wall in front of his door, and when I saw what I looked like, I was frightened of my own image. I could scarcely recognize myself, so radically had I altered.

When I sat at the table and actually was offered a plate of soup, with a spoon, I realized it had been a long time since I had eaten like a civilized human being. I had nearly forgotten how it was to be a man.

Thanks to the watchman, I was kept abreast of the news in the world, at least to some extent. It was from him that I learned that the Americans had tried to make a landing at Dieppe, which was not successful; but he pointed out to me that the Allies were serious about bringing the war to a rapid conclusion. He informed me of many things and spoke with authority. It seemed to me that he had good political sense.

Meanwhile, as time passed, my brother continued to plead with me to try to escape from the camp. But I was reluctant to attempt it, for I remembered the springing poles on

which prisoners were punished; I vividly recalled the gallows and the limp, hanging victims. I had written to him asking him to move from Sambor to Drohobycz, because I knew that if he remained in Sambor, it was unlikely that I could manage a successful escape. The authorities knew where I came from; they would, immediately, I felt, check for me at Sambor, catch me, and implicate my brother.

Before I was able to hear from my brother that he had managed to reach Drohobycz, the watchman approached me and said that he was planning to get me out of the camp. He attempted this very infrequently, and he wanted to help me without receiving any payment. He had been successful two or three times. But how was he to get away with it again?

It could be accomplished only during bathing time and this is how it worked. He would drive his carriage in front of the bathing house to pick up the dead who were shot during the bathing period. Sometimes he was able to drag a live prisoner into the carriage, treating him as though he were a corpse. Already, he had discussed the matter with his assistant Jona.

That very day, when I saw Jona, our eyes met and I realized that he was clearly aware of the watchman's plan. And then, a few days later, I learned that my brother had sold all his possessions in Sambor and had fled to Drohobycz in the dead of night.

On Friday of that same week, the watchman told me that the next day was to be a bathing day, for the Jewish Council already had been alerted that it was to prepare the baths.

On Saturday, the watchman brought me a plate of soup, and we sat in the cemetery, among the graves, and talked about the plans for my escape. He told me where to go, on which street corner to wait, and how I was to make believe I was dead and how I had to react when I was tossed into his carriage. If I was unable to manage to show up at

the appointed street corner, I had an alternate corner. The action was to take place before dawn on the following Monday, when everyone was tired out after sitting around for a couple of days, and all the prisoners were indifferent to what was happening around them. If my group was to be led to the bathing rooms before Monday, I was to try to delay my entry, by falling back to the end of the line, hoping against hope that I would manage to remain outside until the appointed hour.

He shook my hand and said, fervently, "Good luck."

I was, at once, a bit more confident and believed that with the help of God, all would go well.

That same evening, after the day's work, we had assembled on the parade grounds of the camp. Oddly enough, we were not called and made ready for bathing. This meant there would be no bathing for us this week. As it had rained during the day and it was wet everywhere, the Jews were rather contented.

Following the roll-call, I returned to my barracks with a fellow named Grob, who came from the town of Rzeszow. It was thanks to Grob that I was living in this barracks in the first place. The barracks leader, a well-known thief from Lemberg was a friend of Grob's, and through Grob's good offices, I was permitted into this barracks.

For some days now, I had noticed that Grob was not well. His complexion had changed and when he slept his breath came fast and hot. He generally rolled himself up in his jacket, which he used to use as a pillow, because he seemed always to be cold. Yet it was very warm in the barracks.

It is clear enough why prisoners were generally willing to keep their sicknesses to themselves, for it was common for a prisoner to be shot if it was suspected that he was ailing. Even Grob, who must have known I would not report him, dared not tell me that he had typhus. He was afraid

to utter the word. I permitted him to take his own way out. I left him in peace, looking anxiously at his pale, drawn face. When we came to the barracks, he was perfectly happy to have escaped bathing. Had he gone, it would have meant sure death, for he could not have escaped the peering eyes of the Germans.

Finally, I slept. And then, as though it were a nightmare, I seemed to feel that hundreds of pairs of wooden shoes were stamping over me. I thought I heard shooting. And then I awakened—and it was no dream. SS men were storming through our barracks, hitting blindly, and the prisoners were jumping off their beds, rushing about wildly, and were gradually pushed to the barracks doors.

What is it I wonder? I pushed up against Grob. Maybe he knows what is going on. From the loud confused babble, I hear the words, "Roll-Call." Grob says, "Let's not leave the barracks by the door. They are probably waiting there and will beat us up." So we leave by way of the narrow barracks window, directly into the court. Others follow us.

Outside it is pouring rain and a strong wind is blowing the rain about. It is very wet and cold and we find it difficult to walk. We stumble against one another in the dark and slip in the mud. With heavy effort, we finally reach the area where our brigade has to fall in. Some of us stand there, trembling in the cold. Others are huddled together, in protection against the wind and rain.

Is this the morning roll-call already? But we hear the men talking and we learn that the roll-call of the evening had passed only an hour ago. We hear new rumors: that everyone is going to be shot. The glaring reflectors on the fences of the camp illuminate the entire area and it seems that it is daytime. We remain standing in the rain and storm for a few hours, and it is painful and terrible. Finally, we hear the command, "East Station Brigade—March!" and then, "Brigade—March!" One brigade after another

leaves the area. A long line forms as we march in the direction of the camp's exit gates.

We are marching toward the city to the baths.

What will become of Grob? I realize that it will mean death for him, for we will have to wait more than thirty hours in the streets. And there are now flooded streets where narrow lanes used to be. "Sit down!" and with the familiar command, we are forced to squat in the cold water itself.

In spite of the terrible night and the discomfort, I remember my arrangements with the watchman, and I move toward the corner we agreed upon. But I sit and wait . . . . . and wait . . . and wait . . . and the day and the night pass and the carriage does not come by.

On Monday morning I saw the watchman again, as usual, at the cemetery, and he signalled to me what I already knew: that the carriage had not come. At noon, when I had my soup in his one-room dwelling, he told me that he had not gone out at all because of the miserable weather and because he feared the violence of the SS men and the Askaris, their native helpers. He assured me that the next time around, the plan would meet with real success, and he hoped that God would preserve me until then. Two weeks was a long time to wait, as we both knew well. To live two weeks in Janover Camp was a great accomplishment and I would need the protection of God, who had preserved me until now. Poor man! He had no way of knowing that God would leave his side in but a few days.

Some days later—it is hard to keep track in the camp—I wanted to visit him at noon for a plate of soup. I was with another group of men, who were joining me. Suddenly, a handful of prisoners came running up to us; then they ran back to the cemetery. Apparently, something had happened in the watchman's room, but no one was quite certain what it had been.

In a moment, we heard the firing of guns in the cemetery. In a few seconds, we discovered what had happened. At about noon, the camp leader, Wellhaus, had surprised the watchman's dwelling and saw two prisoners there, eating at the table. Wielding his machine-gun, Wellhaus shot them both. Then, he killed the watchman's wife and one of his daughters. The other daughter had escaped through the window. Nobody knew what had happened with the watchman himself.

At the same time, we learned something else: The German supervisor of the cemetery, Adolph, who aided Wellhaus, was in danger. Wellhaus had threatened to send him to the Russian front. Adolph was terribly frightened by this turn of events. All afternoon he sat stolidly, like an idiot, on one of the cemetery graves with his head between his hands, staring into space. He was, at the moment, not interested in work. But before we were marched back to the camp, he pulled himself together, waved his whip in our direction and promised to repay us for all the danger he faced.

When we returned to the camp, we saw what had happened to the watchman. He was bound to the punishing poles; Wellhaus had not shot him. Instead, the watchman was being tortured. His face was ripped by whip strokes and the blood was matted on his countenance. As I passed him with our column, he murmured, "I am in great pain, my friend, great pain."

The roll-call this evening was later called "the black roll-call," and even the oldest brigade leaders could not remember so violent a roll-call.

Wellhaus entered and in his evil, hoarse voice kept calling out victims and four different times men were led to the parade front grounds and executed. Eventually, the execution area was covered with corpses and as men were called out and shots rang out, death ran rampant. Blood flowed

readily as men were murdered.

When the fourth group had been marched out and killed, Wellhaus calmed down. Then he ascended the stage in the area and told us why he had commanded the massacre. The blood-letting was due to the discovery of a few prisoners in the private dwelling of the cemetery watchman. This was the great crime the prisoners had committed—and *this* the punishment meted out!

Wellhaus declared, "We Germans do not need you Jews! There are enough Aryan workers we can use. We have Poles and Ukrainians, Russians and Czechs and Serbs. We have Greeks and Frenchmen, Dutchmen and Belgians. So if you want to live, if you want to survive, even for a little while, you'd better obey the camp rules."

Then he ordered that every brigade leader working in the cemetery be lashed fifty strokes. In addition, the Jewish policemen were demoted to the "rank" of common prisoner.

The counting of the brigades was then started. Ordinarily, this meant the end of the shooting. This time, however, men were shot as they counted. One small-sized Jew, through an error, repeated his neighbor's number instead of his own. He was ordered to leave the brigade and stand alongside the kitchen wall and count to the number sixteen some sixteen times. Trembling with fear yet relieved to have come through alive, he started counting. Standing with his face against the wall, he would recite a number and then turn around as though expecting a bullet. When he reached "sixteen," he turned around to rejoin his group. At this moment, Rokita pulled his gun from his pocket and quickly and crisply killed him. And as the Jew lay on the ground, Rokita, evil to the end, shot him once again.

During this night, I was wracked with anxiety. I had no peace. From a distance, I saw the poor watchman, still fastened with wire to the posts, trying to move. But the

wire had cut into his flesh and his face had grown black. His eyes were now large with pain and shot with blood. There was dirty foam dribbling from his mouth. His lips moved convulsively. He seemed to want to speak, but was unable to. The upper part of his body was naked and a few hours later, he was hanged from the gallows. He wore only trousers and his tongue popped out of his mouth. His body swung in the wind. He had finally died; it was a relief for him. But the cemetery was now a real cemetery to me. I had lost my friend, as he had lost his life.

When Autumn came, it rained constantly. The air was wet and cold and the earth was soaked. It did not take long before typhus began to spread due to the lice. The prisoners, weakened and sick, were swiftly infected. More than two-thirds of the inhabitants of the camp were struck down by typhus, and every morning working groups of men carried out the dead bodies of those that had succumbed during the night, placing them in front of the barracks so that they could be reported as dead during the roll-call.

At about this time I, too, became ill. While I was smashing stones in the cemetery, I grew weak and rapidly lost strength. My hammer slipped from my grasp and I fainted.

When I recovered, I discovered myself lying between two graves, out of sight of the other workers. Apparently I had been placed there by my fellow workers who intended to carry me back to the camp in the evening as another dead prisoner.

I attempted to stand on my feet and after great effort I finally managed to drag myself back to my corps to return to work. I had to try to work again because if the guard saw that I was too weak to do my share, he would have to report me to the authorities and I would have been shot in the evening.

Fortunately, my friend, Dr. Schorr examined me on the

spot and realized that I had typhus. None of the men would report me and as the disease was widespread, the fact that I was sick alarmed nobody. Now there were some sixty in our brigade ill with typhus, and the brigade leader told me he would do all he could to cover for me. That night while lying on my cot I began to tremble violently. Grob, who lay near me, soon became aware of my condition and whispered to me that he himself had contracted the fever four weeks earlier. He instructed me on how to behave when I left the camp with the other workers and he thought up an imaginative touch to help protect me from the SS-men.

He owned a pink painting stone which he had obtained from his sister in the Lemberg ghetto. With this stone, one could paint one's cheeks after washing himself. Thus, the SS would not notice how pale the victim was. While helping me, Grob said, "Please don't tell this to anyone. It must be kept secret. If everybody learns this trick, the camp will be full of people with painted cheeks and we'll all be caught." That same night, Dr. Schorr and another friend from Sambor, Dr. Reich, visited me at my barracks and told me that as they had no medicine for me, I had to develop a strong will to live if I wanted to survive.

A week later I received from my brother a Russian coat lined with cotton wool, called a Fufeika. I was also given a good pair of shoes and began to feel better. My trembling stopped and my fever vanished. Once again, I was comparatively healthy.

I did have the will to live.

During the period of my illness, a great Jewish exodus went into effect throughout all Galicia, called the "October-action." Freight trains filled with Jews rolled day and night through Lemberg in the direction of Zolkiew-Rawa-Russka. The unfortunate people within the boxcars called out to us asking where they were going and whether we

could help them. We could be of no help. There were all sorts of terrible rumors about the eventual fate of these people, but we were truly ignorant of what would happen to them.

The stories they heard made them desperate and at night many of them jumped out of the boxcars, with their children, sometimes without any clothes and often fainting because of excitement and weakness. When the guards saw them, they shot them mercilessly.

A few weeks later, I met a woman who had escaped from one of these boxcars and she told me that she had wandered naked around the countryside for three weeks before she was able to find her husband at Drohobycz.

Slowly, each day we picked up new facts about the evacuation of Jews. We found out that the German authorities had established ghettos for the Jews in every town.

In August, 1942, something new was added to the armband badge of the ghetto Jew. A red letter "A" had been embroidered into the emblem of the Star of David. This meant that the wearer was ranked as a worker and the number of his working certificate was fixed behind the Star, which also had the German police seal on it. When a man wore his band, it was supposed to keep him and his family safe from attack by the Germans, as it was issued only to those Jews who worked within German establishments. The ghetto Jews who had not yet been assigned to work now desperately looked for jobs. It was more or less natural that unsavory "brokers," Jewish and non-Jewish alike, offered to sell such bands to Jews. Many people sold their last possessions in order to acquire these bands.

But now in October, when the new drive against the Jews was started, these bands were no longer respected. The Jews who thought that they were safely labeled as workers found themselves hustled into boxcars for liquidation and annihilation.

Escape Into The Lemberg Ghetto

One day I found on the cemetery my friend Jona again, who had improved his position a great deal since he had become a watchman. He was well dressed and well nourished. When he saw me, he suggested that I had sought him out in order to plot again to escape from the camp. He made it clear to me that it would be impossible to escape at this time. He did not drive the death carriage, which he controlled, to the bathing area, although he had received permission to use it even at night. He was simply afraid to take a chance.

In the course of our conversation, however, I sensed that he spoke this way only because he wanted to extract more money from me if I wanted his help. First, I offered him $20.

"Do you think I would make my wife a widow and my children orphans for a dog's price?" he asked.

I promised him $50.

He looked at me challengingly and said, "I'd like to see if you have the money."

I led him far into the cemetery, took off one of my shoes and extracted a bundle of American dollars which my brother had sent to me.

I gave him $10 in advance. He hid it hastily in his pocket and told me what he wanted me to do. From Sunday night to Monday morning he wanted to bring me, together with the dead, in his carriage to the cemetery. He was unwilling to do more than that, and he thought that my difficulties would begin after he brought me to the cemetery. Where would I go? Into what province? To Drohobycz? I thought that within the first few kilometers from Lemberg I would be recognized as an inmate of the Janover camp and that I would be shot down by any German or Ukrainian militiaman. I would not even possess identity papers and it would be hard for me to get into the Lemberg ghetto. And if I managed to slip in, who would risk his life by sheltering me?

I explained to Jona that I had plans of my own and that I had thought them through carefully, though the truth was that I was completely ignorant of what would happen to me. I thought only of escaping from this camp and getting into Lemberg. Naturally, I assured him that if there were any slipup, I would not betray him. We separated in good humor. On Saturday morning we already knew that we would be led to the bathing area that evening.

More than a full day has passed and I am now sitting at a street corner not far from the bathing house. From here I am to be thrown into the death carriage. It has taken me a full twenty-four hours, from Saturday night to Sunday night to reach this corner. I am wearing a cap and I hope that Jona will recognize me. I am lying in the street and I manage to nod every once in a while. The late Autumn sun was warm the entire day and I am not uncomfortable.

But Jona has been here several times already with his carriage and has not recognized me.

It has been a quiet night. The SS men are walking about with dark, thoughtful faces. They have heard that the Germans are being driven away from Stalingrad. The camp inmates who are sitting around me are tired and weak. We haven't been given any bread since Saturday morning. It is now Sunday night. We are beginning, all of us, to feel wretched, for if the men will not wash tonight they will be marched to work from here tomorrow morning at 6 A.M.

It must already be after midnight . . .

I hear the rolling of wheels . . . My heart is beating rapidly.

Cautiously, I look around me, and see that there are no SS men around. I lie motionless. The carriage stops near me and two men are approaching. I close my eyes not daring to breathe. Strong hands lift me by arms and legs. I let my head hang limply. There is a muttered command and I am thrown into the carriage, tossed on dead bodies. The carriage cover closes over me and the wheels roll on. I remember my instructions and keep my eyes shut, for the SS men usually stop the carriage and examine the corpses and scatter a few shots into the bodies. I think of the fate that faces me if I am to be recaptured. I recall the poor watchman who had been tortured. My flesh creeps while my heart pounds.

At length, the rattling of the carriage ceases. We have left the small streets behind us and in fifteen minutes we are in the cemetery. Meanwhile, I am curious to know how many bodies are in the carriage with me. I allow my hands to flutter about. I feel one cold body, but another is still warm. Maybe he is still alive, I think. Carefully I turn in his direction and I speak in a low voice. "Are you still alive? Tell me! You have nothing to be afraid of. Are you living?" There is no answer! Loneliness overcomes me, limitless and

terrible. How happy I would have been if he were still alive! How we could have helped each other, for I had as yet no real plan for escape. I realize how many dangers still await me, how unreal everything is.

The carriage stops. We are at the terminus. Stupified, I climb out as the two dead men are thrown out. Jona walks up to me and I give him the $40 I promised him.

"Where are you going now?" Jona asks me.

"I don't really know. But there is only one thing for me to do. I have to get into the Lemberg ghetto."

I say this because I once had many friends in Lemberg and I might meet up with some of them. I reassure Jona that I will never betray him and I begin to wander off into the middle of the cemetery. A day before, I left a spade beside one of the graves which I am preparing to carry with me so that I may be taken as a street worker. It seems to me that a ragged worker with a spade on his shoulders will not draw the attention of the SS men.

In the darkness of the night it takes me a long time to find the spade, but finally I manage and walk toward Jona. We reach his office, enter and sit down. He is well pleased with the results of his adventure. He is safe and he has my $40 in his pocket. He offers me a Hungarian cigarette and I ask him if he can lead me to any particular person in the ghetto. He pretends not to know anyone there and I think the reason is that he is afraid I will talk about how much money he now has. After all, $50 in American money is 2,000 zloties!

It is now five o'clock in the morning. I put on my jacket with my Jewish armband, which Jona had obtained for me and I bid him farewell and leave the cemetery.

I am well acquainted with Lemberg because I was once a student there. As I leave the cemetery and enter an open field, I hesitate for a moment in an effort to get my bearings. As I walk forward, all is silent. Suddenly I hear the barking

of dogs, and the dawn begins to rise. I begin to march toward the town and swiftly I reach Rappaport Street, which is near the Jewish Hospital.

As I look about me and see the familiar landmarks, warm sentiments rise in my heart, for I spent the happiest days of my youth here. It was in Lemberg that I was a member of the Zionist group called "Tikvat Zion," and where the Jewish intelligentsia met. The religious Zionists were particularly active in Lemberg. One of the outstanding leaders of the religious Zionist group was Dr. Simon Federbusch, the Hebrew scholar. Dr. Federbusch had left a deep impression on us and was, therefore, an added reason for my fond memories of the city.

Swiftly I pass through Rappaport Street and enter the Zamarstinow District, where the Jewish ghetto is situated. I see scores of Jews, wearing their armbands, rushing to work. I walk on, spade on my shoulders, and look neither to the left nor right. I finally enter the ghetto gate and feel that for the moment, I am safe.

As I write, I remember that seven months after I smuggled myself into the ghetto, I heard that Jona had been caught helping other Jews escape and had been hanged by the Germans.

In the Lemberg Ghetto

Before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, more than 100,000 Jews lived in Lemberg. Later, the Jewish population swelled to 150,000 during the Soviet occupation. When the Germans gained control of Lemberg in 1941, persecution of the Jews began, with three pogroms in the first few weeks. As usual, the Ukrainians played an active part in the persecutions and thousands of Jews were killed. Among them was the famous Rabbi of Bobov, Rabbi Ben Zion Halberstam, a Hassidic rabbi who had many thousands of followers in Poland and elsewhere in the world. Also, Rabbi Aaron Levin of Rzeshov, a leader of the Agudath Israel in Poland and his brother Yecheskel Levin, Rabbi of Lemberg. Professor Allerhand was killed later, probably in the action of August, 1942.

In one particular action, more than 50,000 Jews were annihilated in Lemberg and 40,000 more were jammed into the ghetto in Zamarstinow. By the end of 1941, the Janover Camp had been established and was inhabited by hundreds of Lemberg youngsters, who had been dragged into the camp by the Germans.

Life in the Lemberg ghetto was full of tension and distrust. The constant punishments imposed by the Germans, the killings and the tortures, made the ghetto a hell-house. When I entered the ghetto, I knew all this, but I was still happy to be there because I had an opportunity to live once more among my fellow Jews. Although I had lived among many Jews in the Janover Camp, I felt that many of us had lost the semblance of human beings.

But I began to lose my enthusiasm when I saw policemen and SS men. I fixed the armband on my sleeve, took the spade from my shoulder and began to work in the streets.

I scraped the pavements, cleaned up the fruit peelings and worked fast in order to avoid attention. In this fashion I worked my way deeper and deeper into the ghetto. By this time I had been strolling about for almost half a day and had not as yet seen a familiar face.

I slipped into a corner, took some money out of my pocket and walked over to a small shopping area where I bought old clothing, consisting of trousers, a shirt, a tie, socks, a hat and a light overcoat. I also bought some soap, cigarettes and food.

Loaded down with this equipment, I was now unable to work in the street. When I saw a barbershop, I entered, placed my spade in a corner of the room, sat down in a barber chair and placed my equipment on the floor near my feet. From the expression on the barber's face, I could see that he understood my situation. When he had finished cutting my hair, I tried to pay him but he grasped my arm, indicating that he wanted no money. I told him that I could pay him, but he remained stubborn and in a few words he told me how to get to the bathing house. I thanked him warmly, and even as I write these words I feel deeply obliged to him.

You good, nameless Jew! Surely, you are now mouldering in a mass grave somewhere. Did you realize how you

renewed my faith and strengthened my confidence at a time when I had begun to despair of people, even some who were Jewish?

When I reached the bath house and got into a tub filled with hot water, I sat in it for hours, wanting to wash all the dirt off and out of me. A clean body and fresh clothing renewed me and I gained new courage to face the future.

Nevertheless, when I went out into the street again I was overcome by sorrow. Where was I to go? Where could I spend the night? I walked through the streets of the ghetto, this time without the protecting spade on my shoulder and with anxiety in my heart. For the first time in my life, I felt utterly homeless.

It was dark. The streets in the ghetto were now nearly empty. Curfew was fixed at seven o'clock in the evening and the police were out in force. I was frightened when a policeman crossed my path and I realized that he might ask me for my papers. To escape him, I ran into a side courtyard. It was the house at Lokietka Street 14. Perhaps I could find shelter here. Cautiously I began to look about me. Gradually I discovered that about twenty families lived in this area. Pieces of furniture were in the courtyard and the inhabitants slept there. The area was jammed and people were crowded in like sardines. I managed to find a stool in the corner and sat down. Nobody noticed me. Tired and excited over my adventures of the day, I fell into a restless sleep.

Suddenly I heard the familiar, lovely chanting of Jews studying the Talmud. I did not dare open my eyes, for I thought I was dreaming and wanted to retain this dream in my mind's eye. My own happy youth was revived in my heart. Once again I saw the Synagogue in Schodnica and the corner in which I studied from dawn to dusk. I saw my beloved teacher, Rabbi Abraham Mersel, and I hoped he was still alive. I recalled all my comrades: Meilech

Backenroth, Max Gartner-Backenroth, Mendel Mersel, Berl Eichenstein, and the many, many, others.

The Talmudic chanting continued and I realized that it was no dream. I rose from the stool and walked toward the direction of the singing, which came from an area where blankets served as partitioned walls. I pushed a blanket aside and looked into the section. An old man sat at a table which had a lighted candle on it. He wore a skull cap on his head and he rocked to and fro as he studied the Talmud treatise "Chullin." A young man was sitting and studying with him.

When the old man saw me, he interrupted his studying and, with a kind smile, invited me in. I apologized for having disturbed him.

"I am sorry to bother you," I said, "but it has been such a long time since I have heard these wonderful Talmud sounds that I had to come here."

The old man asked me my name, where I came from and how life was on the outside. His name was Isaac Meier and, in spite of his advanced age, he retained his freshness of spirit and lively personality. The young man with him was his son, and as we talked we forgot for the moment the miserable conditions under which we were living.

As we engaged in lively conversation, the blanket was again shifted aside and a young woman, with sharp features and fiery eyes, came in. She was the young man's wife. She, too, questioned me closely on my background and on the work I was doing.

But she was not satisfied. She wanted to know exactly where I came from and whether I had escaped from Janover. I became uneasy and grew frightened when I thought she was realizing that I was an escapee. I rose quickly and told her that I did not plan to stay with them, that they were not responsible for me. In the morning, I said, I would leave the court.

I left the stall, although the old man repeatedly asked me to stay. I returned to the corner where I had slept previously and waited to see if the woman would report me, but I could not keep awake and soon fell asleep on the chair. Suddenly a strong hand on my shoulder awakened me. I opened my eyes and saw the woman standing in front of me, her husband behind her. I was about to ask her to leave me alone but she said, "Come with us, young man. I will make up a bed for you and you'll be able to sleep quite comfortably in our area."

At first I did not want to go with her and then she said, "Please excuse me for having frightened you. Today a Jew is afraid of his own shadow. We want to help you."

I went with them to their stall and they gave me an armchair with a feather cushion for my head and a feather cover for my body. I felt good again for the first time since I was dragged away from my own home. I was able to take off my shoes and clothing and sleep like a human being once more.

I was suddenly awakened by a loud noise. Men and women were scurrying about saying that SS men had entered the ghetto. I hurriedly dressed again and prepared to flee, but a moment later I was told that the SS men had just passed through. Once again I undressed and slept long and restfully.

When I got up, the sun was out and Isaac Meier told me that it was noon. I had slept, I discovered, for fifteen hours.

The old man informed me that he had been thinking of me and of the possibility that he and I were relatives. After all, aren't all Jews related to one and another? It developed that Isaac Meier was right. Somehow, we were blood relations, through my grandmother Libe.

His father-in-law, a chemist named Katz, was well known. He had discovered a chemical for washing clothes,

which was very popular in Poland. I realized that all Jews are indeed related to each other.

Isaac Meier was very helpful and managed to obtain a temporary shelter for me, near the border of the ghetto. It was the home of a poor widow who knew that I had been a prisoner in the Janover Camp. She accepted me only because she needed the money I was willing to pay. The widow lived in a single room with her daughter and son, although other young folks slept there every night while working all day long on the outside. The Rabbi of Wadowice and his brother had also found refuge in the widow's room. She earned her livelihood and supported her children by buying butter and eggs outside the ghetto and selling them at a large profit to the ghetto inhabitants.

It didn't take long for all the folks in the shelter to learn that I had escaped from Janover. Nobody spoke to me about it, but I was always tense and nervous after I discovered that they knew my secret. Whenever they heard that a policeman was in the vicinity of the shelter, they fled the room and left the widow and myself alone to face any danger. I sometimes hid under the bedcovers and prayed that I would not be found.

After five days of living in the widow's room, the Rabbi's brother gave me some unexpected good news. A truck driver, a trustworthy man, was parked at the Zolkov gate and preparing to drive to Drohobycz. He was willing to take me with him. I swiftly put on my overcoat and began to run toward the gate.

All at once I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. Before I could turn around, a coarse, loud voice thundered in my ears,

"Stop!"

I froze.

"Your identity card! Who are you? Where do you work?"

He permitted me to face him and I realized I was looking

at Keiler, a Jewish militiaman, one of the most vicious and brutal Jewish guards in Janover Camp. He was one of the most feared men in the area.

"What do you want from me?" I asked in a controlled voice. "Leave me alone, I'm in a hurry."

He paid no attention to me. "I have to check your papers, or you'll have to come with me to the Kommandant of the Jewish ghetto militia."

By this time a crowd had gathered around us and I was surrounded by Jewish militiamen from all sides. I was dragged to the Kommandant and realized that what I was most afraid of—being caught—had come about.

I thought of the terrible death that was awaiting me. I remembered the gallows and the tortures in front of the Janover Camp. If I could have obtained poison at that moment, I would have swallowed it without hesitation.

In the Jewish ghetto militia Kommandant's office, there were a dozen militiamen sitting around idly, writing letters or playfully lashing their whips on their high, black boots.

"Who do we have here?" one of them asked. "Another bird that escaped from Janover?"

Keiler, by then, was roaring with rage and threatened me with all sorts of dire punishments.

Meanwhile, one of the Jewish officers behind a desk asked me, "Where were you going?"

This crisis had come upon me so suddenly that I was unprepared for the situation. I had to think quickly and said I was leaving the ghetto to return to my home as I was on a secret mission. "The Jewish Council has given me a job to do and I have to get on with it."

Before the Kommandant could consider my reply, Keiler called out, "Don't let him fool you! He's from Janover Camp and if you'll give me a little time, I'll be able to prove that he's not on a mission."

The Kommandant turned to me and said, "Young man,

if you have the proper documents, I'll set you free. But if you cannot convince me you are telling the truth, I shall have to turn you over to this man."

Another militiaman said to me, "We will force you to show us your papers if you are unwilling to do so." And at that moment he came close to me and tried to tear open my coat to look for my papers.

I decided to act boldly. I pushed aside the man who was gripping my clothes and said, "Gentlemen, I will let you search me over my dead body. The fate of an entire community rests on me. Lead me to the top officer of the Jewish Council and I will explain everything to him."

Although there was not a word of truth in anything I said, I was beginning to believe these words myself. Keiler became impatient, for he had to leave, and in desperation he suggested that I strip off my shirt and reveal the upper part of my body to them. His reason was clear to me. Practically all the prisoners at Janover Camp had welts and scars because of the beatings administered to them.

I said, "That's silly. I know you are looking for welts on my body, but what Jew doesn't have them today?" I spoke wildly in the hope that I could delay this entire inspection so that Keiler would be forced to leave without me.

As I write these lines, I myself wonder where I got the strength and courage to speak as I did. I can only say that my overwhelming fear drove me to these bold measures.

The Officer at the desk accepted my statement. "We will hold you until tomorrow morning in our ghetto prison. Then we'll bring you before our Jewish Council."

I insisted that this measure was impossible because the truck I was waiting for would not be there the next day. But my complaints went unheard. When the officer asked me my name, I gave him a false one. The necessary papers were filled out, and I was taken to the Baluckiego ghetto prison, with orders that I be sent back to Janover Camp.

I was placed in a small room which had a window with bars and an iron door. My cell was located in a small house surrounded by a large courtyard and guarded by two Jewish policemen. Two young boys were in the tiny room with me. A few hours later a young mother with her small child were thrust into the cell. She had been accused of breaking curfew and stealing.

I sat on the narrow cot thinking about my situation. I had not escaped from the Germans; I had merely delayed the showdown. I tried not to think of the future. Tiredness settled over me and I tried to sleep but my anxious thoughts gave me no rest. What would tomorrow bring?

Finally, I fell into fitful slumber. When I awoke it was daylight again, and the two young boys, Tobias and Nachum, were playing merrily and helped me forget my own misery.

At noon, two Jewish policemen and a civilian called for me. I was told that the civilian was the deputy leader of the Jewish Council, but because he wore cheap clothing, I felt that he was a subordinate official. I told him that I was willing to show him my documents if he could prove to me that he really was an official of the Council. The Policemen grew angry when they heard my conditions and left with the civilian, threatening that I would be severely punished for my insolence. After they had gone, I asked the boys whether the Jew was really a deputy chairman. They laughed heartily and Tobias said, "Of course not. Don't you know that the leaders of the Council have fat bellies and double chins? That man was Rappaport, a minor official."

Later in the afternoon, the vice-chairman of the Lemberg Jewish Police, who was the deputy chairman of the Council, arrived with two policemen. I was summoned to the courtyard and was told that the ghetto Council would accept my statement as true, but that I had to leave the ghetto immediately and promise not to return to it. If, by chance, I were

captured outside the ghetto, I was not to tell anyone that I had been there. In addition, I would have to pay a bribe to Keiler so that he would not try to track me down again.

So now I had to decide whether to leave the ghetto immediately or be delivered to the officials at Janover Camp. It was a terrible choice to make. Where was I to go if I left the ghetto? While life in Janover was fraught with peril, it was certain death for me to be caught outside the ghetto. I told this to the gentlemen deciding my fate.

They admitted that they understood my plight. "You must understand our point of view." one of them said. "We have no way out. It's unfortunate that we have to do this, but we must protect ourselves as well."

I tried to bargain with them; I asked if it were possible for me to stay in the ghetto another eight days. They refused my request. In despair, I offered another proposal. Could I remain in my cell a few days longer? This too was refused me.

In utter misery I shrugged my shoulders and said, "What can I do? Lead me to the gate and I promise that I will not get you into any trouble."

I did, however, have an opportunity to say goodbye to the Meier family and to thank them for all they had done for me. The young wife tried to cheer me up by telling me that I might manage to get away safely. But now another problem came up.

I was scheduled to board a train and leave the ghetto, but as Jews were not permitted to ride the trains, no one knew the railroad schedule. Finally, a member of the Jewish Council learned that two trains left the station daily: One at 6:30 A.M., the other at about 4 P.M. It was now too late for the afternoon train, and old Isaac Meier asked the Council leaders to allow me to remain until 5 o'clock the next morning. They agreed.

The next morning I prepared for my trip by taking my

armband off in the hope that I would be accepted as an Aryan. I reached the station a little after 6 A.M. and asked the girl in the ticket booth for a ticket to Drohobycz. Briskly, she told me that she had no more seat tickets and abruptly slammed the window shut. I was thunderstruck. I had never heard of special tickets. Again, I felt trapped and was certain that I would not emerge alive from this adventure.

As I stepped away from the window, a ragged youngster approached me and asked in a high voice, "Where do you want to go, sir?"

"It's none of your business," I snapped.

But the boy was persistent. "I only want to sell you a ticket for a reserved seat to Stryj, which is near Drohobycz."

How clever, I thought. So that's how the boys make extra money. I paid him whatever he asked and he whispered to me, "I know who you are, but I won't denounce you." And he disappeared.

I found a seat in the train which was full of Poles and Ukrainians who, if they could but recognize me, would have turned me in. Luckily, I was not approached by anyone, and as I sat in my seat nervously, I managed to work myself into a happy mood by the time the train reached Stryj.

As the train pulled into Stryj, nearly all the passengers got off. I didn't want to be the first to leave and peeked through the window to see who was on the station. When I noticed German policemen and railway guards and observed how they were examining documents, my heart fluttered uneasily. I had not thought that the Germans would be so careful in their examinations. I could not decide what to do, and then fate played a hand in my decision. The train began to move again in the direction of Drohobycz, and I realized that I would have to jump if I wanted to get off now.

I remained frozen where I was, even though I had a ticket only to Stryj. It was three more stations to Drohobycz, and in another forty minutes we arrived.

Because of the fact that there were policemen here too, I jumped out of the train from the opposite side to avoid them. I came upon a small group of Jewish workers who were loading lumber from a truck into a freight car. I rushed up to them and said, in a trembling voice, "Jews, *Ivri Anochi,* I am one of you. I've just come from Lemberg. How can I get into town?"

One of them replied, "Quick! Get your armband on or they'll kill you." I began to work and when it grew dark, I marched with them into the ghetto.

I was safe again. Here I found my brother, many of my friends and acquaintances and I told them of what had happened to me during the past weeks. I told them what the Germans were doing at Janover and how they were trying to liquidate the entire Jewish population. Although everything I said to them was true, even I could not anticipate how much more suffering faced me. Even as I lie here and write these words, I can scarcely realize how much misery faced me in the future.