Chaim/Imek Segal

with Julia Drinnenberg

Chaim means Life

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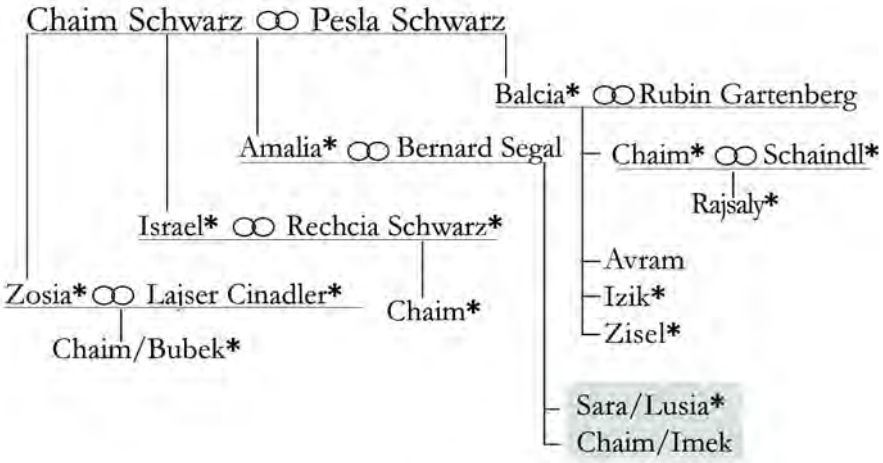
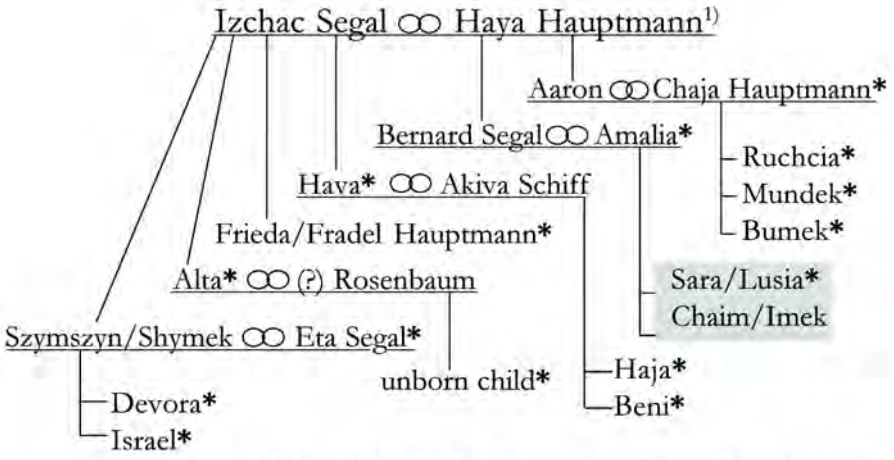
Für Mamus und Lusia

Murdered family members of Chaim Segal

1. Maternal side



2. Paternal side



* Murdered family Members. At least 55 other distant relatives were victims of the Holocaust.

1) As it was only a religious marriage, the wife and children kept the maiden-name Hauptmann. Bernard and Shymek later adopted the official name Segal.

FOREWORD

My childhood suddenly ended in 1941 when the German *Wehrmacht* marched into my hometown Boryslaw, in former Poland. As a child of twelve to fifteen years, I experienced terrible cruelty and saw the dark sides of the human soul.
For 70 years I could not share my experiences from the years of war with anybody, except with my dear wife Bella – by all means not to the full extent. I did not want to burden my grandchildren with this for a long time. They are growing up in a peaceful and liberal country in loving homes – why should I distress them with my nightmares? Today I think differently. I am 82 years old, the last and only one, in whose thoughts our murdered relatives, especially my beloved mother and my sister Lusia, still exist as living people.
This book will keep the memory of them alive in my children and their children. They shall read this when they are at an age to have the right amount of comprehension. They must know what happened because they belong to the generation that will shape a peaceful future.

I am happy to have such a good memory. However, after 70 long years, memories can be interfered with by other stories or even shift around. As a small boy, whose sole thought was only to survive the next day or even hours, I did not memorize what day or month it happened to be.

Bronia and Gustek Halmut (their former name was Halpern) contributed their memories to this book. I will never forget until the end of my life what they did for me during the war. They are special people – angels, who protected me, by accepting me like their younger brother. They showed me in their simple and humane way that it was worthwhile to go on living.

My dear friend Izik Kudysz trusted and encouraged me. As a result I could gain great strength. Sadly he is no longer alive. This book shall save his name from being forgotten.
I also think with gratitude of all the anonymous people giving me a little of their bread rations at times, helping me to survive the next few hours or doing difficult work for me because I was a little child. Often it was these small gestures that helped me on a bit.

Julia Drinnenberg documented my story after countless personal conversations. She not only managed to project her thoughts into life in those days, but also to empathize with the soul of the little Chaim/Imek.

By researching historical sources, she verified a child's experiences and transferred them into the historical context.
My mother's last request, that I should tell the whole world about what had happened, could be realized with her help. For this I thank her with my whole heart.

Chaim/Imek Segal

CHILDHOOD IN BORYSLAW

How was I able to survive the war? I was a young boy of twelve years when it started. Why did somebody survive? One does not need to search for reasons. It just happened. Luck and coincidences determined life and death, above all the luck of always finding good friends.

For instance, that I was a terribly poor eater as a small child, was good luck for me later on. Whatever my mother cooked, tasted delicious. I especially like remembering her *Gefilte Fisch,* the chicken broth with *Kreplach* or the *Cholent*. But once I had eaten two or three mouthfuls of it, I felt full up and only picked at my food. I apparently was a good child, so these are the only times I remember my mother being cross with me.

„How can he grow?"

She moaned, pleaded and begged, promised me sweets and in the end she scolded me and threatened to cancel my dessert. But it couldn't be helped – I ate like a bird. This is how I came to survive on very little food when other people collapsed in the streets weak from hunger.

When I was a little child, I had long, blonde curls. I looked like a girl. Everybody on the street wanted to stroke the little angel's head, pinch his cheek or spoil him with chocolate, which was my favourite food. I really was a pampered child.

My sister Lusia (spelled Lousha) and I sometimes quarrelled and yelled at each other, as normal with siblings. But yet we loved one another and played and romped around together. Lusia was two years older than me. The day I started school, waiting with my cousin Mundek and all the parents gathered in the school yard, I spotted her blonde head with pinned up braids amongst the other girls. She waved and laughed, arm in arm with her best friend, our cousin Rachel, called Ruchcia. It reassured me to know she was among the children in the school yard, when the parents were sent home later. In the first school year I suddenly did not want to have long curls anymore. The boys called me 'little girl'. This upset me because I was big now and certainly not a girl. I also found it most unpleasant to be fondled by relatives and acquaintances on the way to school in front of the other boys and girls. I was a pupil and insisted on having my hair cut like a boy. My mother's face was sad, but she finally cut off the curls and kept a few in a paper bag like a treasure. She left one long streak at the back of my neck. But she also had to cut this off the next day, because the children had teased me and had fun pulling it.

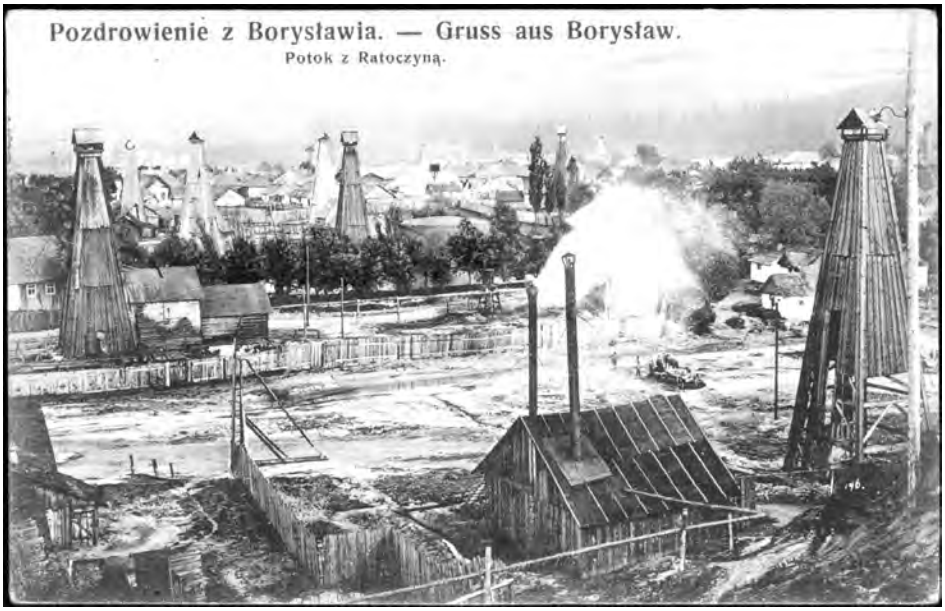
My focus became larger with my first year at school. New streets and squares were added. Even though my little world around our house in

Zielinskiego No. 19 had been a big adventure for me. We lived in Wolanka, in the middle of the winding centre of Boryslaw. The houses were built close together and nearly every one had a small shop or workshop of some kind facing the main road with uncountable interlaced extensions and sheds, rabbit hutches and latrines out to the back. The labyrinth of back yards and little paths were the best playgrounds and hide-outs for us. There were worn down lawns, heaps of firewood and impenetrable shady corners with rambling nettles and elderberry bushes in between.

The families lived so close together in Wolanka that you knew everything about the neighbours – or at least believed to know. Of course one helped each other whenever possible, however, there was passionate gossip and talk about everything and everybody on every corner, over fences and from one window to the next!

As soon as I was four or five years old, I was allowed to go on Sabbath at the synagogue holding on to my father's hand. The big synagogue, the *Beshamedresh*, was located only a few minutes away from our house. The women sat up in the gallery. I could recognize Mamusia *(spelled Mamousha)* and Lusia among them. The old women, who could no longer climb the stairs, looked for seats behind the men near the entrance. I looked up at the arched ceiling with my head tilted back. I loved this vast building and marvelled at the precious doors of the Torah shrine. Who had carved these elaborate ornaments a long time ago? My glance wandered to the pictures on the stained glass windows, telling stories from the Bible. Sometimes my friend Buroch came and quietly sat beside me on the bench, the little *kippah* slanted on his blonde head. His father was the *Shamas*, a serious and important man at the synagogue, who opened or closed the gate, kept the big room clean and prepared the festivities. I did not understand one single word of the Hebrew songs and prayers, but I liked the sound and was surprised my father knew them all by heart. It was wonderful sitting in the dense crowd of devout men. I felt their deep respect for the Torah and their devotion when the *Chazan,* the cantor, began to recite the words. I had the feeling that there was nothing to fear and felt secure in this big family. The warm voice engulfed me and rose up to the vault. I listened and forgot everything else around me. To me the chanting came directly from heaven.

Now I dreamt of becoming a singer. And so, to my family's joy, I began singing as a small boy and memorized every tune I heard. My musicality seemed promising to my parents. Hence they even bought a piano once I was older. For a time I imagined becoming a world-famous pianist. But after a while I did not enjoy piano lessons with the rigid and unrelenting piano teacher and nothing came of this career.



View at Boryslaw in the 20th, centre of the oil industry
(Photo archives www.redbor.pl)

Our big house, the yard and the rented out houses on the other side of the narrow alley, all belonged to my grandmother on my mother's side, Pesla Schwarz. In my eyes she was an immensely rich woman. Family Schwarz had come to fortune by owning oil fields. Grandmother always wore a nice, long fur coat in winter. One day, I stood next to the coat stand and stroked her fur. I put my hand into the deep coat pocket. It was filled with coins – all of them were Russian rubles!

We had a house built out of wood with white plastered walls on the outside. Big, grey metal sheets, as common in Wolanka, covered the roof. Because the back yard was also part of Pesla's property, my father had set up an extension with a workshop under the steep wooden stairs leading up to the attic. He was an upholsterer by profession and, like all men in the Segal family, a very talented craftsman. He left the house early in the morning at six o'clock and went to work for *Bernstein&Mojak*, a transport company, where he constructed and repaired car seats. When he returned home at four o'clock in the afternoon, we ate together. He then disappeared into his workshop and took care of small and big orders. He not only repaired furniture, but also mattresses and seat cushions, sewed curtains or decorated people's walls. Once he even sewed big new curtains

for the theatre in Boryslaw. My father liked having me around when he was working. I watched him cut out my first canvas satchel and sew it on his sewing machine. In my eyes, my school satchel was the most beautiful one in the class.

My father Bernard Segal (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Uncle Lajser Cinadler had his butcher's shop in the same house with the entrance out to the front of the Zielinskiego. Almost every day, I pushed open the big shop door, using all my strength, to go and visit him. Ah, Imek! Immediately I was greeted from all sides. I then squeezed behind the counter, stood on a box and watched his hands, dissecting the meat with a shiny knife in brisk flowing movements and rapidly cutting it into small pieces. At the same time Uncle Lajser could talk to the customers, make jokes and laugh without cutting himself. Zosia, his wife, was my mother's youngest sister. They met nearly every day. Both women liked to sit together in our kitchen talking, especially when Aunt Zosia was expecting her first baby in 1940.

Workers and drivers for the company Bernstein&Mojak in Boryslaw
(Photo archives Oleg Mykulych)

After I had watched in the shop for a while, I'd move on to Uncle Israel's. He had a tavern on the left side of the house – as with Uncle Lajser, a few steps led up to the front door. *Israel's Café* was written outside, which I knew even before I could read. Uncle Israel, my mother's brother, was my favourite uncle, so to say he was my hero. I noticed that he was highly respected. He always was open-handed if somebody asked him:

"Israel, I have a problem. Can you lend me some money...?"

But he could get terribly angry, he could not stand injustice. He interfered everywhere. How strong he was! Once Marian, Grandma Pesla's Ukrainian tenant, did not want to pay the rent. He insulted her and threw eggs at her. Uncle Israel stormed into his house, grabbed him and nearly broke his arm. He did not leave until the tenant had forked out the money.

There was all to see and hear in Uncle Israels tavern! Usually all tables were already busy in the mornings. Many Jews came here, but there were also a few Polish and Ukrainian guests. The men sat and smoked, drank beer and slammed the playing cards on the tables. After the games ended, the cards were shuffled and loud debates took place. Everyone knew each other well. When they teased each other and tried to cheat on someone, then laughed at him, I knew these jokes were good-natured. Yes, I listened very carefully

and was taught whom to trust, who was a crook, who was a twaddler and whose advice the men listened to. Everything was discussed here – surely also an imminent war. But I cannot remember this any more. I was too young and could not imagine that life could be dangerous. Uncle Israel lived with his wife Rechcia and their little son Chaim in the rooms right behind the tavern. I was his pet child and he gave me lemonade, chocolate and sweets or a *Groszy*. I ran down the street with it to the *Wenecjenka*, where they had the most delicious ice-cream I ever tasted in my life.

You'd almost think that these were enough people: three families already living in one house. But that was not it by far! Lewenbergs with their daughters – all four of them a little on the short side – lived in an apartment, which took up about half of the attic. They had a wide balcony facing the main street. They reached the attic by climbing up the wooden stairs in the backyard. Passing the bolted wooden sheds of the tenants, they finally arrived at their front door. Mr. Lewenberg ran a hairdressing salon not far from us on the Zielinskiego.
Only the cellar was not inhabited. Steps beneath Israel's Café and Lasjer's butcher shop led to a furniture shop and another shop, where you could buy pickled vegetables and fruit. Nearly every space in the house was used.

I just had to run out of the front door, there were children everywhere in the streets to play with. Nobody bothered whether we were playing with Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish children or with Gypsies. We played, we squabbled and made close friends. I still remember the names of my Polish friends: Mundek, Bonek, Januk, Marisha and Usek. It was a happy childhood for all of us and so it was for the barefooted children of the poor from the neighbourhoods Debry, Potok Gorny and Miskievicza.

A Gypsy family with lots of children lived next to us. The father was a peddler.
"I reckon he stole the money,"
Grandmother Pesla always muttered when he came to pay the rent once a month. The older Gypsy children always had to look after their small, runny-nosed siblings. One of the girls was only slightly older than me. She was a real beauty, dainty with enormous black eyes and shiny dark curls.

Sometimes children's films were shown in the cinema. We then ran off with a few coins in our sweaty hands to get a good seat at the *Apollo* or *Colosseum*. What a racket until the children were all seated on the wooden chairs. I was amazed at the artist who had painted the portraits of famous

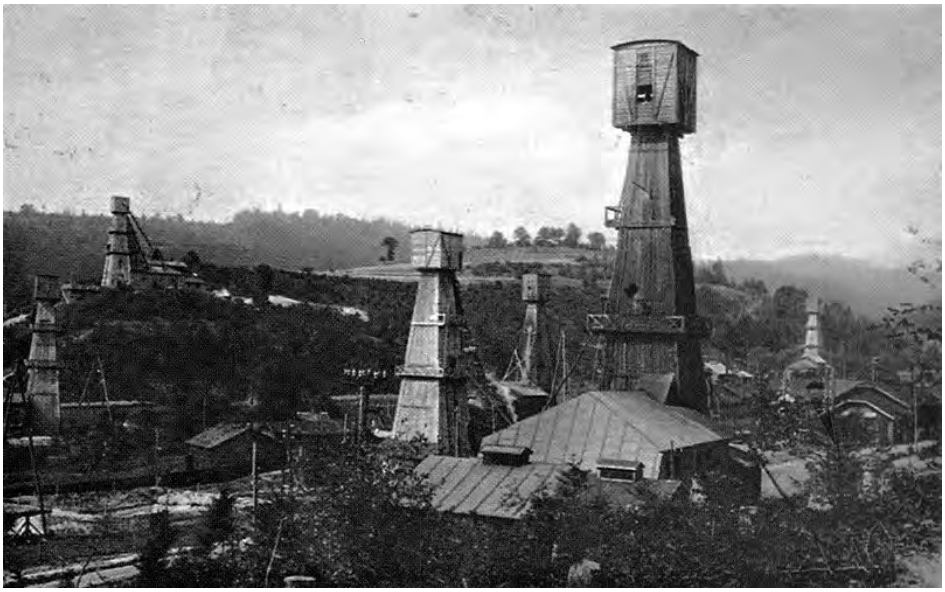
The Kosciuszki Street with a sign for the Colosseum Cinema
(Photo archives Oleg Mykulych)

actors on the walls of the *Colosseum*: Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo and Cary Grant. I especially loved the films with Charlie Chaplin and Pat and Patachon. Our bellies ached from laughing, and on the way home we talked about the scenes in the films imitating them.
Jolly little Mundek Schlesinger, who was my age, and his younger sister Rachel were my playmates as well. They lived right next door in a small crooked house that always smelled of cabbage. Mr. Schlesinger knew how to make the best of life. He went from house to house selling sewing thread, needles and other essential things to housewives. How did he and his wife manage to feed the family and forever be happy and in a good mood? Everybody liked the Schlesingers.

My cousin Izik Gartenberg and his little sister Zisel, the youngest children of mother's oldest sister Balcia, popped their heads round our front door:

„Imek, come with us!"

We ran down the lanes together with my cousin Mundek and built hiding places or let paper boats float in the big puddles on the unpaved Zielinskiego. It was also adventurous in the meadows on the edge of town, near the oil fields, where high wooden towers stuck out like soaring rigid monsters. The Tysmienica lazily flowed through the middle of Boryslaw.



Shaft towers in Boryslaw (Photo archives www.redbor.pl)

Oil swam on the surface. Thick oil oozed out of the oil fields or leaking pipes. The small tributary rivers were also too dirty to bathe in. One had to walk to the springs in the woods to do that. But we always found something to watch on the banks of the Tysmienica.

For example three *Lebaks* would be standing in the water up to their knees. Their battered, oily buckets were propped up against each other on the bank. The *Lebaks* were fishermen. Only they did not catch fish, but were fishing for crude oil on the surface of the river. They used blades of grass to do so, which were bound together like thick brooms. These they held into the currents. Once the broom was full of oil, they waded back on shore, let the water drain off and squeezed the oil out of the grass brooms into the buckets with their hands. It looked odd when the thin, stooped figures carried the heavy buckets, filled with oil, home on a yoke. In the backyards they mixed in sawdust and shaped it into balls for heating and cooking, which they could sell in the streets.
In summer we ran into the woods, which were not far away. We made dams in small streams on hot days and looked for deeper places to bathe in. Sometimes, when the entire family walked to the woods with a picnic basket on Sundays, I could lead them to the little clearings, where I had recently found raspberries or blackberries and where the mushrooms

peeked out of the ground in autumn. My extensive wanderings meant that I knew all the crannies and every path in the woods surrounding Boryslaw. Like many other people, we wandered around in the woods with baskets and buckets gathering berries and mushrooms. How well my mother knew all about the plants.

"Chew the leaves of the wood-sorrel. It helps against thirst. Here, try these, those are unripe seeds of wild hollyhock. They taste like nuts, right?"

Lebak in Boryslaw (Photo archives www.redbor.pl)

What did we children do in winter? Barely had the first snow covered the schoolyard, when a wild snowball fight would start during break. Not only snowballs, but also ice balls were sometimes thrown – a dreaded and very painfull ammunition. There were loud screams and the teachers intervened. All children were hopefully waiting to get down the skis and sledges from

the attics. There were steep and not so steep hills in Boryslaw and lots of snow most of the wintertime.
I learnt to ski very early on. My father even claimed, I had been able to ski before I could walk. My friends and I built small ski jumps. Everyone tried to set up a new record. Our breath froze on our scarves and hats, we were sweating and our faces glowing. Sometimes we stayed outside until it was getting dark and our mothers or my sister had to come looking for us.

Izik and Zisel Gartenberg and their elder brother Avram often were allowed to eat at our house. When the meal was ready and my mother called me in to eat, she often asked the other three to come in, too. She loved her oldest sister's children. She felt sorry for them. Uncle Rubin, their father, did not earn much money as an accountant and had to support a big family. My father said:

"He can't manage money."

From time to time, Grandmother Pesla helped out with small and bigger amounts of money. Then Uncle Rubin took the money to start a nice business with it. In the end the money was always gone, but the others had done good business.
Chaim, the Gartenberg's eldest son, was already earning his own money. He lived in a one-bedroom apartment not far away from Uncles Aaron's house. His girlfriend Schaindl got pregnant before the wedding, which was a scandal back then and all of Wolanka was talking about it. So Chaim married the pretty, red-haired Schaindl before the child was born, although he could barely feed a family. He had not learned a profession, worked here and there – mostly for a friend who was a fruit seller. The wedding took place without a religious ceremony and celebration. In 1940 their daughter Rajsaly was born.

I still have to tell about Uncle Aaron and his family. Aaron was my father's elder brother. With his wife Chaja, their children Rachel, Mundek and the little Bumek he lived in an apartment in the house right next to ours, directly on the main road. Aaron was a good craftsman. He worked self-employed as a decorator and upholsterer in his workshop on the ground floor. He was called *Fiddel* because he always fetched his fiddle and played on every occasion, at a party, a jolly gathering or in his workshop in the middle of work. He mostly played Yiddish or Chassidic songs. Some people patted his shoulder and called him *Mendzio Drala* after the renowned musician in Boryslaw. He then felt very honoured. Had Chaja also fallen in love with him because of him playing his fiddle?

Aunt Alta Rosenbaum with Aaron's children Ruchcia and Mundek and Uncle Aaron (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Their eldest child, Ruchcia, was the same age as Lusia. They were in the same class. Both girls were like sisters. They were always together and none of them ever went into town, to the post-office or library, alone. They had much to tell each other and giggle about. Sometimes they combed each other's hair and made themselves pretty. Mundek and I grinned at each other. We made fun of the fine ladies until they chased us away. I liked to play with Mundek best. He was the same age as me. Of course we sat next

to each other in class. His little brother Bumek was three years old when the war started.
Chaja's cousin Lola Feigenheim shared an apartment with her mother and one of her four brothers in the same house. He sat stooped in front of a little window in a tiny shoemaker's workshop. I sometimes took my shoes to him when the heels were worn down. There were tools, pieces of leather and soles hanging all over the place on the walls. I remember the smell of leather and glue up until today. He did not speak as he was deaf. But one look at my heels and he knew exactly what had to be done.

We did not leave Boryslaw very often, but at least twice a year we drove together to Truskawiec, a nearby Spa, all dressed up in our best clothes. The drivers of the carriages near the bridge over the Tysmienica rushed up. Each one would have liked to load us into his carriage. One bowed lower than the other in front of my father and complimented my mother. Finally, only one of them got the ride and the others trotted off.
The streets looked bright and clean in Truskawiec. People were dressed in fine clothes. In the reflection of a shop window I saw us: my mother was a beautiful, slender woman in a semi-long dress and a small hat. In autumn, she wore a warm fur draped on her shoulders. I observed how some men turned around to look at her. This made me very proud. Her hand, clad in a white glove, lay lightly on my father's arm. Now and then he raised his hat if he saw an acquaintance. Everybody had to drink some of the *Naftusia* healing waters. Lusia and I held our noses because it smelled and tasted of rotten eggs. The doctors said to drink a lot of it and as often as possible. Afterwards we were allowed to go to a café and order lemonade. We returned to our carriage towards dusk and trotted back to Boryslaw through the cool woods.
If my parents had business to do in the district town of Drohobycz, we went there by train. We always visited Uncle Szymszym. We called him Shymek. He was a butcher who made a very special kind of sausage. It tasted so good that we had to get some for a lot of people in Boryslaw each time. Lusia and I always liked going to see Uncle Shymek, the youngest Segal brother and his wife, Eta. Lusia and I had fun with their little daughter Devora. We were allowed to push her around the town in her pram. We zigzagged along the pavements until she was squealing with joy. Aunt Eta became pregnant again when Devora was two years old. Eta's second child Israel was born shortly before the war.
We also met up with Alta Rosenbaum and her husband in Drohobycz. She was a younger sister of my father. Her husband was also a butcher. Alta was looking forward to having a baby when the war started. It was her

Devora, daughter of Uncle Shymek and Aunt Eta in Drohobycz
(Photo archives Varda Stieglitz)

second pregnancy. Some time ago, to their sorrow, Alta and her husband had lost their first child when it was nine months old.

I like thinking back to the time when it was getting dark and my father returned from his workshop. He spread out the rustling newspaper on the kitchen table. I was given the page with the funnies. My mother and Lusia passionately read books, which they borrowed from the library. If Lusia was not reading, she got a notebook out of her little chest and put on her new reading glasses. She always continued writing her story in the evenings. In school she was highly praised for her essays. Now she wanted to write a real book. I saw that she had already filled many pages with her neat writing. I begged:

"Lusia, please read to me what you have written!"

She told me that the book was not finished yet. Not until she had written the end would she read it to all of us. Was it a fairy-tale, an adventure story or a love story? I would never know.

We liked sitting around the stove together in the evenings. We chattered while Mamus and Lusia did needlework. They embroidered flowers on

table-cloths, knitted baby clothes for Aunt Zosia and Aunt Alta or darned the holes in my socks, shaking their heads. Lusia could already knit very well. In winter she even wore a warm sweater she had knitted for herself. On these quiet evenings my father always was the story-teller in the family. I forever asked him to tell one particular story.

"Tell me the story about our grandfather who disappeared."

This was the story I was especially interested in because I imagined all kinds of adventures grandfather could have had. Father elaborated a lot, I already knew this habit. For him it was important to tell about our great-grandfather first. Now this was when father always looked at us children with an important expression raising his finger:

"All Segals have inherited their craftsmanship from him."

"Lusia too? Me too?"

"Of course, you both have inherited it."

Grandfather Izchac Segal had also been a highly esteemed man. Thanks to his technical talent he had had a good position in an oil shaft, in a small place called Urycz, before he moved to Boryslaw with his family. He employed a private tutor, Mr. Schieber, who taught Hebrew, High-German and other school subjects to all the little Segal children, including my father. In 1870, grandfather Izchac joined the Austrian Army and went to war. He said good-bye and disappeared. He never returned. Not even a message reached his family. Nobody ever found out what had happened to him. At least this is what was passed on in the family. He left seven children. My grandmother had to raise them on her own. My father and his brother Aaron, the eldest sons, were forced to work when they still were very young. Then the family lived in great poverty.

The Schwarz family on my mother's side however, was one of the wealthy Jewish families in Boryslaw. My grandfather was Chaim Schwarz. I only knew him from stories. He was highly respected and had left Grandmother Pesla whole rows of houses and shops to rent out. One of his ancestors had been a house constructor in Colomea a long time ago. As a little boy, I persistently drew ground-plans of houses with a pencil and ruler, dreaming of becoming a constructor of wonderful houses like him later on in life.

One spoke about Grandfather Chaim Schwarz like a holy man, because he had helped a lot of poor people in his life. He already had a long white beard when he was 40 years old and died much too early at the age of 42.

My father's eldest sister Hava Schiff lived in Urycz with her husband Akiva and their children, Haja and Beni. We made family outings to Urycz in summer. Aunt Hava laughed all day. The large crowd of children was never

Ruchcia visiting Urycz. Beni Schiff is next to her. (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

too big or too tiring for her. Uncle Akiva joined us in the evenings when we sat at the oblong table under the fruit trees for a long time. As a master builder he was in great demand and very busy working at the oil mines. His main passion was the huge, paradise-like garden in which he cultivated all kinds of vegetables, fruit and flowers. The women picked berries together. Afterwards, one heard them chattering in the kitchen while they were making jam or compote. The hills at the edge of the village ascended to the Carpathian Mountains. The woods appeared endless. For us it was a big playground with small streams, berries and mushrooms. Coming from town we children felt in paradise during the holidays in Urycz.

We really had lots of relatives. When I was doing my homework together with Lusia at the kitchen table in the afternoons, Fradel, my father's sister Frieda, often dropped in and I would listen to the latest gossip in Wolanka with half an ear.
Kind-hearted Aunt Fradel was crippled. She had a hunch-back and limped. Because of her cleft palate, one could hardly understand her. She wasn't married and loved children all the more. She spoiled them whenever she could. She was very poor without an own income and lived together with Grandmother Haya Hauptman in a tiny household until Grandmother's death in 1922. The dark apartment only had a small kitchen and a

bedroom. In spite of her poverty, Aunt Fradel always had a *paare Groszy* for us children in her apron pocket.
I also remember the big family celebrations we had in the side room of the synagogue. Who had enough room for a wedding table with chairs for 50 or 60 people at home? The last family celebration could have been Uncle Lajser and Aunt Zosia's wedding. The food and wine was ordered at the butchers, bakers and merchants in Boryslaw and delivered with handcarts. The neighbours arranged to bake all sorts of cakes and pastries. The celebration lasted several days. We ate, nibbled sweets and drank lemonade until our stomachs ached. The highlight was when Mendzio Drala and his musicians started playing dance music. The whole town knew his band consisting of two violinists, one cellist and a drummer. How I admired these cheerful musicians! We children skipped around the dancing couples, or I danced with Mamus or Lusia until we were dizzy.

IN SCHOOL

Our father had already gone to work when Lusia and I had breakfast – a glass of milk, a slice of bread with butter, homemade jam or Ukrainian cream cheese from the market. Maybe Lusia drank coffee back then, but I do not remember any longer. Mamus wrapped up sandwiches with salami in greaseproof paper for us to take to school. Sometimes she added an egg, an apple or even a sweet. We were always supposed to wear our school satchels, made out of firm canvas, on our backs to get straight shoulders.
It took about ten minutes to walk to school. At the end of our street leading out of town, behind a lawn, was our school next to the Roman Catholic church. Sometimes, I popped through the door to take a look inside, I was curious about what was going on in there and what all the smartly dressed people were doing. I liked the priest's robe and the way the Christians held their service. The light shone through the stained glass windows just like in our synagogue. Likewise they showed scenes from the Bible on them. Nobody minded that I, a Jew, sat and listened to the organ music and Christian hymns for a short while.

Lusia and I always had to dress well for school. In summer, I wore a sailor's suit with a blue beret and white ankle socks with my lace-ups. Balcia Gartenberg, Izik and Zisel's mother, was a good seamstress. She sewed everything for us and altered the clothes when Lusia and I had grown again. The children of poor people came in worn-out, patched clothes and

Boryslaw, Jewish Quarter, Shops in a house belonging to Moses Hersch Erdheim
(Photo: S. Erdheim around 1910. From the book *Das Stetl*, by Claudia Erdheim)

crushed caps, but nobody dared to go to school dirty. The teachers were strict in paying attention to cleanliness, checking the girls' and boys' fingers. The closer we were to school, the bigger and the louder the crowd of children became. All the shops opened up in the mornings. There was one shop next to the other all along our street. The horse carts with Ukrainian farmers were already on the way to the market, fully laden with chickens, vegetables and potatoes. What a bustle! In the midst of all this, the poor, the beggars, the weirdos and the unemployed walked around surviving by their wits with resourceful ideas. I knew many of their names, well, actually only their nick-names. There was S*ische Pempak* coming round the corner, constantly gasping for breath like a pump because he was so fat. *Kamlam Bilchefresser* had the biggest belly. *Krimme Shmil* had grown up lopsided and *Ziporje mit de Glockn* was a crazy woman, who ran from house to house, knowing everything about everybody and spreading the latest gossip:

"Do you already know...?"

The water carriers filled their big buckets at the pumps. They carried the water for people who did not want to go to the wells themselves. Every house had a wooden vat for the water supply that looked like a wine barrel. It held about 200 hundred litres. Our big barrel with a lid stood on the left of the hallway in a corner across from the front door. My mother used this water for watering the flowers and for cleaning. When our barrel was nearly empty, we called a water carrier – for example the *Krimme Moische*. Two buckets were hanging left and right on his *Kromesla,* a yoke he carried on his shoulders.

How much did he earn? He got one *Grosz* for each bucket he fetched. That was ten *Groszy* for ten buckets. It was a lot of money for a poor man. If he supplied a few more houses, he could live off the money for a day. He bought a loaf of bread, sour gherkin and a herring with it. That is what the poor people ate back then. Only very few houses had water pipes like our house. One can imagine how proud I was of our 'English toilet' that my father had built himself. One pulled a chain, the water immediately gushed out from the toilet tank and carried away the content in the toilet bowl with a loud gurgle. My friends came to our house and could not get enough of the spectacle. Grandmother Pesla's tenants shared one latrine in the yard.

In Wolanka (Photo archives Yaroslav Lavryk)

Our apartment consisted of two long narrow rooms, the kitchen and the parlour that was also our bedroom. My father had built an entry hall for our apartment. Now the wind and snow could not directly blow into our kitchen when one opened the heavy oak front door. The wooden hallway we called 'foyer'. It had a small door on the right leading to the toilet. This is where we also bathed in a wooden tub. In winter, a small oil stove made sure we did not have to freeze and shiver once we got out of the warm water. We had to walk past the big water barrel over creaking wooden planks in the 'foyer' to reach the kitchen. Even in summer it smelled of an open wood fire because Mamus used wood to cook on the kitchen stove. It was part of a round stove built out of bricks that nearly took up a quarter of the room. We liked to lie on the far end to warm ourselves up in winter. In the afternoons, when Lusia and I were doing our homework, the light shone in the window onto the round dining table. We did not mind if our mother was preparing a meal or cleaning the kitchen at the same time.

The parlour lay behind the kitchen. The first thing that visitors noticed was our oil painting. It was not just any painting! I have never seen such a picture since. It was six metres long and two metres high and had a big wooden frame. How had it been carried into the room? The doors were much too narrow. My father said it was painted on the premises. Once a hook slipped out of the wall and the painting was hanging crooked. Three men had to hold the painting up to put it back on the wall. Lying in bed I could let my eyes wander through the vast hilly landscape. I climbed the steep mountains and wandered down to the valley from above. I boarded the boat that lay in the glittering water in the sunlight and I dreamt. Wherever is the painting now? Just below it stood my parents broad bed with two bedside cabinets. Lusia slept by the window and I in the opposite corner near the stove, next to the piano.
The small plush sofa in the middle of the room and the chaise-lounge on the right of the window were both hardly used. White and scented sheets and table clothes lay in a big wardrobe. My mother liked it, when the linen was lying neatly in the cupboards and she took great care that our things for school were tidily packed in our *Bambetel*. This was a small trunk with compartments for our clothes. It was used as a bench when the lid was closed. My mother was tireless. In the evenings she only ever sat down with us after everything was shiny clean and put back in place. As soon as it was spring, she was bending over her small flowerbed in the back yard. She could spend hours there. She pulled up weeds, loosened the earth around her pansies and checked the gladiolas a few times a day in summer if they were blooming yet.

The only picture of my mother Amalia Schwarz as a young woman
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

"There is nothing better than one's own garden,"
she often said, when she came into the kitchen with some parsley, chives or radishes for the salad in her ruffled apron.

In 1939 I was ten years old and attending the fourth class. I liked going to school. Lessons were taught in Polish and Ukrainian. We spoke Yiddish or Polish at home and on the street. It was taken for granted to grow up with lots of languages and a fifth one was soon to be added. I brought home good grades in all subjects, but my favourite and best subject was mathematics.
Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and Gypsies – we all went to the same school. Primary school was free of charge in contrast to grammar school. Either we got on well or fought bitterly which is quite normal with children. If a fight started, the Ukrainian and Polish children cried 'Filthy Jew'. The Jewish children shouted back 'Filthy Ukrainian bastard' or even worse things. Only a few years later, I remembered a fight when a Ukrainian boy hissed in my ear:
"Careful, you Jewish Pig, one day I will break your neck!"
Now I did not understand what this threat meant.

THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

Around the time when I was changing into the fourth school grade, the Russians occupied Boryslaw. In the first days of September, a boy had seen German soldiers in cross country vehicles, tanks and trucks. I envied him for this. The Germans had attacked Poland on the 1st of September, 1939 and had briefly turned up in Boryslaw. Whilst the grown-ups worried about the future, all we talked about in the schoolyard was the tanks and their technical specifications or the different arms of the Russian, Polish and German armies.
On *Jom Kippur*, the Jewish Day of Atonement, Cossacks rode into town. A red star shone on their hats. Their horses were not supposed to trot on the cobble stones and the pedestrians had to leave the pavements clear. Hitler and Stalin had negotiated to split Poland among themselves. The Germans withdrew back to West Poland. In Uncle Israel's Café the men laughed about the joke that you went to bed in Poland at night and woke up in Russia the next morning. Some ranted about the Russians, others expected good times. The roads were given Russian names. The Zielinskiego was now called Karl-Marx-Street. But people could not get used to it and still

used the old names. Pictures of four bearded men now hung in our classroom: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Jewish refugees from Western Poland, with bundles and back-packs, passed through Boryslaw on the way to Russia. They told us about abuse and Jews even being murdered by Germans in the occupied territories. The refugees were not taken seriously in Boryslaw. Our image of the Germans was one of a civilized people, different from the Russians in this regard. Acts of war against their enemies and the pursuit of Bolsheviks we could imagine. But why should they act against innocent people and civilians? For us, the refugees' horrid descriptions were only exaggerations beyond measure.

The Soviets nationalized all property. As a result Grandmother Pesla lost all her houses and the income from renting them. She lived off her savings from now on. Father was lucky. Although he was not a communist, he had been a member of the Socialist Party of Poland for many years. He had always eagerly attended the meetings, where communism and socialism were discussed for hours. Therefore the Russians had no objections of him continuing to work at *Bernstein&Mojak*. We were doing fine and lacked nothing.

Lusia now went to the *Gymnasium*. Every morning our paths parted outside the house and she walked with Ruchcia and her other friends to the Ulica Stalina which we still called the Ulica Panska or Herrengasse. She now wore a school uniform. I envied her for the chic hat which she wore at an angle on her head. Wait until I go to the *Gymnasium*, too! My grades were good enough – I already saw myself proudly wearing such a school hat in the future!

It was a good time for me. I was a ten-year-old boy, who did not care in the least for politics, but developed his own interests. For example I started to copy pictures that made my friends laugh. I sketched heads of famous people from the daily newspaper, of Lenin, Stalin and Hitler, too. In actual fact the sketch looked a lot like Hitler with his little beard and hairdo – only that my Hitler had two devil's horns on his head.
Russian was a new subject in school. I liked this language, it sounded melodic and soft. One heard Russian spoken in the streets everywhere now. Soon it was easy for me to speak it fluently, like Polish, Ukrainian, German and Yiddish.

PURIM 1941

Oh dear, when I think of *Purim! Purim* was the most favourite feast for all the children. Even in 1941, at twelve years I did not feel too old for this fun. Only that Lusia and I did not want to dress up any longer. Yet, we were excited days beforehand. Most often it was still cold and foggy in March, but one could already sense that the worst of winter was over. The *Esther Megilla,* the story of Esther and Haman, was read in the Synagogue. As a small child I had not understood one word of it – the main thing was the rattle in my hand. Every time the name of the evil *Haman* was said, the grown-ups stamped their feet and we children turned the Purim-rattles. There was a deafening noise and it was great fun. We had an *Esther Megilla* at home as well and my father enjoyed reading from it before the meal. My mother had placed a bowl with biscuits and sweets for visitors on a small table by the door – little heaps of coins lay next to it, carefully counted by my father. We had scarcely finished our meal when there was a loud racket at the door. Nothing kept us on our seats any longer. Izik and Zisel stood at the entrance, bathed in the front door's light with bright-red painted cheeks, black moustaches and shining eyes. They were wearing coloured turbans on their heads and had sacks over their shoulders. Now they said their verse:

"Heint iz purim un morgen iz ois.
Git mir a grazer un varft mich arois."
(Today is Purim and tomorrow it's over,
give me a penny and throw me out.)

Both of them had something sweet put into their sacks and they went out into the alley. I quickly painted myself a black beard with coal. At last we were allowed to go out as well. The streets were full of frolicking children in disguise, who were visiting relatives and friends, showing their loot, frightening each other, shouting and laughing, pushing another, falling over, grazing their knees. First we stormed Uncle Aaron's apartment and took Mundek, disguised as a ghost, with us on our foray. We heard far away music. It was Mendzio Drala and his musicians. They were roaming the streets and given coins by people when they played requested songs in front of their houses. The grown-ups danced and we pranced around them. All the children returned home late at night; flushed and too tired to wash properly before going to bed. I still found traces of make-up on my face the next morning.

OUR LAST PASSOVER

It was only a few weeks until Passover. In this time my father had more orders than all the rest of the year. People had their homes renovated for the festive holidays. They wallpapered and had their furniture repaired and upholstered. Hundreds of Jewish families lugged baskets and tubs of dishes to a clean stream, to make it kosher in running water. We did not need to do this – the special Passover dishes were wrapped up in cloth in a cupboard in the loft. My mother brought the dishes down, after she had cleaned the entire house for *Seder* evening. She carefully unpacked the plates and tureens, the big platters, sauce boats and cups. I still see it before me: it was white china, with a fine and a wide gold edge. The newly starched, white damask cloth was placed on the table. Once the table was laid, our big room looked very festive. The anticipation made us children so excited and restless, that Mamus shooed us out of the room. I could hardly wait for the candles to be lit and everybody to be seated at the table, because I, as the youngest, was the most important person today. Once everybody was assembled, I was allowed to sing the song with the four questions:

"Ma nischtanah ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-lejlot?..."
(What makes this night different from other nights?...)

The questions were answered by the entire family and we sang the ancient song together. I already spoke this text at the age of four without understanding the words. By now I understood their meaning and knew everything about the departure of the Jews from Egypt, as written in our *Haggadah*. We sat together until late at night, ate the feast and crumbled the *matza,* the unleavened Passover bred, until it was time to go to bed. The year 1941 was the last time we celebrated together.

JUNE 1941

The school year was just coming to an end. I was moved up into the sixth grade. Lusia was already going to attend the eighth grade. Then the war broke out. Rumours were circulating. The general mood ranged between fear and hope – for us children it was a mixture of suspense and curiosity. Soldiers marched through the streets. The Russians left Boryslaw. Anyone could go with them. They particularly summoned party members to flee to Russia. They had gradually become nervous in the last months. They came

into the houses and deported people to Siberia, whom they suspected to be public enemies or pro-German. The prison cells in the NKWD-building were reportedly overfilled with arrested people.
My father had returned home from work on the 26th of June, while Lusia and I were still half asleep having our breakfast. He had to leave immediately – the Germans were coming! The last freight train to Russia was leaving in a few hours. The farewell was short. Mother packed some bread into a backpack and I saw her trying not to look sad. My father's departure came as no surprise. I knew all about it. Father had explained to Lusia and me that it was better for him to disappear when the Germans arrived. They would take all men prisoner, especially Socialists like him. The backpack had been ready for days just in case. Even a money supply for a few weeks was stored in a coloured tin in the cupboard. He wanted to come back soon. He embraced us one by one.

"It won't take long, no worry. Only a few weeks! Help your mother a little with the work. The Russians will send the Germans home immediately."

"Tato…"

"Lusia, what's up? There is no need to be frightened – the Germans will not harm you."

Lusia was pale. She sobbed when father hugged her. Now my mother was also crying. Insecurity soared inside me. Uncle Aaron, Chaja and the children, Grandmother Pesla, Uncle Lajser with Zosia, Uncle Israel – all of them came to say good bye and give a lot of good advice, which my father reluctantly took note of. My mother kept us at home from this day on. We did not go to school any longer.

While we were saying good bye to father at the station, the Gartenbergs also boarded the very last eastbound train leaving Boryslaw. Aunt Balcia, Uncle Rubin with Avram and my playmates, Izik and Zisel, were standing excitedly next to the railway tracks with a pile of luggage. Chaim Gartenberg, looking pale and distraught, hugged his beautiful Schaindl. He tenderly kissed his daughter Rajsaly, who was only a few months old, over and over again. The suitcases and boxes were stowed away with lots of yelling and bustle. One person after the other disappeared onto the train. I ran along the windows of the wagons, jumping up and trying to look inside. At last I discovered Tato's smiling face. The whistling train was just leaving the station, with Schaindl standing on the platform crying and laughing at the same time with the baby and – Chaim Gartenberg with his backpack. He could not get himself to part from his family. Together we slowly walked back to Wolanka.

We never saw Izik, Zisel and their mother Balcia again. What I did not know until after the war: in Russia, the train stopped in a small town near Odessa. Uncle Rubin got out, wanting to get some fresh water for the children and his wife. None of the travellers had heard the sirens. Uncle Rubin suddenly noticed German bombers approaching. He threw himself into a ditch just in time. The German planes were already firing at the train. Balcia and the children were dead immediately.

Avram Gartenberg was no longer with them on the train. He had bidden goodbye to his family at an earlier stop in Russia. He had decided to join the *Anders-Army* and fight against Hitler. However, he did not stay in the army for long. His goal was to reach Palestine. He set off on the long journey and crossed many borders on foot. He finally reached Palestine in 1942. Fending for himself by taking on odd jobs, he always tried to get news of Boryslaw from the refugees who had just arrived from Poland. Only after the war did he know for certain, what had happened to his family. He later on became a member of the kibbutz *Ma'ale HaHamisha* and changed his surname to the Hebrew *Ganani* (flower garden).

Zisel and Izik Gartenberg, six and thirteen years old
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Avram Gartenberg in Israel
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Uncle Rubin Gartenberg
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Uncle Rubin was one of the few people to survive the attack on the train. In the Red Army he fought against the Germans. After the war, he set off to look for his sons Chaim and Avram. In 1957 he emigrated to Israel to live with Avram in a kibbutz. He died in the late seventies, surrounded by his grandchildren and great grandchildren.
Many men escaped, leaving their families behind. At the same time as my father left, his brother Shymek also said good bye to Eta and his children in Drohobycz. He escaped to Russia just in time, together with his brother-in-law, Alta Rosenberg's husband. Uncle Akiva Schiff left Urycz in great haste. He also escaped to Russia.

THE GERMANS ARE COMING

Let us return to Boryslaw at the time of the outbreak of the war. The Russians withdrew and the Germans could invade any time. We heard explosions in town, columns of smoke were standing over the oil fields. The sky was black with acrid fumes. The Russians were setting the oil mines on fire. After a huge explosion the window panes rattled and our

ears were ringing. They had blown up the electrical power plant, so it would not fall into German hands. The lights went out and we had no electricity anymore. Zosia came running to us carrying Bubeck:

"Hurry! People are buying up the shops! Make sure you get something, too!"

Mamus and Lusia dragged big bags from one shop to another to buy durable supplies: potatoes, onions, sugar, salt, canned vegetables, flour, dried beans and soap.

Early in the morning on the 3rd of July, aeroplanes were flying low over the town. Factory sirens wailed. Startled people jumped out of their beds and watched the sky from their windows. The war had begun. Shortly after midday Uncle Israel came rushing into our kitchen with Rachel and Chaim.

"The Germans have arrived! There are pogroms! The Ukrainians are starting to beat Jews to death. The Germans are giving them free rein until this evening! You all stay inside here! Nobody will search the outhouses yet! I hope! Hush – keep quiet until I return! If only Bubeck keeps quiet, too!"

Uncle Lajser and Zosia, with two month old Bubek, rushed in to join us. My mother tugged at Israel's sleeve:

"Where is Mother?"

Grandmother Pesla insisted on staying in her apartment.

"I am not having my money stolen. Let them come. They will be in for a surprise!"

Uncle Israel closed the shutters and locked the door from the outside to make it look as if nobody was at home. Then he disappeared. We had never sat together in the parlour in the dark like this before. Dust danced in the rays of light from the shutters. Bubek fell asleep at once. What were we going to do if he started to cry? The grown-ups sat on the chaise longue and the beds. Lusia and I huddled up to Mamus. She appeared calm, but I knew that she was terribly frightened. Then I heard faraway engine noises and quick footsteps in the street.

"They are on the Ulica Panska! They are not coming here."

But the shouting came closer, drunken voices and cursing in Ukrainian – loud thuds, splintering wood and windows breaking.

"They are smashing the doors in, please G'd, help us. They will kill us."

Now we heard screams and loud weeping very near by and the roar of the mob.

"Byj jewreiw! Byj jewreiw! Beat the Jews!"

I was paralyzed with fear. Was this the same room, where we had happily slept in our beds last night? The room appeared to become narrower. We were sitting in a trap! My mother's arm around my shoulder was trembling, she whispered the same words time and time again. Now somebody was beating the door with a hard object:

"Jews, Bolsheviks! Dirty swines!"

Our heavy oak door still withstood the blows. With every vibration the piano behind me re-echoed a faint sound. Then the footsteps and shouts moved on. Were they in a hurry because of the curfew? Were they too impatient? Were they looking for a house which was easier to loot? We now heard them next door at Schlesinger's house.

"Dear G'd, the Schlesingers!"

It became very quiet outside after eight o'clock. The curfew began. We were still staring into the darkness wide-eyed. At last somebody dared to open the door.

"Where is Israel? What has happened to Pesla, Aaron, Chaja and the children?"

Mother firmly held us by our hands. This was not snow in the lane. The wind was swirling white feathers about. Slashed feather pillows and shards of china lay around. I saw gaping black windows, broken dishes, destroyed tables, mirrors and books. There was a trail of red blood in the alley. Motionless bodies lay further away on the main road. Something terrible had happened, something I did not understand. We found Uncle Israel at Grandmother Pesla's. Nothing had happened to them. Firmly clinging on to each other, we stumbled over to Schlesinger's small house. It did not have windows and doors any more. Ms. Schlesinger lay under the table, Mr. Schlesinger, totally distorted, next to her on the floor. Then I saw Mundek, my playmate, with blood at the back of his head and little Rachel. The whole family was dead. It was a terrible sight. We stood there staring, nobody said a word. Then we all started crying and shouting at the same time:

"They have killed the Schlesingers. They have slaughtered them! Even the woman and the children! They will kill us all. G'd, what shall we do?"

I shall never forget my mother's face. As she tried to pull Lusia and me away and comfort us, with her body trembling all over:

"They won't get us – not us! We will hide. We'll stay alive!"

'One day I will break your neck.' I suddenly remembered this sentence. The Ukrainians hated the Jews. This was the simple truth. It was normal for them to say this to the faces of Jews. For generations the children had inherited the hate from their parents. The Poles had always been rather reserved, but friendly – at least up until now. Poles and Gypsies were also involved in this pogrom, hoping for easy prey from the Jewish houses. Later on the Gypsies were hunted themselves. What about the Germans? My mother whispered:

"Hitler hates the Jews!"

We were lucky. Nobody from our family was killed. The men from the Jewish burial society, *Chevra Kadisha*, came the next morning, put the Schlesingers on a cart and buried them in the Jewish cemetery, together with about 200 other victims.

The following day we heard how the pogrom had started:

"The Germans found corpses in the cellar of the Technical College at the Fanto-Square – at least 50 dead bodies, prisoners of the Soviets. They had no time left to deport them and killed them before they fled. A few Jews were among the dead, too. But immediately it was said that the Jews were guilty. The Jews were communists and bolshevists! Ukrainian goon squads, armed with clubs, broke into the Jewish houses. All young men, even school boys were amongst them. They ripped the women's clothes off and laughed. Reb Jankaly, the Rabbi, was dragged there by his Pejes. The Jews that were caught, had to wash the bodies. Many were killed while doing so. The Rabbi is dead as well. Then it got even worse. The news spread to the villages like wildfire that there was something to get from the Jews. They even went to the poorest of the poor in Debry and Loziny. The Germans just watched and said, 'Do whatever you want to the Jews until eight o'clock tonight'."

Uncle Israel immediately began to feverishly build a hiding place for everybody who lived in our house. There were elongated narrow gaps between the wall and sloping roof on the left and the right of Lewenberg's attic apartment, where planks and strips of wood were stored. He built a hiding place on the right side, with an entrance hatch that he painted in the same colour as the outer wall of the attic apartment. He also boarded and painted the hollow space on the left. It would have been too suspicious having only one side closed. Nothing implied that there were hollow spaces there any longer. The hiding place was very narrow, but the space was big enough for 14 people closely huddled together: Uncle Israel with Rechcia and Chaim, Uncle Lajser with Zosia and the baby, my mother, Lusia and I and even the Lewenbergs with their four daughters. There would have been enough space for Grandmother Pesla as well. But she refused to crawl into this hot and stuffy hole right from the beginning. My mother implored, but it did not help. It was so narrow, that we all had to stand and only one of us could take a turn lying or squatting on the floor. Uncle Israel built a connection to a pipe from the roof for the urine. A bucket with a lid served as a toilet. There was a water supply and a few dry biscuits. That was all. It was scorching hot under the roof during the secret preparations for the hideout. Uncle Israel's back was dripping with sweat. He had to work very quietly and carefully. Any loud and steady hammering would have given us away to the Ukrainian neighbours and they would have known that a hideout was being built in the attic.

After the pogrom, the commander of the German *Wehrmacht* placed the Jews under his protection. Deceptive peace ruled for the next few days. The killing and looting had gotten out of hand even for the Germans. They probably felt deprived of their prey.

"As you can see, they are protecting us from the Ukrainians!"

"You fool! Who permitted the Ukrainians to kill us? I saw it myself, the Germans were there too! They gaped and laughed and took pictures! And then they raced through the streets on their motorbikes and shot the half-dead Jews!"

Full of fear we thought of Aunt Fradel and Aunt Alta. They had been staying in Urycz with their sister Hava Schiff for some time now. Aunt Alta had been on her own in Drohobycz, after her husband had left for Russia to fight with the *Anders-Army* at the same time as my father. Hava had taken in the highly pregnant Alta. The baby was supposed to be born there. We heard about pogroms taking place in the surrounding villages. In Schodnica, the murdering was even continuing now, two weeks later. But in little Urycz? Maybe the Germans had not reached there?

I was standing outside Uncle Israel's tavern's door on the stairs with Mamus on the 28th of August 1941. Ukrainian and Polish workers were passing by, laughing and calling to us:

"Another two villages cleaned! All the dirty Jews of Urycz and Schodnica are dead!"

How they laughed. How they spat the Polish *Zydzi* (Jews) in our faces, as if we were insects that needed to be crushed. What they had said became certain: Fradel was dead and also Alta, who had so looked forward to her child, and all our beloved relatives in Urycz. Soon we had no more tears left. I saw the sunny garden belonging to Uncle Akiva and Aunt Hava before me, with Benni on the swing and his sister pushing him. Suddenly the image of the dead Schlesingers appeared before me. I felt cold fear rising in me.

Abe Pollak, an eye-witness, who managed to hide in Urycz during the massacre, reported after the war that a brigade of Ukrainians on horseback reached Urycz on the 27th of August. They were commanded by *Sonderführer* Pieter Menten in SS-uniform. More than 200 Jews were herded together on the banks of a little river. The Ukrainians began digging a mass grave. A plank was laid over the grave and the Jews had to stand on it, one after another. Once a victim was standing in the middle of the plank, Menten gave the order to shoot. When all the Jews were dead, he had a bottle of brandy passed around. The grave was not completely covered up with earth yet, when a shower of thundery rain started. Small children, who had not been properly hit by the gun shots, were buried alive under the mud.

Had Uncle Shymek's family survived? What had happened to Aunt Eta, Devora and little Israel? We found out later: in November 1941, Eta and both her children were taken from their house in Drohobycz and shot together with one thousand other people in the woods of Bronica.

EVERYBODY IS GOING TO DIE

Edicts were released in Boryslaw immediately in July 1941. All Jews older than 13 years had to wear a blue Star of David of a certain size. My mother sketched stars for Lusia and herself on white cloth and sewed them onto their jackets with fine stitches. It was a reason to be beaten to death or shot if one was caught in the streets without this star. The Jew's shops were confiscated. Nobody was allowed to conduct trade any more. Visiting cinemas, theatres and public buildings or using public transport was prohibited with immediate effect. We were not permitted to use the pavements, but had to walk on the streets. A *Judenrat* (Jewish Committee) was appointed by the Germans. It had to work for them and to establish the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish Police). At first, the position was much sought after, but it quickly became clear that the *Ordnungsdienst* was to play a big role in the extinction of the Jews and many refused to cooperate or resigned from the post. Those who kept it most often were ruthless and corrupted. The Jews avoided the main roads. German and Ukrainian units captured anybody they found. They tormented and humiliated the people and sometimes let them do heavy and pointless work.

The *Judenrat* had to organize the forced labour for the Germans. All male Jews over the age of 13 years were forced to register with the employment agency and were given a work card with their picture on it. I was lucky and did not have to join the labour force yet. The w

orkers had to line up in rank and file in the big courtyard of what had formerly been the *Talmud Tora School.* Afterwards they were led to different work-places in small columns. For example they had to clear away debris in town.

The Carpathian Oil Cooperation was now firmly in German hands. New ditches for the oil pipes were dug and roads were paved. Lots of the grown-up men, who were able to work, were brought into labour camps in the surrounding area. The labour camp Janowska in Lemberg was hell, people said. There, the Jews were tormented and ill-treated and hundreds were shot.

Lusia and I were hanging around in the house. Most often I stood by the

window and secretly looked at the courtyard or watched the main road from Uncles Israel's tavern door.

"Get your books! Learn something!"

my mother said. I then got my books and stared at them, unable to concentrate. My thoughts were fleeing from reality. Nearly everyday we heard the beat of the hooves, when the Ukrainian mounted police came to loot the Jewish houses once the curfew had begun. When would they come to our house again? I could not go out at all any more. My Polish and Ukrainian friends had become deadly enemies. They had a new sport. When they saw a Jewish boy, they chased him like a mouse, threw stones at him or beat him severely. It was best not to fight back. This only made things worse. I imagined myself fleeing from town and thinking of good places to hide. But soon reality caught up with me again. There were no safe places anywhere. The main thing was that my mother and Lusia were here with me. I was paralyzed with fear at the thought that everybody expressed: they are going kill us all!

I did not want to die, I wanted to live. My mother put her arms around me. Using my real name she gently said:

"Chaim, of course you will live!"

What were Mundek and Izik, my playmates, getting up to? Sometimes we briefly saw each other when they darted by. We did not want to play any more, and we suddenly could not do so either. Our childhood was over. Only Ruchcia and Lusia still sat together and had a lot to tell one another.

A man from the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* came into the house. A new decree ordered all jewellery and valuables to be handed over. All the radios were also confiscated.

"Give away everything you have. They will kill you if they find anything here afterwards!"

My mother parted with her jewellery.

We did not need a special warning system because everybody constantly kept their eyes and ears open. If we saw a Jew rushing down the alley, or the Ukrainians could be heard from afar, we already knew that we had to hurry upstairs to our hiding place in the attic. Ah, they were thorough! Wherever they entered, they hurriedly turned the whole house upside down. They slit open pillows – something could be hidden in them. Everything was devastated when they left. Those who could not escape in time were killed. Every day we heard shots, screams and wailing in the streets when the operation was over and the murderers had returned to their houses at night.

The *Judenrat* had provisions delivered that were supposed to be given out to all the Jews. It was evident that the Germans wanted to starve us. Who could survive on seven and a half litres of milk and four loaves of bread for one month! Previously we would have thrown this bread away. It was dark, nearly black and very sticky. I gradually learnt to eat everything, no matter how stale and putrid it was. In September rain poured down relentlessly and all the fields were flooded. What was left of the potato harvest was collected under the supervision of the police. The black market now thrived. The Ukrainian farmers drove their fully laden carts through the streets and stopped outside the houses. They got everything they pointed to with their fat fingers in exchange for bread, butter or vegetables. Our money had been spent long ago. My mother exchanged tableware and linen for food. How it pained her, to give away the lovely Passover dishes! She had deposited part of the silver cutlery as a reserve in our secret hiding place in the attic. The farmers became more cunning by the day. We had to give them more and more for a couple of eggs or a few potatoes. The poor, who had nothing to exchange, fell over in the streets or died in their huts. My mother always insisted on going to the building of the *Judenrat* herself. She never would have sent us children. There she saw dying people with swollen bellies. She had to stand in a long queue. When it was her turn, Segal was crossed off the list of names and she went home with hardly anything in her bag, maybe only a little rice or flour. Most days barley broth was distributed. It was always burnt. Some half starved joker made up a song in Polish:

Take four grains of barley, take one litre of water.
Make a good soup out of it,
the good soup is good for your ass.

The people stole, slaughtered dogs and cats, ate nettles or chewed the bark of trees. Everybody was going to die. Every little child knew this now. The dead were collected and taken away everyday. My mother tirelessly washed our clothes, checked every seam and made sure we kept clean. But despite this, lice were soon plaguing us. We already heard that some people in Boryslaw had been taken ill with *Fleckfieber* (typhus). This word had been unknown to me up until now.
The Jews had to register with the new German employment agency. They were given identity cards and white armbands with an 'A' on them. They were led to work in columns into town and the neighbourhoods. Everybody who could work tried to get such an armband. People said one was protected as an indispensable labourer, workers were always required.

In September, posters were put up. All Jews were to be concentrated in a ghetto. Wolanka, Potok Gorny and Mickiewicza were declared as part of this ghetto. We could stay in our house in Wolanka, but hundreds of families from the other parts of town, loaded with their bedding and a few other belongings, were searching for new accommodation somewhere. Everyday we heard gunshots. During the 'move' Germans and Ukrainians dragged elderly and sick people off into the woods in Bronica, Tustanovice and Mraznica and shot them. Those who survived the 'move' crowded into their relative's or friend's cramped places. The ghetto was not closed off. This was not possible because of the oil shafts all over town. It was not very difficult to sneak to other parts of town or to the farmers in the villages in search of some food. But those who left the ghetto in spite of the ban, always risked being shot immediately by a guard.

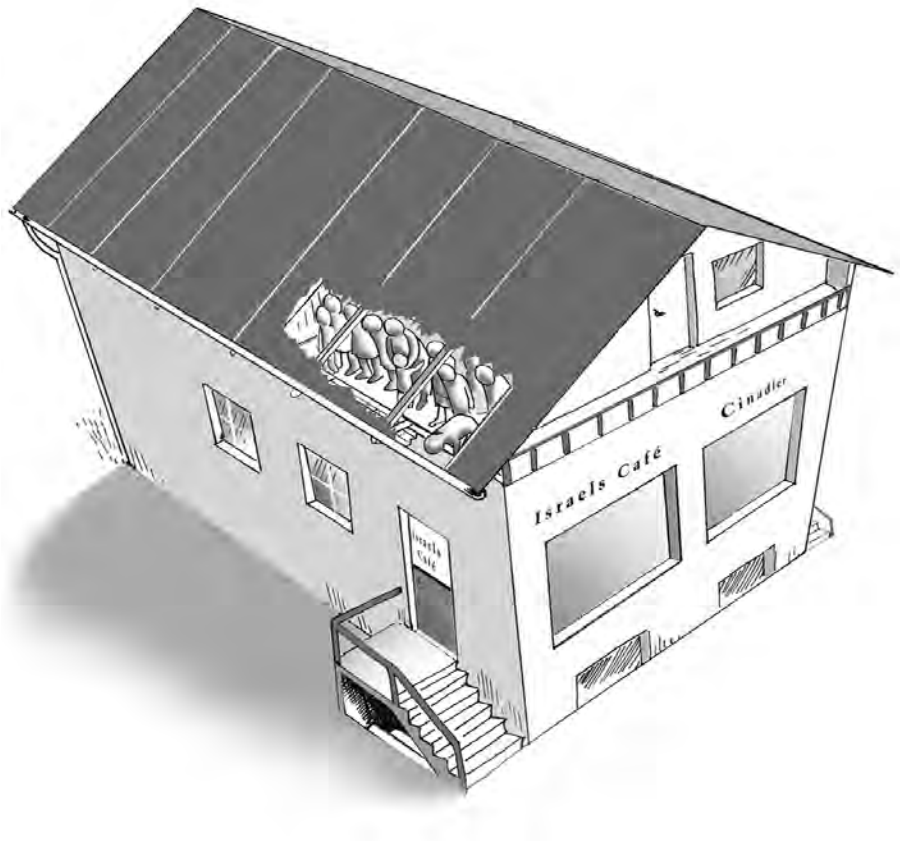
NOVEMBER 1941 – THE FIRST *AKTION*

Uncle Israel heard that the *Judenrat* was supposed to make a list of 700 sick and disabled people. This meant danger! *Aktion* was the new word that terrified us. It was the night of the 27th of November when the Germans came in black uniforms, accompanied by the Ukrainian militia. They surrounded the courtyards and randomly dragged the elderly and sick from their beds and houses and locked them into the police barracks. We crept up into our hiding place as quickly and quietly as possible and closed the hatch behind us. There we stood, fifteen people, closely huddled together and hardly daring to breathe. Zosia crouched on the floor and breastfed the little one, to keep him quiet.

The next day, the Germans searched our whole house. They also trampled up the attic stairs and rampaged right next to us in Lewensbergs' rooms. We could have been discovered at any moment. The second night descended. It was already becoming cold in spite of the warm days. The next morning, we heard gun shots that continued for hours. We suspected that the prisoners were being shot near the oil pits and in the woods. In the morning, the Polish and Ukrainian children ran past our house on the way to school as if nothing had happened. We stood next to each other without moving and lost all feeling for the time going by. My mother took my hand. She stroked Lusia when she cried. Mamus prayed. I fell into a state of semi-consciousness when it was my turn to stretch out. When I was lying on the floor I could look out through a small hole in the overhanging roof.

I saw our alley with Grandmother Pesla's house and a small part of the Zielinskiego. For three days, we heard the yelling of the Germans and their Ukrainian helpers, the drooling of the dogs and the screams of the Jews. Then the noise in the streets and the gunshots near the oil shafts died down. The *Aktion* was over, and we were still alive. My trembling legs gave way climbing down from the attic. I held on to the wooden banister with both hands. We checked on Grandmother Pesla. How had she managed to survive this time? I do not know until today.

Only a few pictures were missing in our apartment. Obviously they had been looking for jewellery and valuables. But what did the rooms look like! All the drawers were lying on the floor and the contents were spread



The hiding place in the house Zielinskiego Nr. 19.
Drawing: Julia Drinnenberg

around the room, next to torn and dirty linen and tablecloths. They had destroyed everything that they could not take with them. Silently with tight lips, Mamus picked up everything that still could be used or repaired. I found my school satchel. Dirty boots had left marks on the books and notebooks. I had written *Chaim Segal* with blue ink in my best handwriting on the maths book. I picked up my school things and threw them into the stove. About 2000 people were shot in the *Pilsudski* shaft during this operation.

After this first *Aktion*, girls from Lusia's age on also had to join the forced labour groups and to report in the courtyard of the *Judenrat* in the morning. Lusia, Ruchcia and the Lewenberg girls worked twelve hours every day including Saturday and Sunday. They were given one loaf of bread a week as 'wages' for their work. It was torture for Lusia, who had to physically work for the first time. Her hands were bloody and full of blisters. Mostly she had to work in the labour battalion that was appointed to dig ditches for the Beskiden Oil Corporation. When she came home, she cried from exhaustion and pain. My mother cried with her, applied ointment to her hands and rubbed her sore back.

"You will get used to it. Hang in there! Those who are needed and have work are safe! And you get bread. We need it!"

Somehow she always managed to clean Lusia's long work trousers and boots by the next day. My sister quickly learnt never to show weaknesses during work. The workers were deliberately hit and anybody who stood upright during work to straighten their back for a moment was whipped. Women were dragged from the lines and raped. We both already knew about the facts of life and sexuality and knew what it meant if a woman was taken by force. Lusia pinned up her braids and wore a man's cap pulled deep down into her face. She often felt faint with hunger during the heavy work. She always had been a good eater and suffered more than me. I started the habit of drinking little sips of water to calm my stomach down if I was feeling very hungry.

'RESETTLEMENTS'

Big posters announced the Jews would be resettled. Some people even believed what they read. Ukrainians and Poles would be sentenced to death if they hid Jews. We knew what 'Resettlement' really meant. The Jews should climb onto trucks, believing they were given new homes somewhere in the East. But they would be killed there.

If we were not busy obtaining a few potatoes or some barley, our thoughts were occupied with making plans to escape or finding good hiding places. In fact some Ukrainians and Poles hid Jews – in exchange for good money. Desperate people gave their babies to Christian families for money. They were supposed to claim the children as their own. We had no money left and our apartment had nearly been emptied. Father's workshop had been broken open long ago and the sewing machine and tools had disappeared. The winter of 1941 arrived, the cold settled in the walls. The firewood was used up. We burnt solid paraffin that Uncle Israel obtained from the deserted oil shafts to cook the few potatoes we had. But we were still alive. 3000 of the originally 14000 Jews of Boryslaw were dead.

It was very cold in January 1942. I had very bad chilblains. By now, my shoes were too small for me. We still had a pair of old shoes belonging to my father, so I arranged to fit them by stuffing pieces of newspaper into the toes of them.

New posters on the walls ordered us to hand over all furs and winter clothes under sentence of death. Some members of the *Judenrat* had been taken hostage by the SS to enforce the delivery. Men called out while dashing by:

"An Aktion! They will come and check! Don't hide anything; you cannot wear the stuff outdoors anyway without being shot!"

We obeyed. Mamus got the warm coats, trousers and gloves out of the wardrobe. Her beautiful fur lay on top. The Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* even took our skis and my sledge with them. Uncle Israel knew that the Germans were held up close to Moscow on their triumphal march against the Soviet Union. Obviously they lacked warm clothing. I imagined the German soldiers turning to ice and was happy about it. Hundreds of Jews were beaten to death or shot during the *Pelz-Aktion* (fur-action). Together with Uncle Israel and Aunt Rechcia, we anxiously checked on Uncle Aaron's family, Chaim Gartenberg and Schaindl with their child. Nothing had happened to them during this *Aktion*.

One afternoon in February, Aunt Zosia came to visit my mother in the kitchen. She had put the baby to sleep. Uncle Lajser wanted to stay with

Uncle Lajser Cinadler (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

him until she returned. As soon as she closed the front door, my mother placed her finger on her lips and listened:

"Hush!"

The quick trot of horse hooves and the hoarse yells of the dreaded Ukrainians were to be heard approaching from outside. We hastened up the attic stairs. Mother pulled Aunt Zosia with her:

"Come with me! Lajser will follow us! For sure!"

Uncle Lajser did not make it. We heard noise and terrible screams from downstairs. We held on to Aunt Zosia, she fainted. The horse cart quickly sped away, Uncles Lajser's screams became weaker. Eight-month-old little Chaim had been instantly killed. Maybe he had woken up and started to cry. Uncle Lajser was beaten and tortured before they tied him, still alive, to their cart on a long rope and dragged him through the town. They untied him outside the entrance of the Jewish cemetery and left him lying there like a dog. Aunt Zosia collapsed. For days she lay on one of our beds in a state of apathy. My mother was constantly attending to her. There was no consolation. Maybe there was one after all? How could it be that it was a comforting thought that all of us would be killed without exception, that nobody would survive? One day she got up. She stayed with us. Never again did she set a foot in her own apartment.

TYPHUS

The winter started. We froze in the house. Hunger and lice occupied our thoughts. Death accompanied us every day. The dead lay in the streets – famished, slain and sick. We were surprised about every day we survived. Now and then Lusia brought along some of the sticky, black bread. We still had a few things in the apartment that we could offer the farmers for food. Then we heard about the first cases of abdominal typhus in the ghetto. By March, the illness had spread and it became an epidemic. The Jewish doctors were helpless without medication. They advised to boil the water and to wash one's hands often. Some people painted 'Typhus' in white letters on their front doors, and hoped the killer commandos would be discouraged the next time.

One cold morning, when my mother woke Lusia for work, I woke with a start. I sat up. I was feeling dizzy, and when I went to the toilet my legs felt weak and soft. My head was hurting. I quickly went back to bed. Later on I woke up dripping with sweat. I felt my mother's hand on my forehead.

"He has a high fever."

She gave me something to drink. She placed wet, cool poultices around my legs. My stomach was hurting. I had typhus. I have no clear memories of the time that followed. I only remember terrible dreams and pictures that haunted me. Pain and diarrhoea brought me back to reality again and again.

"Come on Imek, drink. Just little sips. You must get well again."

I heard Mamus and Aunt Zosia crying when they put a dry shirt on me.

"How weak he is. He cannot even lift up his arms."
How long did I lie like that? Four weeks? Eight weeks? I do not know. One morning, I could feel the cold on my cheeks. My head and my limbs did not hurt any more. I looked around. Completely exhausted, my mother had fallen asleep on my bed. How pale she was. She had black rings under her eyes. She noticed a movement and woke up.
"Imek?"
I smiled at her.

Hundreds died of typhus that winter. I had survived because of my mother's care. It took a while for me to gain enough strength to learn to walk again. But my mother was delighted and tirelessly searched for food for me. When Lusia came home from work that day, she found me sitting up in bed. It was the first time she laughed for ages.

THE SECOND *AKTION*

With my recovery from the illness and my returning strength, the feeling of paralyzing fear inside me miraculously disappeared. Not that I kidded myself that I would be spared from being murdered. No! But I did not want to wait for it to happen one day, all passive and lame with fear. I gradually had the courage to leave the house at dusk. Where could I get something to eat? A farmer came in spring. He had last year's beets and potatoes loaded on his cart. What had I to offer him? With his thick thumb, he pointed at Grandmother Pesla's rooftop. So I climbed out of the attic window of our neighbour's house with a rusty pair of pliers. I yanked off and unscrewed the big tin sheets and let them fall onto the street down below. I can still see how the farmer left, highly satisfied, with his cart piled high with the tin sheets, tied down with a piece of rope. We got eight potatoes for the whole roof – two each.
It was March 1942 when we heard the first talk about Belzec. This is where all the trains from the whole Drohobycz District were headed for the 'Resettlement'. A railroader and people from the neighbouring town of Rawa-Ruska had reported that people were suffocated with gas there – hundreds at the same time. We sensed that something unbelievable like this was possible. The fact that we never heard anything from the deported people ever again, led us to expect the worst.
Somehow the *Judenrat* had heard about the Germans' latest plans. The skilled workers and those able to work were to be accommodated

Chaim Gartenberg (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

separately from those unable to work in the ghetto. The Jews in Boryslaw flocked to the employment agency. Everybody attempted to get a worker's badge with an 'A', to save themselves being deported. At the same time the *Judenrat* established their own workshops to create more jobs. This was where the Jews were only given a little money, but no food at first. Later on, they were given 200 g of bread daily, the same bread ration as the oil workers.

There were a suspicious number of trucks sighted outside town on the 14th of March. The news spread through the ghetto like wildfire: an

Aktion! We were standing and crouching anxiously in our hiding place again. I heard the dogs. I imagined how the hatch to our hiding place would be torn open. I was trembling all over. It would not take long and we would be discovered. My mother was sick with worry about Lusia, who had already gone to work together with the Lewenberg daughters.

"Dear G'd protect them."

Uncle Israel's little son Chaim was freezing and shaking. He was wearing his pyjamas. Pale and wide-eyed he clung to his mother.

They came when all the workers had left, and their families remained in the houses alone: The SS in black uniforms, the Ukrainian militia, dogs. Chaim Gartenberg had also gone to work that day. He hurried home in the evening full of fear. Shaindl and the baby were gone. They had been taken to Belzec together with 1000 other Jews from Boryslaw. Chaim nearly went insane with pain and sorrow. But against all odds, he kept on hoping to see his wife and child again one day.

After the *Aktion* we stared out of the window and waited. Lusia had not returned yet. It was dark. I tried not to think. Mamus walked back and forth in the room, listening to every sound outside. Late at night, the front door opened and Lusia flew into my mother's arms.

"Have you got anything to eat?"

Once again we had had a narrow escape.

GRANDMOTHER PESLA

Little Pogroms took place almost every day. We hid again and again and waited for the moment when the Ukrainians and Poles were no longer to be heard. I cannot exactly remember, but it was a hot day in the summer of 1942 when we were in our hiding place. I was kneeling on the rough floor boards and watching the street through the hole in the roof. Then I saw Grandmother Pesla. She wore her dark, long dress with little white spots. I looked exactly at the parting of her hair. She came out of her house, very upright and held a little axe with both her hands. An Ukrainian policeman came onto the scene and with him Marian, the Ukrainian tenant from Pesla's house. He pointed at her. She called out something in a high, excited voice. Then I understood what she called:

"If one of you dares to come closer, I will kill you on the spot!"

The policeman lifted his arm, pistol in hand, and shot her twice in the

head. I closed my eyes. Grandmother Pesla was dead. We had to support mother, who writhed in pain. She did not utter a sound. Grandmother's body lay there in the same place all day. I did not see who removed her body. The next morning it was gone. The men of the *Chevra Kadisha* from the Jewish community had a lot of bodies to bury and some of them were victims themselves. Was Pesla's body picked up by the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst*? They had to throw the dead into a deserted oil pit somewhere. In my imagination Uncle Israel secretly went to fetch Grandmother Pesla, carried her to the Jewish Cemetery and dug her a proper grave.

AUGUST 1942 – THE *BIG AKTION*

We moved around the apartment like shadows, constantly on edge. I looked at the wall, where the big oil painting had hung and where my thoughts used to go for long wanderings. The Piano was gone. Most of the furniture was missing. Who cared? They would come back and fetch the rest of it or demolish it. We only cared about our lives and our stomachs. Israel came one evening:

"An Aktion! Go and hide, a lot of trucks have driven into town!"

We heard the trucks coming in the early hours of the morning on the 6th of August. Wolanka was surrounded and searched. Lots of Jews had been forewarned like us and had gone into the woods at night or into hiding behind their double walls, chimneys or escaped into the sewers. The persecutors found their deserted apartments. The screaming, chasing and shooting lasted some hours, then the *Aktion* suddenly stopped. We did not trust the silence and stayed in our hiding place. Late at night gunshots, screams and barking dogs could be heard from all directions again. It did not help to cover my ears with my hands. When I heard a woman's terrible scream, I knew a child was being snatched away and killed. When the Germans screamed, they were chasing a fugitive Jew. Two, three short shots mostly finished the pursuit. After three days there was silence. We only dared to leave our hiding place the next evening, scared stiff. We had survived.

Uncle Israel learned from the *Judenrat* that with this *Aktion* the liquidation of the Ghetto had begun. The Germans and their helpers from the Ukrainian militia shot small children, elderly and sick people on the spot. They locked hundreds of Jews up in the *Grazyna*. Within a few hours the cinema was completely overcrowded; the other prisoners were put into a

storage shed next to the station and in the former office of the Polish Socialist Party. Policemen got the children of the Jewish orphanage out of their beds. Smaller children were immediately killed. They threw them out of the windows. The older children were herded to the station, still in their pyjamas. There they were loaded into the train wagons together with the other Jews. Even some workers of the Oil Company were among them. The German director of the Oil Company, Beitz, hurried to the station and managed to get a hundred or more people out of the wagons again – even women and a few children. 5000 were in the train to Belzec. A small group of men were sorted out and were brought to the forced labour camp Janowska near Lemberg.

Uncle Aaron was an eye-witness of a brutal incident. Never before had I seen him that pale and disturbed as when he told us what he had seen the day after this *Aktion*. Before, Chaja and the children had hidden in the attic of their house earlier on. Aaron worked across from the barracks of the mounted police as an upholsterer for *Bernstein&Mojak*. The works manager, who needed him to work there, hid Uncle Aaron under the roof of the garage. He could watch the street from up there. Directly before his eyes stood a German with a monocle, who obviously was in charge of the *Aktion*. The house next to the garage belonged to a Jewish family, who ran a small transport business. Aaron suddenly saw their five year old girl run out onto the street. A Polish woman pointed at the girl and yelled 'Jew'. The German grabbed the child by the leg and smashed her head against a brick wall. Then he threw the child onto a truck.

'CLEANSINGS'

We were on the lookout. Because of the announced 'Resettlement', everybody, who seemed physically able in any possible way, was trying to get an 'A'-card. Uncle Israel was lucky. Now he was wearing an additional big round badge made of tin with the inscription: *Altstofferfassung* (collection of old clothes and raw materials). *Dogtag* is what the Germans called it.
The collection of *Altstoff* was a dirty job that only Jews performed. After *Aktions* Uncle Israel had to go into the empty houses of murdered people and look for clothes and fabrics that the Germans could still use. *Altstoff* collectors and their families were protected from *Resettlement* by command of the District Administration. He was even allowed to move around freely

Uncle Israel Schwarz with the tin badge of the *Altstofferfassung*
(Foto archives Chaim Segal)

inside and outside of the Ghetto. While doing so, he used every opportunity to organize something to eat. Israel, as the former owner of a popular inn, had many acquaintances among the Poles and Ukrainians and he knew whom to trust and who he could ask for help.

Lusia wore the armband with the 'A'. We only saw her for a short period. As soon as she came home and had had something to eat, she fell asleep exhausted. To work for the Oil Company was at least some protection, she

reckoned, even if it was only digging up ditches. Word had spread that the director Beitz had reemployed dismissed Jewish skilled labourers in the beginning of February,. He was very friendly to them and supported the families giving them food. But during a raid that followed in October 1942, workers from the Oil Company were also arrested and locked into wagons at the station. Director Beitz repeatedly managed to have some of the workers released under the pretext that they were his skilled labourers. Some of these 'skilled labourers' were hair-dressers, gardeners, house-wives and even children.

After this *Aktion* I pushed myself out of the hiding place and crept down the attic stairs with my mother. What was that? A man staggered towards me in the dark outside our front door. It was Uncle Aaron. He held on to the door post. He stared at me out of red rimmed eyes, wild and angry:

"What, you're still alive?"

I was very frightened. I did not understand. Why did he want me to be dead? Then we found out: Chaja and the children were gone. Uncle Aaron had been hidden at his workplace during the *Aktion*. He knew his family was hiding under the roof. Ruchcia had not gone to work that day. She had crawled into the hiding place together with her mother and the younger siblings. A Polish neighbour came to check Aarons' apartment. Maybe there was something she could steal. Suddenly she heard a noise and became suspicious. She quickly led the *Schutzpolizei* (German security police called *Schupo*) to the house. They came straight away, ripped open the tin roof and dragged Aunt Chaja, Ruchcia, my best friend Mundek and little Bumek out of their hiding place. Later on a Polish truck driver from *Bernstein&Mojak* told Uncle Aaron that he had to transport the Jews to the station and that Chaja and the children had also been among them. Crying, our Mother begged him to come into our apartment. But he turned round and disappeared into the darkness.

Aaron was not the only one restlessly wandering around that night. In the neighboring apartment he met the crying and trembling Lola Freigenheim, Chaja's cousin, in his empty and devastated house. She was the sole survivor of the family. Her mother and all her brothers had been killed. In this moment, sharing their sorrow and giving each other support, Aaron and Lola decided to stay together.

I avoided Uncle Aaron for a long time. The feeling that I had survived Aaron's family, and especially my beloved friend Mundek, gave me a big lump in my throat in his presence. I could not forget his face and his words: What, you are still alive?

We considered and debated. Was our hideout reliable? Should we do the same as the others and flee to the woods? But winter was imminent. Was there a chance to get into the forced labour camp in Mraznica? The families of the administrative employees lived there in the so called *Biały Dom*, the *White House*. They were under the personal protection of director Beitz. Some other *Rüstungsjuden* (Jews working in the arms industry) had moved to the labour camp in Boryslaw with their wives and children and lived in the big buildings of the former *Limanowa* factory. But were they really secure there? The labourers in the Oil Industry were given new badges with an 'R' for *Rüstungsindustrie* (arms industry) in the beginning of November. Everybody who could work tried everything to obtain the badge with this 'R' because all signs pointed to the immiment deportation of all Jews without work.

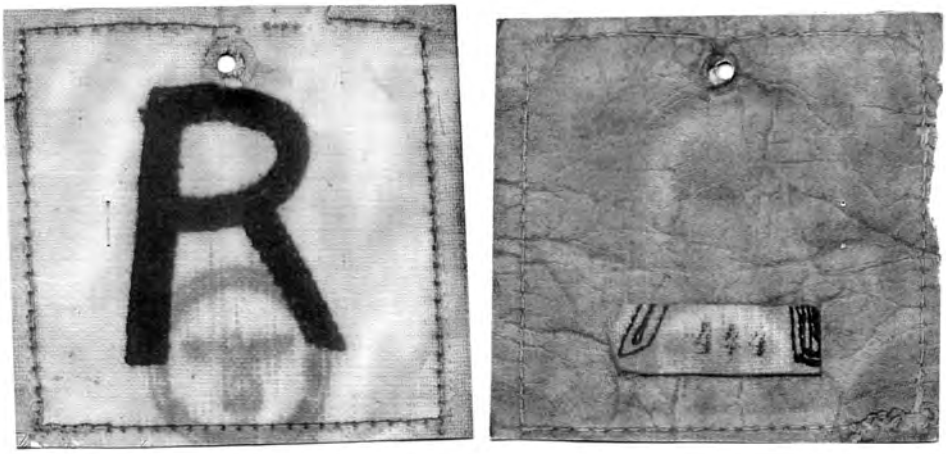
It was the 7th of November 1942. Lusia had left early, to go to work like every morning. Then shortly afterwards an *Aktion* began. Hastily we stumbled up the attic stairs. I did not believe we would stay undiscovered much longer. But what choice did we have? Uncle Israel was downstairs with Rechcia and Chaim in his apartment. They had nothing to fear because he had the identity card of the *Altstofferfassung*. The Lewenbergs were all gone. They were obliged to work. Only three of us were crouched in the hiding place: my Mother, Aunt Zosia and I, when the racket started outside. Vehicles raced down the Zielinskiego, the *Reiterzug* (mounted police) and the *Schupo* followed. Even under the roof, we could hear the panting dogs, straining on their leads, the shouting and yelling, when a Jew tried to escape, the gunshots. One quickly noticed that the *Aktion* was especially thorough this time and that more men were on duty. Then we heard the noise downstairs in Uncles Israel's apartment:

"Out, out, out! Quicker, quicker! Hurry up you Pigs!"

I could hardly breathe for fear. Uncle Israel, Aunt Rechcia and the little Israel – they were taking them away! Nobody searched the house afterwards. We crouched there paralyzed with fear and pain in our hole. Lusia did not return that evening. She did not come back the next nor the following evenings. The *Aktion* continued.

"What has happened to Lusia? Is she hiding? My G'd, if they even take Israel away! Are they killing the workers too, now?"

Every day, often before sunrise, sometimes nearer or further away, we heard the noise of the persecutors. How many days had we been here already? I had forgotten. We gloomily leaned against one another. The



Front- and backside of the 'R'- badge of Gustek Halpern
(Photo: Gustek Halmut)

hunger was unbearable. We had finished our emergency ration of food a long time ago. Our limbs ached and we froze. Nobody spoke any more. The water ration was also finished. Mamus slipped downstairs to get some water and I begged:

"Stay here. Please let me go!"

But she never let me leave the hiding place.

Eventually I woke with a start. It was light outside, and Uncle Israel was there. Was I dreaming? He looked like an old man with hollow cheeks, unkempt hair, beard stubble and feverish, restless eyes. No, it was not a dream. He brought us water with trembling hands.

"They let me out of there because I have the badge. They are collecting people in the cinema – in the Colosseum. More come every day. A few hundred people. Rechcia is in there with Imek. I wanted to get away, somehow I must get them out of there! Tomorrow I am working nearby. ... Lusia? Yes, Lusia, I saw her too. She is with Rechcia. They took her directly away from work. Chaim Gartenberg is also in the cinema. They are guarded by German guards and Jewish Police. I...I will bribe them – somehow. Lusia broke down, she is crying. She told me she could have got out again immediately. Hennek Art, one of the Jewish Ordnungsdienst…he…wanted to sleep with her. He promised he would let her go. But Lusia did not want to. Then he tried to rape her. She screamed and fought back. She scratched his whole face. No, he did not rape her. The bastard, I'll kill him!"

My sister Lusia at the age of about fourteen years of age
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

I can't forget the long time we spent in the hiding place. Hunger, thirst and the fear of being discovered gave way to the fear for Lusia, Rechcia and little Chaim. Would Uncle Israel come to see us tonight? What would he tell us? My mother cried and prayed for Lusia. I prayed with her, but I knew that this God did not hear us. Had he answered the numerous prayers of the Jews so far? The passive waiting was unbearable for me. It was pointless, Uncle Israel could not approach the guards at the cinema without putting himself at risk. We had nothing left to bribe the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* with. Our entire house had been cleared out, except for the oven and a few demolished pieces of furniture. Uncle Israel returned from

the *Judenrat*. Like the other relatives of prisoners in the cinema, he had not been able to accomplish anything there.

"It's hell. They have locked up the toilets, people are sitting in their own excrement and sick. The smell is awful. Shot people have been lying in between them for weeks and not carried away. Some are going insane. People are killing themselves. Some parents have suffocated their babies; they could not bear their suffering any longer."

The Germans did not start loading the Jews from the cinema onto trucks until four weeks later. Uncle Israel, who was working nearby, had to watch helplessly while the prisoners were herded out. Hennek Art had made sure that Lusia was among the first to be taken away. Rechcia was with her, closely holding the child. Chaim Gartenberg was with them, too. They helped each other onto the truck.

We already had secretly feared: we would never see Lusia, Aunt Rachel, little Imek and Chaim Gartenberg again. The trucks went to Belzec. My mother broke down. We were devastated. Lusia, my sister was dead. She was only fifteen years old! Now it was Aunt Zosia, who held my mother and consoled her:

"Soon they will kill us all anyway. Look, she has only gone before us. We will all follow the same way."

The former Colosseum Cinema is a church today. (Photo: Lev Popel)

If it had not been for me, my mother would have lost her will to live. She drew on her remaining strength to protect me. She started persuading herself and us that not all Jews would be killed and that I, her only child, would survive. When we heard that the Ghetto was definitely going to be liquidated, she started to plan on how we would be able to get away from here as if out of her mind.

TO MRAZNICA

A solution came much quicker than we had imagined. Meanwhile Uncle Israel had been registered in the forced labour camp in Boryslaw and had the life-saving labourer's card. Workers were given soup and bread there. Uncle Aaron and Lola Freigenheim had also gone to the camp. He had declared her to be his wife. In the daytime he worked for a cabinet-maker in town. He let us know that there were also children in the camp. I should try to get in there. I would not be registered as a labourer, but he would introduce me as his son if he was asked by an SS-guard. Director Beitz had ensured with the camp commander Hildebrand that the labourer's families were permitted to live in the camp. His argument was: if a father had to fear for the lives of his wife and children during work, he would not work properly. Some Jews with no relatives among the labourers were illegally staying in the camp. My mother and Aunt Zosia should try to hide somewhere in the buildings.

Our only chance to get into the camp was to wait for the group of returning labourers in the evening and secretly join them.
The night we left our house was frosty and clear. It was about five o'clock in the morning. We had put on all the clothes we still had. Mamus and Zosia had wrapped themselves in thin blankets. An icy wind whirled the fine snow along and made my eyes water. Mraznica was a neighbourhood on the southwest of Boryslaw. How easy and carefree it had been in the past, to walk down the road towards Schodnica, wrapped up in warm winter clothes. This day I felt ravenously hungry and half frozen, so that the slight slope was steep and the way was difficult. In spite of it all I was happy that something was happening. We were not idly waiting any more. I took over the lead, urging us along. We repeatedly stopped, looked around, pressing ourselves into the dark shadows of the houses or embankments. We found a place to hide near the road in the shelter of a wood shed. We wanted to wait there until the labourers came back in the evening. We

cowered close together and put the blankets around us. That is how the day passed.

It was dark early. We crept back to the road in the evening. Soon I heard the footsteps of the labour battalion. There were about 100 men and women. No guard was to be seen from here! Already the group of labourers was marching next to me. I jumped up and pulled my mother with me. My heart was throbbing. I automatically fell in step with the people. Hands pulled me into the middle. I looked back. Mamus and Zosia walked in line behind me. Shortly afterwards we were smuggled through the gateway into the interior of the camp. The women and men lined up in the big square. Other prisoners from the buildings joined them. The *Appell* (roll call)! My mother and Zosia must not be discovered. Without a word, some women pushed them to the edge of the group. I saw them disappear through a big wooden gate. At last I spotted Uncle Aaron in the throng of people. I silently stood next to him. A man from the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* counted the rows. He was probably used to the number of prisoners varying. Maybe he made sure that they matched in the morning and evening? Nobody took any notice of me or asked questions. Aaron did not introduce me as his son to anybody either. This only would have aroused suspicion.

After the *Appell* a long queue of people formed, standing in line to get soup. Uncle Aaron pointed to a big stack of tin bowls. I took one and stood in line behind him. My stomach rumbled when I smelt the soup. It smelt of cabbage.

"Eat slowly!"

Aaron hissed at me. Would they detect me being there illegal? The man dealing out the soup did not even look up when he filled my bowl. He was also a prisoner. The soup was my first warm meal in weeks – cabbage with a few turnips cooked in salty water. I had trouble eating slowly. At the same time I had to think of my mother and Zosia. How could I eat when they had nothing! I wanted to save half the soup for them.

"Whereto can Mamusa and Zosia go?"

Aaron shrugged helplessly.

"I don't know. Have a look around. Maybe under the workers bunks. There are places to hide under the roof. But illegals often go there, when they start hunting for hidden people."

I found Uncle Israel on the first floor of one of the big buildings. The the labourers had their beds there – simple three-storey wooden bunks with straw, blankets or rags on them. This was not my Uncle as I knew him

before. He looked grey and wretched. But he was happy when he saw me.

"Ask for Izik Kudysz. I heard something about him – nothing particular. He's supposed to have built a Bunker. Maybe he can help."

My courage waned. I was a small boy. Nobody would admit to me that they knew about a *Bunker*, this is what the hiding places were called. If only even a rumour about it reached the Germans, they would torture somebody to make him talk. Owners of *Bunkers* also took money or valuables in return for the shelter. I had nothing. For what reason ever should somebody take in my mother and Aunt Zosia? Anyway, I wanted to try it, what choice did I have? I saw Izik Kudysz for the first time that evening. He was at least twelve years older than me, not very tall, but well built. His open face and lively, friendly eyes gave me courage.

"Do you have a hideout for my mother and my aunt? I can't give you anything for it. But I can organise food. I steal it! I am small and thin. I can slip through the smallest window. And look – do I look Jewish? No! I might as well be a Polish or an Ukrainian boy. I speak both languages and German too! And I'm quick. Maybe you can use me!... Please!"

He looked at me in silence for a while. Then he said:

"I see,… you're a Chevreman,…you know, what you want. Fine, we are partners."

I rejoiced and was very excited. It was as if I had won the lottery – a long forgotten feeling. That Izik trusted me, gave me new strength. Izik introduced me to the second owner of the bunker: Shmil Rosenberg, the Red Shmil. He had this name because of his flaming red hair. He was a big fellow and his face was covered with light freckles. The way he walked reminded me of a cat's gait. Shmil didn't hesitate a moment before accepting me as a new partner.

Only we three shared the secret of Izik owing a pistol. That made him invincible in my eyes. So there were people who did not give in to their fate and fought back. I started to build up hope. The war would not last much longer. Maybe we could manage to survive. Izik and Shmil were already planning how we could take the two women to the bunker. My mother and Aunt Zosia were supposed to leave the camp with a group of labourers the next morning and hide outdoors.

We three wanted to wait for the dark until evening and pick them up. How would we leave the camp? There was a guard posted on every corner outside the camp's fence .

"I'll show you something. Nobody in the camp knows about this, except for Shmil and me. Now you are the third and no one else should know. You got that?"

Behind the latrine hut by the fence, hidden under wood and all kinds of other rubble, a hole in the earth opened up. A tunnel led to the other side of the tall wire fence into dense shrubbery. We crawled through the hole and out of the camp. Izik and Shmil pushed little knotted cloth bundles with food along in front of them. Crouching low, with my heart throbbing, I walked between both men. Nobody spoke a word. We found both women where we had agreed to meet.

THE *BUNKER*

Our way to the *Bunker* was not very far, but we had to be careful and not walk too near the houses and keep stopping every now and again. After half an hour, we stood before the big black ruins of the bombed-out electrical power plant. What was left of a big black chimney jutted out of a heap of bricks and blocks of concrete. I quietly groped along my way behind Izik. He started to pick up stones and tufts of grass. Then he lifted up a plank. A narrow hole, about 80 times 80 centimetres, was gaping in the ground. Mother and Zosia had to crawl into it before us. At that moment they did not know that it was the last time they would see the sky for two years. We slid down a tunnel for about ten metres and then we landed in a cellar with six to seven big rooms, each about 30 square metres. The smoke of a tiny fire lost itself in the four to five metre high ceilings. In the semi-darkness people, dressed in rags, crouched or stood around the fire, throwing restless shadows on the walls.

I could not identify anybody. Izik and Shmil whispered to them – there would be two more eaters now. How surprised I was, when Mr. Lewenberg and his daughters came out of a dark corner of the room to greet my mother and Zosia. His wife had been murdered. He had been taken into this hiding place for a golden ring. It was not until days or even weeks later that I became acquainted with the other inhabitants of the bunker. Being under the earth, the people were protected from severe frost, but the place did not warm up properly because a bigger fire could not be made. Alone the smell of smoke would have given the hideout away.

Several gallons for water were hidden outside in the compound. Water ran out of a damaged pipe not far from the entrance to the tunnel. Whenever we came to the *Bunker*, we collected it and carried it into the cellar.

Izik and Shmil regularly brought oil clots and firewood along, so the people could cook on a small grill. No hole, no window illuminated the cellar. The only light came from candles and oil lamps. Maybe one of the bunker

inhabitants occasionally crawled into the open air at night, but I know for sure that my mother never left the cellar. For two and a half years she lived down there with her sister, as if buried alive. Nobody could wash themselves properly. The toilet was a hole in one of the back rooms that Izik had dug, after having broken open the cement floor. If the hole was full, people filled it up and a new hole was dug. *Schmattes,* old rags, lay as bedding on the bare cement.

All the inhabitants of the bunker were eaten up by lice. Day and night they were busy with this plague. They had nothing else to do than to sit, talk, eat or drink something and wait for a miracle. My mother wistfully awaited the moment when I came with Izik, to bring food and news from the camp. She went through hell if I was delayed.

"How is Israel? What is Aaron doing? Aren't there Jews in the Ghetto any more? What is going on at the front?"

These were always the most important questions. Zocia stroked my head before she turned back to join the others. She always arranged it so that my mother and I had a few minutes to ourselves. So we sat there nestling on the rags on the floor whispering to each other.

How had Izik found the former cellar rooms? He was ordered to clear up in the ruins of the electrical power plant with a group of labourers. During this work, he had found an opening in the ground and carefully covered it up again. He had returned with Shmil once more at night to investigate the hole. For weeks they cleared out stones and the cement from the buried tunnel, so that they could get into the cellar easily. Then the first *Bunker* inhabitants came: at the beginning 30 people were hidden there. In the end there were about 26 or 27 people. I cannot remember all the names any more. There was Jetka Kalkstein, Izik's cousin. I remember Mr. Grünberg. When he became seriously ill, he dragged himself back to the camp. He was shot there. Malka, an elderly woman, died in the bunker. Izik and I dug a grave for her in one of the outer rooms. She still is buried there until today. I also met Family Storch and their two sons. Two labourers from the camp, Szmil Leib and Mr. Oberländer kept their wives hidden in the bunker. They always gave Izik und Smil food or money, but never came to the hiding place themselves. I can also remember Ms. Ruderfar well and her daughter Stella. Stella was two years older than me. She was the only bunker inhabitant to survive the war.

Prisoners in *Koszary* left the camp in different ways at night, to 'organise' food and other things. It was important to know where the guards were at that moment. Some prisoners used to jump out of a window at the right moment, landing beyond the fence. Others tried bribing the guards or took off from the column of labourers marching into town. They only had to return to the group to be back for the *Appell*. I crawled through the tunnel at night twice or three times a week and crept into the farmer's cellars, pantries and barns. Stealing animal food was not that risky. At first my heart raced, when I opened a barn door or a beet storeroom at dusk. I was always ready to run away quickly. But with time I had a routine. I knew when the farmer was sitting down having dinner in his house. I avoided the yards guarded by dogs, and I soon knew all the barns that were a bit remote and not guarded. The fright when I suddenly heard a voice shouting:

"Damned bastards, thieves! Get lost or I'll shoot you down!"

This feeling of triumph, when I could become invisible, and when I returned to the camp with potatoes or beets under my jacket or some grains in my pocket! Not a single second I must be careless.

It was clear to the Germans that some Jews sneaked out of the camp to get food or goods to exchange. Outside the camp the *Schutzpolizei*, and the mounted police was responsible for chasing the Jews. The *Schupo* was under command of Captain Wüpper, whose cruelty had been apparent during the liquidation of the ghetto. Especially Nemez was a passionate Jew hunter.

Nemez! He spread fear and terror. He was a sadist and enjoyed tormenting his victims. He was in charge of the Ukrainian militia that were barracked in the Ulica Panska. He had no function in the camp that was supervised by the SS. But he still came for a 'visit' from time to time accompanied by his German shepherd. He carried a short sword in his belt. Once during the *Appell*, he looked with screwed up eyes through the rows of prisoners and selected an old man with a beard. We stood there silent and trembling. Nemez raged and cursed:

"Stinking dirty Jew, you! Damn it! You, with your dirty fringe on your face!"

He pulled out his sword and cut off the old man's beard together with the skin. How he laughed when he threw the beard up into the air. And how the drunk SS men roared with laughter and slapped their thighs. In my thoughts I rammed Nemez his sword into the ribs.

One time a trembling victim stood already waiting before we had lined up. Nemez screamed at him:

"Pull your trousers down. Come on. Go! Go!"

The dog had already started pulling at the lead like crazy. Now it was let free, it knocked the man over and ate his genitals. The victim bled to death. This scene and other terrible pictures are burnt into my memory and have pursued me all my life.
In spite of the constant fear, the ever presence of death and the horror that surrounded me and in spite of the constant hunger, I still felt strong. I cared for my mother and Zosia. I had responsibility. I was clever. I had become more shrewd and successful on my nightly raids. Now I started to exchange things and to bargain in the camp. Amazing what people could still organise in these times: cake, sausage, sugar…. After work we bargained and haggled for a little piece of bread with lard or a few sugar cubes. I tried to get hold of cigarettes, as they were a highly demanded currency.
I quickly had an overall view of the camp and the inhabitants. I knew the buildings from earlier family outings. Back then Lusia and I had sometimes curiously looked through the big gate. *Koszary* (barracks) is what the prisoners called the camp even today, because originally barracks with horse stables had been here. Now the remaining Jews from Boryslaw were living here: 2000 of formerly 18000. And what had become of them!

The big square inner courtyard was surrounded by buildings. A wall closed off the front side of the yard. A wire mesh fence separated the open compound from a slight slope with bushes and shrubs. This was also where the wooden latrine stood, with entrances on both sides, one for men and one for women. Two narrow footbridges crossed the yard and connected the upper floors of the buildings facing each other. Right next to the gate, there were prison cells in the cellar. Next door, in another cellar room a group of women made soap for the camp. Above this, on the first floor were sick rooms. Surely there was a German specification for a facility like this. But I never saw a prisoner being treated there.
The men's accommodations were in this building and also in the elongated building to the right of the entrance gate. The smaller *White House,* the accommodation for very important skilled labourers, chemists and engineers with their families, stood in a little walled garden. It was reached by a narrow path. In one of the smaller outhouses of the *White House,* lay a heap of the murdered Jew's clothes that were delivered after the executions as 'work clothing' for the camp.

I examined all the rooms that I could get to, crawled into every dusty corner of the cellars and attics. Soon I found a few nooks where I could hide in an emergency. I was not a labourer. So I had no bunk and slept on

Schutzpolizei Boryslaw (Photo archives Yad Vashem)

the ground-floor in a former horse stable, together with the people unfit to work, the old and the children. The simple wooden gate did not keep the cold and wind out. It smelt of urine, sweat and decay. Pale, skinny figures lay there in the winter's cold or in the stuffy heat of summer on old, stinking straw with lice multiplying themselves by the billions. I did not want to lie in this straw. I found two small wooden boxes outside in a heap of rubbish – one was ten centimetres lower than the other – and pushed them together in a corner of the stable. That was my bed on which I curled up in my clothes. But that did not protect me from the lice either. Every day I found the white, quite large parasites in my clothes and new, terrible itchy bites all over my body.

I never took off my jacket or trousers or even the rags on my feet to sleep. I even kept my *Kaskiet,* my cap, on. Only my shoes and occasionally a piece of bread were placed under my boxes, where they were protected from theft. I could go to sleep anywhere, whenever I had the chance: in a little quiet spot, in the little side room next to the kitchen or under a staircase. After a few minutes, I was wide awake again. Strangely enough I was never really tired. My mind remained alert, even during sleep.

Uncle Israel had given me a bit of advice:

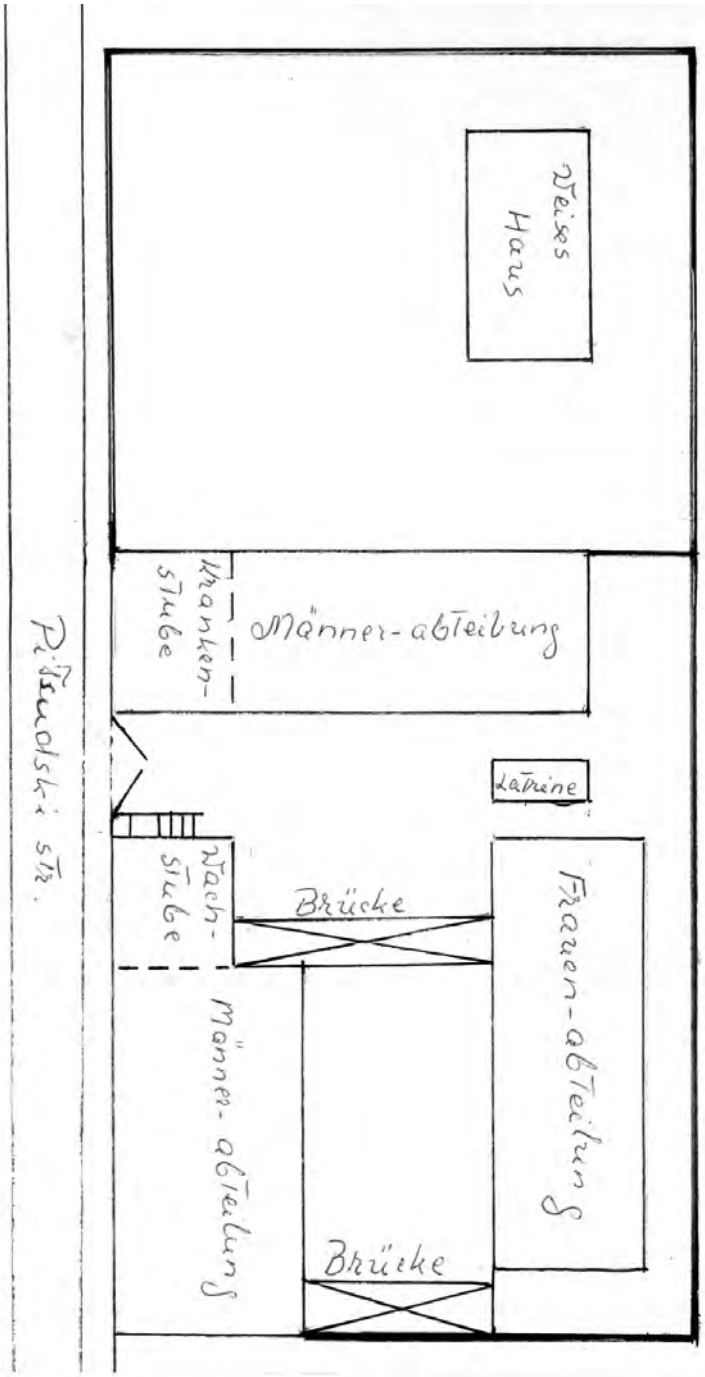
"Make yourself useful!"

All the Jews who did not work, were only unnecessary eaters. It would not take long until they were all killed. What could I do? I was small for my age and just could not make myself older than I was, like many of the fellow prisoners my age. Nevertheless I joined a column of labourers after the morning *Appell.* Why did the guards allow me to go with them? Why was I, the small weak boy, handed a shovel at the building site? I do not know. Maybe they thought I was going to die soon, anyway, and they could let me work a little first. Nobody told me how to behave. So I very closely observed what the other prisoners were doing.

As soon as the labourers were under guard and marched out to town, their bony, stooped backs straightened themselves. The people who were limping a moment ago, marched upright in their line and did not show their pain. I attempted to make a healthy and good impression. Maybe the Germans would get used to me. We paved the streets in Broyslaw. I tried to spread the heavy sand with all my strength, but soon noticed my arms and back growing weak. One of the labourers took the shovel from me and gave me a broom instead, so I swept the sand over the newly laid paving stones. Now I had an easier task.

Being new in the camp, I had to learn a lot in a very short time: If you came across a German in the camp, you had to take your cap off immediately. It was better to avoid them and the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* as well. You always had to give the impression that you was busy with an important job. The trick I learned from the other prisoners, was to make yourself invisible. When someone was beaten up, I saw how disastrous it was to scream out loud. It only made the bully beat harder. Some Jews had their hair shaved off by fellow prisoners in the camp to fight the lice. I wanted to keep my hair, so that I could not be identified as a camp inmate right away. I preferred to put oil on my hair regularly to kill the lice.

There were two kinds of prisoners. Some only cared about themselves, stole the last little bit of bread or shoes from the poorest. But most of



The Camp *Koszary* in Boryslaw, Sketch by Bronia and Gustek Halmut

The former forced labour camp Boryslaw in 1972,
Picture above: the womens quarters and the footbridges,
Picture below: Entrance to the former horse stables,
the sleeping place of Chaim Segal (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

them helped one another, shared the little they had with someone who needed it badly and thereby won friends, whom they could trust. There were a lot of people in the camp, who gave me, a child, some bread or some warm clothes out of pity. I was happy if I could pass on some of my loot to them. I have liked giving away things my whole life. After all, good friends in the camp saved my life in the end.
Who were my friends? Gustek Halpern and his girlfriend Bronia Herzig. They were several years older than me. I knew Gustek, because his sister Stella had been in the same class as Lusia. I had admired the girl with dark blonde hair and bright green eyes. In October 1942 she was killed in Belzec together with her mother. Gustek was a technician. He had the card for armaments workers and worked in the *Galizia* workshops. I met Bronia in the camp. She had cooked barley soup for the *Judenrat* before the Ghetto was liquidated. Everyday she had scratched the burnt leftovers from the bottom of the pot and had taken them to her mother and her seven-year-old brother Benio. Bronia told me they both were killed in the woods of Bronica in 1943. Her father and her brother Elo still lived in the camp when I came to *Koszary*. Bronia was one of the women who washed the armaments worker's dirty laundry boiling it in a big vessel. The skin on her hands was flaming red and sore, because she had to make soap powder with her bare hands.

I met some former schoolmates in the camp, like Salek Linhard, Jakov Bander, Joe Hirsch and Emmanuel Szrek. My friend Buroch, the son of the *Shamas*, also turned up one day. He had had to leave his hiding place with a Polish family. We boys all did our own thing, had hiding places and organised food on secret ways, which we did not tell each other about, but we could rely on each other.
I watched the SS-men in the camp. Among others there were Menzinger, Semmer with the glass-eye, Lingenheld and the beefy Silesian Schönbach. He was the only one who spoke Polish. One had to be careful when he was close by, because he eavesdropped on the prisoners when they spoke Polish to one another.
Once I was working right next to a guard, spreading sand on the newly cobbled pavement and I started singing a Polish song. He liked it.

"Come on, once more!"

So I sang the song again. The other prisoners also liked my clear boy's voice, especially when I changed the refrain to:

"Go dead, go dead, go dead!"

I never would have imagined that singing would bring me luck. For instance in summer when it was hot, the guards put tables and chairs out to eat in

the open air. I hung around close to the fence near by and watched them. They ate and drank more than it was good for them. Schönbach was a real drunkard. Now and then one of them was sick behind the house and returned to the table. The scene reminded me of a Roman drinking orgy that I had read about in a book. Finally they spotted me:

"Come on over here, Jew, and sing something for us!"

That was the dirty little Jew, who could sing like an angel in different languages. When this filthy angel sang German songs with saucy words, they roared with laughter and threw gnawed bones and scraps of food at me as if I was a dog. It did not take long for them to let me clean their boots. Sometimes I was even allowed to take food into the dog kennel. The shepherd dogs were especially trained to attack Jews. I could distract the beasts from myself with the food for a short time, but made sure I got out of the kennel as quickly as possible. Through this job I got some bits of meat now and then that I stole from the dogs.

The women in the kitchen were busy cooking the daily water soup. Turnips, onions and potatoes were brought into the camp and stored in a cellar. How happy I was one day when they waved me over and let me wash and clean vegetables in the wash kitchen, called *Zmywak*. I sang Polish and Yiddish songs while working. So they tolerated me eating a raw potato or turnip now and again. And of course I stole from the *Zmywak* as well if possible. Everyone did so. Certainly, I could only hide small portions of food on me. The Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* in the camp watched the kitchen workers carefully.

One day I was careless. On the occasion of a public holiday, meat was provided for all the camp inhabitants. Max Heimberg, a Jewish policeman, had come in the morning and slapped down a few lumps of horse meat on the kitchen table. Just for once this was supposed to make a hearty soup for the prisoners just for once. With a little luck you would even get a piece of meat to eat. I decided to take a little of it to Mrs. Hauptmann. Her only son had organised something to eat for me some time before. He had been deported and killed just recently. In an unobserved moment I stuffed a piece of meat under my jacket and rushed outside. If only I had not run so quickly! Right behind the door Max Heimberg grabbed me and gave me a good shake. The meat fell in the dirt. Heimberg now turned red with fury. He wrenched me up by my ears. The pain took my breath away. Then he held me in a tight grip and he let his club crash down on me.

"You… will… never… steal… from…your… own people… again, you bastard!"

With every syllable he beat my head, chest and back until I lay on the ground bleeding and unconscious. I came around when someone stood me up on my feet and helped me wash off the blood that was running from

both ears down my neck into the collar. I only reached my sleeping boxes with great effort and rolled up on them. The next day my body had started to turn black. I could hardly breathe for pain. Today I do not remember, who gave me water now and then and how long it took for me to walk again. I did not make it to the *Bunker* to see Mamus and Zosia for a long time. They heard from Izik that I had survived this punishment as if by a miracle.

In August 1943, twenty women in the camp were selected. Their 'R'-badges and cards for Armaments workers were taken away. First they were locked up to be shot at the slaughterhouse later on. Aaron's new wife Lola was among them. I had already noticed that she was pregnant. Normally there were no pregnant women or new-born babies in the camp. They would have been killed immediately. One of the female prisoners in the camp was a Jewish doctor. She secretly helped the women terminate pregnancies in difficult hygienic circumstances and without anaesthesia. Maybe Lola had missed the right moment for this, maybe she and Aaron really wanted to have the baby, I do not know. Lola avoided the *Appell* when she was in the camp, and Aaron had requested her as a helper for his work outside the camp, where she was allowed to stay overnight with him. The discovery of her pregnancy was possibly the reason for being selected. Uncle Aaron did everything to free her. He obtained a bottle of vodka, this was a real fortune. He bribed the guard in front of the prison cell with it and got Lola out. A girl called Oberländer was taken in her place. She had infected eyes. Together with the other women she was shot instead of Lola at the slaughterhouse by Nemez and his Ukrainian militia the next morning.

JANOWSKA

In the afternoon of an autumn day in 1943, I was caught on the road to Drohobycz after I had sneaked away from a group of labourers. The men were from the Ukrainian militia. They searched me thoroughly looking for weapons and stolen food. Luckily I had nothing on me and because I had never seen the faces of these Ukrainians before, I indignantly started to protest in Ukrainian.

"Let me go! I am not a Jew! This is a mistake – I am Ukrainian!"

They looked hesitant for a short moment. A German truck approached, the rear fully loaded with labourers from the camp. An SS-man jumped out of the driver's cab:

"Who have we got here?"

I had been identified. Everything happened very quickly now. Everything always happened *schnell, schnell*, quick, quick with the Germans. An armed Ukrainian jumped off the back and shooed me onto the truck. Then I already stood squashed between men and fought not to get crushed. The Ukrainian jumped back on. He watched that nobody escaped en route. 50 or 60 men stood next to each other like sardines in a tin. We drove through Drohobycz. Where were they taking us? Nobody spoke a word. I sensed the men's fear and tension. When we drove in the direction of Lemberg, it suddenly became clear to me: they were taking us to Janowska Concentration Camp. They surely wanted to stock up on the number of workers there because they had shot people again. I noticed a second boy among the men. Children were not labourers. Both of us would certainly be selected and killed as soon we had arrived at the camp. I looked back at the houses, trees and fields rushing past. The farther we moved away from Boryslaw, the more I was seized with panic. I cannot take my mother food any more. What will become of her and Zosia? Mamus will die of hunger if they kill me. I could not escape from here. I was sweating despite of the cold. During the endless trip I pushed myself more and more into the interior of the truck. Then came the arrival at Janowska.

"Rrrraus, raus, raus, schnell, schnell!" (Get out, out, fast, fast!)

Whip lashes, cursing, barbed wire everywhere – double fences. The Jews jumped down stiff-legged, falling over each other. I crouched down in the dense crowd and did not get hit by a blow or kicked even once. We were herded into a big barrack like cattle. Narrow rows of wooden bunk-beds stood there just like those for the labourers in *Koszary*. The three tiered bunks were very close, one above the other, so that a man could not sit upright in them. Roughly 200 people could be accommodated here. There was a water barrel and an empty bucket with a vile stench – that was all. I immediately disappeared into a dark corner on top of the bunks and kept an eye on the door. It was slammed shut. No selection – or rather not yet! Where was the other boy? He was not with us any more!

"Maybe they will let us work!"

The door was yanked open again. Out for *Appell!* I lay there motionless. A voice barked commands. Gunfire could be heard, and later the prisonner's voices and footsteps after *Appell*. I imagined how they lined up in rows to get some soup. The thought of soup caused a burning sensation and cramp in my stomach. Hundreds of prisoners poured into the barracks shortly afterwards. They fell onto the bunks exhausted.

"You come from Boryslaw? Yeah, you're allowed to work and then die. Nobody here lives longer than two, three months. You can be happy if you're only shot – at least that's faster!"

The men from Boryslaw tried to find out as much as possible about the conditions in Janowska camp, but the 'old' prisoners were too exhausted to say much.

"What shall we say? They conceive atrocities, different ways of killing people. You would never imagine! Being choked to death is harmless. They hang the Jews up, heads down and that's how they stay until they're dead. One of them likes slitting open the bellies of Jews. In winter they stick you in water outdoors for a night and you're carried away as an ice-block the next morning."

The first night in Janowska descended. My brain worked frantically. If only I was taller and more grown up. They could kill me like a fly. I must not be seen by anybody. Would they check the barracks?

It was forbidden to go out to the latrine at night. The bucket in the corner was nearly overflowing and stank so badly that one could hardly breathe. Early in the morning a rush and push for the latrines started – and once I was sure that no German was nearby, I used the chaos to dart out from the barracks behind a pile of wood – planks and tree trunks, maybe wood left over from constructing the barracks. My eyes and ears were all over the place. Were there dogs? Where else could I hide? Hunger was gnawing at my stomach. Where could I get something to eat? I crouched down. A small part of the grounds could be surveyed from here. Four equal-sized barracks stood next to each other. Out to the back I could see a double barbed wire fence separating another square with barracks from us. There seemed to be female prisoners. A narrow path lead through the double fences to a guarded gate. Through the fence I could see a row of houses on the other side where the SS-men obviously were billeted. There was some kind of factory behind. The whole compound could not be surveyed from here. It seemed to be huge. When the men were gathering on the *Appellplatz,* the assembly square, I grabbed the chance to quickly return to the barracks. Some groups of labourers began moving. I had to find out whether they also worked outside of the camp.

My hunger was becoming unbearable. I chewed on a piece of wood, spat it out again when I noticed my stomach protested. Two prisoners carried the buckets out of the barracks and brought them back empty. I kept hidden in the semi-darkness of the hut until evening and waited for my comrades from Boryslaw to return. They came after the evening *Appell*, after they had been given soup and some bread. Their clothes had been taken away in the morning and they were given scruffy rags instead. Next to me lay an emaciated young man staring fixedly at the ceiling. Not all the men, who had come from Boryslaw with me, were still alive. The SS-men had driven them with whips to work at a murderous speed. They had dug ditches and

had to fill them up again afterwards. Then they had had to run back to the *Appellplatz*. There, all the prisoners who looked exhausted were taken in 'between the wires', as the prisoners called it, to die there or to be shot later. An older man broke off a piece of his bread ration and gave it to me without a word. I gratefully accepted it.

There actually were external labor battalions for clearing work that were sent to the town of Lemberg. To me that was the most important news. I wanted to wait until the men in our barracks were ordered to join such a group. Not one moment longer would I stay in the camp! I felt hot all over when I thought of Mamus and Zosia. Surely they thought I was dead.

The men around me quietly described the hell that they had been through that day and how they had miraculously survived.

"Where does the path between the wire fences lead?"

"To Piaski, the so-called 'Sands'!"

"And what about this 'Sand'?"

No answer. A few prisoners, that had been in Janowska for some time, silently looked at me. Then, instead of answering, one of them propped himself up on his bunk with a piercing look at me and started to sing – hoarse, grim and in the rhythm of a march. Two others joined in singing:

"If they put you in a labour battalion,
and when they drive you into the Sands,
then you get no coffin.
They take you (…)
and kill you later like a dog.
Your mother is a whore… "

The *Piaski*-song ended on a dry cough and a laugh that sounded like crying at the end. The 'Sands', as I now found out, were a sandy, hilly ravine behind the camp, where those doomed to die were led in hundreds and thousands in long columns or smaller groups and were shot.

Almost two weeks passed without any possibility of escape. If the men had not repeatedly taken pity on me and given me a piece of bread, I would have starved to death. I felt myself getting weaker. My desperation grew. I had to get away from here as quickly as possible. I 'commuted' between the barracks and the woodpile. I saw the unfortunate ones 'between the wires'. One morning a man was hanging from a beam in the barracks. He had killed himself. My comrades were changing. They were getting weaker and

weaker and only thought of food. Some of them started stealing from fellow prisoners.
One evening my bunk neighbours told me that they had been ordered to work in town that day. The very next day I wanted to mix in with the last rows of prisoners at the end of the *Appell*. It was an impossible plan, but at least I would try to escape, before they killed me.

The next morning was an air of anxiety. Trucks had pulled up and I heard that executions by shooting were imminent because masses of deportees would arrive. The *Appell* had began. I stood trembling among the men from my barracks, prepared to be selected and shot any moment. Now work battalions of about 20 to 30 men were gathered and went through the main gate. An orchestra played. Yes, really, I heard a Viennese waltz! The comrades had already told me that an orchestra of prisoners had to play when people were tortured to death or were driven into the *Sands*.
As I was moved forward in the crowd, I could see that there were water barrels standing in a row along the side of the path. The lifeless body of a drowned man hung from every barrel – heads in water and hands tied behind their backs. I will never forget this scene and every time I hear a Viennese Waltz today, the horror returns.

On the other hand the agonised deaths of these innocent people must have distracted the guards' attention. They had not seen me! I marched through the main gate together with the others to Janowska Street. Heavily armed former Soviet prisoners of war accompanied us as guards. They were called *Askaris*. They were feared and described as particularly cruel and sadistic beasts. I kept an eye on them and at the same time feverishly searched the surrounding area for a suitable place to disappear.

Janowska lay a little outside of Lemberg. After a short march we soon reached the first houses of the town. I was in the middle of the group and slowly worked myself over to one side. My luck was that the guards did not know me, I did not look Jewish and my clothes looked quite worn, but not as torn and tattered as those of the other prisoners. With a throbbing heart I suddenly took a step sideways out of the group and turned around in the opposite direction. I tried to walk slowly. Hands in pockets I watched the party marching by, as if I was a curious lokal boy. When the men were out of sight I turned into a side-street and ran as fast as my trembling legs would let me. It was fortunate that no people were on the street at this early hour! First, I had to sit down behind some bushes on the outskirts of the town to calm down and catch my breath again. Train tracks showed me

The prisonner's orchestra in the Janowska concentration camp
(Photo archives Yad Vashem)

the way to the station. Maybe I could find a train in the direction of Boryslaw. Polish railway workers briefly looked my way. I looked back, shaking inside, wondering if any one could see my fear and hear the throbbing of my heart.
I read *Sambor* on a freight train that had been loaded with coal and wood. Slowly I paced to and fro – a child, waiting for a train and killing time. When the train had slowly set off I jumped onto it and climbed into an open wagon. I quickly dug a hollow in the heap of coal on the outer side and lay down in it. I closed my eyes and saw my mother before me.
I had to be on guard not to fall asleep. The train cut back its speed shortly before *Sambor* and I jumped off.

Instead of directly setting off to Boryslaw, the hunger and my weakness drove me into town. It was market day and the streets were bustling. An old Ukrainian peasant woman sat, warmly wrapped in a coloured shawl, next to a vegetable stand. My stomach ached at the sight of the potatoes, carrots, beet roots and eggs. I addressed the peasant women in Ukrainian:

"I am looking for my parents. Surely they are searching for me, too. Did you see them? I am so hungry, but… my father has the money."

Her eyes narrowed and she pressed her lips together. Then she reached behind for half a loaf of bread and cut off a big slice for me. A sly smile came into her eyes when I beamed at her and thanked her. Had she seen through me?

"Enjoy it!"

And how much I enjoyed it! How good it tasted to me, as I sat by the well, drank small sips of water and slowly, slowly chewed the bread. Again a big restlessness came over me. My mother was waiting, she surely was even more hungry. I had not been to see her for two or three weeks now. I put the rest of the bread in my pocket and hurried back to the station. Freight wagons stood on a siding. Tree trunks were being loaded. I watched the men from afar as they stopped their work to eat. To my disappointment no railway engine came to pick up the wagons in the afternoon either.

It became dark early. An icy wind blew through my jacket and froze my ears. I could not feel my hands and feet any more. I found a place, a bit protected from the wind behind a warehouse. This is where I spent the night, ran and jumped up and down, rubbed my hands or feet and drowsily crouched on the ground for a few minutes. I hoped and prayed that the wagons would be picked up the next day. Thick fog had replaced the wind in the morning. At last the first railroad workers appeared. The railway engine! It advanced backwards; at least that meant it was the right direction. Steaming and whistling noisily it stopped on the right track. While the workers were still unhitching more wagons, I hoisted myself, frozen stiff and coming from behind, onto one of the wagons loaded with wood. It was not easy. My cold hands hardly had the strength to hold onto the chains and rods. I would have been seen from afar on top of the tree trunks, so I searched for a place at the rear of one wagon loaded with wood. I hoped the workers would not make an inspection of the train as I had sometimes seen before. The train started and I heaved a sigh of relief. The cold, damp air made me freeze even more, but it helped against the tiredness.

The fields had already been harvested. I knew a slope in the woods outside of Drohobycz, just before the refineries, where the train had to slow down. This is where I jumped off. It felt as if my frozen legs were snapping. At first I trotted slowly and stiff-legged in the direction of the small village Poczajowice. I wanted to bypass the villages as a precaution. It was a detour, but at least I had some protection in the fields and in the woods before Modrycz and Tustanowicze. Slowly I was getting warmer. I was

moving along faster and the roads were more familiar to me, the closer I got to Boryslaw. On the way I picked up a few windfalls and put them in my jacket pockets. Only once did I have a short break, leaning my forehead against a tree. I did not want to sit down, because I knew I would feel tired and heavy. So I continued. My legs
walked like a machine and my thoughts had already reached my destination. Had the *Bunker* been discovered yet?

When I reached Boryslaw, it was not dark enough yet to get to the Bunker unseen. I hid near the camp until evening. I wanted to look for Izik and Shmil at the evening *Appell*. One could not use our tunnel in broad daylight. Time passed unbearably slow, until the work battalions eventually marched into the camp and I was able to slip in with them. The incredulous face Izik made when he saw me! His eyes sparkled when he gave me a short hug. Shmil grinned and patted me on the shoulder:

"I don't believe it!"

"How is my Mother?"

"Not good, she thinks you are dead."

It got dark. I could not await to see my mother. At last we climbed down into the *Bunker*. Where was she? Where was Zosia? They were not sitting together with the others in the candlelight. I felt for their beds in the dark.

"Mamus?"

The bundle on the floor moved. Zosia came with a light. My mother looked at me out of half-closed eyes, but she did not seem to recognize me. I kissed and caressed her.

"Mamusia, I'm back. It's me, Imek. Here, I have bread and look here – apples."

Zosia supported my mother and helped her to sit up.

"Imek is here, come on look, it's really him!

For one week she hasn't wanted to eat, she only lies there and talks about you being dead …. Amalia, Amalia, listen, Imek is here again!"

Now my mother's hand gripped my jacket. She did not let me go when she sank back on her bed. There we three sat – feeding Mamusia with little bits of bread and apple and giving her water.

"Mamusia, you must eat."

"Imek, where were you?"

As a rule all the food was divided equally between the inhabitants of the *Bunker*. Izik and Shmil had given Mamus and Zosia their share during my absence. The next days I spent a lot of time with her. Slowly she regained her strength. How I loved it, when she ate and we sat together and whispered with one another.

"Do you know what, Imek? Last night I dreamt of bread, not of this black, sticky stuff here, but of white bread, a new freshly baked loaf. I even had the smell of it in my nose. To have a slice of fresh, white bread now – I'd give anything for it."

So I decided to organise white bread. I remember that I managed to get hold of some cigarettes in the next days. They were in great demand. It was not easy for me as I had nothing special to offer.

"Will you give me two cigarettes?"

"What will you give for them, boy?"

"I…I've nothing at the moment, but I know a new song. It's even a long song! Do you want to hear it ?"

"Then sing, you birdie. And afterwards I will tell you how many cigarettes your song is worth."

I sang the song of *Piaski*. I occasionally sang it in the time that followed – sometimes with the saucy text, sometimes altered – depending on who I was singing for. Two cigarettes were my reward this time. And in exchange, a young man placed a raisin bun in I my hand. It was braided like a small *Challa*, a Sabbath yeast bread, and it smelt as if it came from a faraway planet. Can one even describe how overjoyed Mamus was about it? I still see her before me, how she ate it with closed eyes, laughing with tears in her eyes and kissing me over and over again.

One evening at the beginning of the winter of 1943, I arrived back from a barn at dusk with a big turnip under my jacket and looked forward to taking it to my mother and Aunt Zosia. Suddenly two Ukrainian policemen appeared before me just out of the blue. They had lain in wait. I stared directly into their pistols. Any attempt to pass myself off as an Ukrainian boy would have been futile. I was from the camp, they knew that. I was lucky, they did not immediately shoot me. A blow in the face – the turnip rolled on the ground.

"Bloody Jew! Come on!"

While being kicked, I had to run back to the camp ahead of them. It was impossible to dodge them and escape. With a kick in the backside I flew into the cellar – a dark hole with a heavy door and a lock on the outside. I was captured and knew what that meant: once the Germans had collected

enough people in this prison, they would lead them to the slaughterhouse and shoot them. Mamus, Zosia! They expected me today. Who would take care of them when I was dead? I did not think of myself until later. I began to tremble. Death itself did not frighten me. But would it hurt?
I felt a movement next to me in the dark. There were more people locked up in here with me. I did not know anyone – there were Jews from Stryj, Schodnica and Drohobycz. They hardly spoke, lay in the dirt apathetically like animals that were to be slaughtered. Their hunger and thirst was worse than the thought of death. The next morning a thin ray of light fell on us. No, I did not want to die, not now. How would we be taken to the slaughterhouse? On foot or by truck? They would shoot me anyhow. So I wanted to try an escape on the way to the slaughterhouse, no matter what! At some point a closed truck pulled up and we were taken to the slaughterhouse. An armed *Schupo* would not let us out of sight.

We were about twenty persons from the prison in *Koszary*. But behind the slaughterhouse a large group of naked people were already standing huddled together in the cold next to a heap of clothes and shoes. I took it all in at once: four Germans, Ukrainian policemen, drunk and in high spirits. A bottle of vodka was being passed around. The commander Nemec. His shepherd dog, pulling at the lead and barking incessently. A grave, a big hole in the ground. A plank of wood over it. Bare, red chilled skin. Faint wails, prayers. My brain worked like a machine, there was no place for fear at this moment. I did not think, did not ponder, only reacted. The people were driven onto the plank, one after the other. Then shot. The Ukrainians were pleased with their hits. Now I was naked. I had got a jab in the back and set off – onto the plank. I did not feel the cold, I did not see the dead and the blood underneath me. Only my sense of hearing was functioning and waiting for the shot. I felt a pain in my leg. Then I plummeted downwards. The shot had only grazed my knee. A person fell on me heavily. It took my breath away. I did not move. More bodies fell – they were my fellow prisoners from the camp. Then the shots stopped. The drunken voices faded away and all was silent.

I nearly suffocated, but lay there motionless. Would they return, to shoot at the dead and half-dead? Gradually my brain started working again. I felt the still warm bodies. Blood ran over my stomach, over my head. How would I get out of here? I had to wait. It was dark and totally quiet. Only after a long time, did I start to pull my numb limbs out from underneath the weight of the bodies. Arms first. I worked frantically, my strength waned. But I could also free my legs, centimetre by centimetre, and hauled myself

to the edge of the pit. They had not posted a guard. I crawled out and felt my way to the heap of clothes. I pulled out a pair of trousers, a shirt. Bent over I ran over to the dark trees. Behind them was a path I knew. My legs ran. I did not feel the bleeding wound. My senses were sharpened like those of a wounded animal.
Where to? I was covered in blood from head to toe, everybody could immediately see where I came from. I washed myself in a small stream. The ice cold water brought back the pain. I pulled the clothes over my wet body. They were much too large. I held the trousers up with one hand. I began to shiver. To the camp! Unseen, I pushed myself through our tunnel. It was about two o'clock in the morning. Startled, Izik jumped up from his bunk and looked at me in astonishment. He did not ask any questions, gave me water and a piece of bread. Without me telling him, he immediately knew what had happened. He had collected food for the people in the bunker.

"Come on! They are waiting. We can make it before the morning Appell!"

Finally, finally I fell into my mother's arms. She was already beside herself with worry. When I told her everything, she wept like a child and cradled me in her arms. This was the moment when I came to my senses again.

THE 3rd OF MARCH 1944

A few days before the 1st of March, fresh snow had fallen during the day. How I hated it! It was dangerous to leave tracks in the snow. We had to take food to the *Bunker* the following night. It was good that it got dark early. Therefore Izik and I could slip out of the camp just after the *Appell*. Mamus and Zosia were eagerly waiting for me. Mamus's eyes appeared enormous in her pale face. They lay deep in the sockets. Zosia and my mother looked more alike now. They both resembled faded skeletons that only moved with difficulty. Mamus's striped dress hung down loosely on her body. Both women had put some kind of *Schmattes* over their heads and shoulders against the cold. But their eyes glowed.

"You can hear the front already? So it's true? The Russians are not very far from Boryslaw. Dear G'd help! Imek, come to me, just for a moment."

Zosia hugged and kissed me and retreated to her bed of rags. Mamus and I talked quietly. We both dreamt of getting out of the *Bunker* together and being free. We imagined having a bath – lying in hot water for a long time. To breath fresh air, to see the sky. We would eat lovely white bread and jam.

We talked about my father the first time for a long while. Will Tato come? Was he still alive?

"And do you know what, Imek, we have to tell about what has happened here. The whole world shall know about it."

Izik said it was time to go back to the camp. I hugged Mamus. Then Izik and I crept out into the night.

Was it our tracks in the snow that Warchalowski found? He was a notorious Polish spy and informer to the Germans. He tirelessly searched the area for hidden Jews on his own and gave them away for money and vodka. Shortly after our last visit to the Bunker, Izik got the warning that Hildebrand and the *Schutzpolizei* were searching the grounds of the electrical power plant. Izik slipped over to Gurbel, a Polish acquaintance, who lived nearby and watched the search from the roof of his house. Luckily the entrance to the *Bunker* was not discovered, but Hildebrand had a guard posted on the grounds. They wanted to catch the suppliers of the *Bunker* before the hiding place was busted. How should we take food to the Bunker now? I was paralyzed with fear.

On the 3rd of March, during *Appell*, an enclosed truck stopped close to the camp gate. Menzinger opened the tarpaulin: It was the people from our *Bunker*. My mother and Aunt Zosia supported each other, blinded by the daylight. They did not look like humans. They were only shadows of humans, whose veins shone through their yellowish skin. My legs gave way. I stood only a few rows away from the truck between my friends Bronia and Gustek. I felt how they held my arms on the left and the right. Then Menzinger roared:

"Who of you has got relatives here on the truck? Step forward!"

I took a step forward, trying to break away. Hands held onto me. And then I heard her voice. Loud and piercing my mother shouted in Polish:

"Imek, stay where you are! I want you to live! Don't come to me! One of us must remain. Listen to me, Imek. One of us must tell what happened here!"

My heart broke. I wanted to run to her, just be with her and die with her. I was stuck between my friends, they held my mouth shut. I screamed into a firm hand and wept. I only noticed the tarpaulin fall down and the truck leave in the direction of the slaughterhouse. All strength had left my body. Uncle Aaron and Uncle Israel quickly dragged me into the *Zmywak* and put me in the hiding place under the potatoes.

"Don't you move! Stay hidden! Do you hear? You're staying here for a while!"

I lay in the dark, motionless. My life was over. How long did I stay down there? Some day, when the search for the relatives in the camp had ended,

someone pulled me out, gave me water and calmly spoke to me. It was Uncle Israel, he put his arm around my shoulders.

"They threw gas bombs, the people came out half choked. During Appell, four or five relatives reported to Menzinger. They were immediately loaded onto the truck with the people from the Bunker. It was Szmil Leib, Oberländer and one, named Szulek. They were shot with the others at the slaughterhouse. Izik Kudysz had hidden earlier on. They looked for him, but he had disappeared in the forest. Imagine if it had been Schönbach instead of Menzinger at the Appell. He would have understood what your mother cried in Polish. You were lucky, Imek. One of us has to remain, she said. She wanted you to live!"

I did not know, why I should live any longer. I was not able to arrange my thoughts. I leant against the wall of the horse stables, numb. The prisoners walked back and forth in the yard. And suddenly I saw Mamus's dress in between them – the brown and blue stripes. As usual, the clothes of those shot had been brought to the camp. Mrs. Wagmann wore it, I knew her well. I started to run, screaming, and fell to the ground. With my limbs trembling I continued crawling on my knees. If others had not stopped me, held me – I would have killed myself. Not one moment longer did I want to live! But still I lived on, numb and without strength. Why could I not imagine Mamus's face anymore as it was before the war? Why did I not have any shoes on my feet?

I looked at my feet. Suddenly it upset me terribly that I had to walk around with wet, dirty rags on my feet. Before, I had had proper shoes that were a little too big, but had been leak-proof and warm. Now my feet were freezing cold. Who had stolen my shoes? In my confused head everything only revolved around the shoes. And then Bronia was there. She put her arm around me, smiled and gave me her shoes.

IN THE FOREST

Gustek and Bronia were the owners of a *Bunker* in the forest. I had presumed this because they disappeared now and again, then reappeared some time later. I had already heard a lot about the underground caves and hiding places, but never seen them up until today. And now I was invited to go with them. They accepted me like their smaller brother.

We crept to the main gate in the dark and watched the road for a while. Smoking, the guard was slowly walking up and down. It was no problem to get out of the gate, we only had to wait for the moment when the guard

turned to walk in the other direction. We sneaked out of the gate like cats, one after the other, tiptoed along the building to the right and then disappeared into the bushes behind the camp.
We marched quickly and quietly in single file, sometimes we stopped listening. We avoided the usual paths and trails. About half an hour later we reached the woods of Opaka. Gustek suddenly stopped above a steep slope in a dense forest. He bent over, moved some branches to the side and it seemed to me, as if he reached for the forest soil. A trapdoor appeared. Gustek only opened it enough, so that we could slip through it. I identified the end of a ladder and a faint light below. Bronia had already disappeared into the cave and I quickly followed her. Stuffy air met me and the smell of damp earth mixed with the vapour of an oil lamp. Pale faces watched me. What a lot of people lived here! If the Bunker was full, there were 15 persons. I remember Bronia's father and her brother Elo. An old lady, wrapped in a blanket, smiled at me from her bed. It was Pesia Silbermann. She was about fifty years old. Yes, in those days one already belonged to the old ones at fifty. Two sisters named Horowitz were introduced to me, a Mr. Waldmann and his daughter, as well as Szmilk Dickman and Jozek Neubauer. These people already knew that one more eater would live with them from now on. The owners of the scattered forest *Bunkers* were in contact with each other and had agreed that the twelve children, who still lived in *Koszary,* were to be allocated in the forest hiding places. Gustek had managed to convince the group that I had experience in organising food. He pointed to a bed with blankets and *Schmattes* where I could sleep. Gustek was the boss, the owner of the bunker. He explained the rules to me:

"Never talk loudly and do not drink too much water! All the food we bring is shared amongst everybody. The guard changes every few hours. You are a child – no need to keep watch. No risk, understand? Only if not otherwise possible, shit in that bucket. Better, if you do it in the woods. But you won't shit a lot, for sure … ."

As I sat down on my bed, friendly faces all around looked at me. A warm feeling rose in me, gratitude. Here, I was safe for a while, until this *Bunker* was also discovered. Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or in a week? I did not think that far ahead. To survive the war seemed unthinkable despite the nearby front. Every hour and every minute that one remained alive was a gift. We were surrounded by enemies: Ukrainians, Poles, Germans. As well as the *Banderowski*, the men of Stefan Bander, the nationalist and fervent anti-Semite, that combed the forests in search of Jews, whom they killed in the most gruesome manner. We had no chance to escape.

View of the forest *Bunker* (model) from above (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Bronia and Gustek Halmut in October 2000 with the model of the *Bunker* in Tel Aviv, Gustek constructed it for the museum in Yad Vashem.
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

The others pulled me back to reality from my musings. Gustek showed me the construction of the beams. The men had used their experience from their work in the oil mines. How the *Bunker* was created was now explained to me in all technical details:

"It took more than two months all in all. The work has to be done slowly and quietly, you know. You need help, so in between you must help with the other Bunkers in between. Then friends come and help you, like with the digging. The hole is two metres deep, three metres long and two and a half metres wide. Some forest Bunkers are even smaller. We stole tools from the camp and from the mines at night. My friend Szmilk Dickman and I cut down trees as supports, about 100 metres from here, and carefully carried them here together with other men. Fortunately, the forest is very dense. There are tree trunks lying on top as a ceiling and about half a metre of earth on top. We also made a deep shaft here reaching down to the ground water. One can climb down the ladder and fetch water."

Vertical logs prevented the clay walls collapsing in persistent rain. Exactly this already had happened with other *Bunker*. The bunk beds made of raw, unpeeled thin trees had three low tiers. One could only lie down flat on them. A simple bench was part of the equipment, a bucket with a lid, which was emptied every morning, two buckets for the water and a cooking area with a grill, fuelled with petroleum.

Some of the *Bunker* residents constantly remained in the woods, but a few of us kept returning to the camp to organise food: potatoes, bread, turnips or onions. We starved. Some times in winter we had nothing to eat for days. There was only water, that was all. We sometimes remembered former meals or recipes: roast chicken or cake – each of us dreamed of a different good meal. The others thought that my dream was strange: in the morning I open the door of a bakery. Before me, lying in the sun are still warm, freshly baked loaves of bread on the shelves, one beside the other – and all the fragrant loaves are mine alone.

From time to time we could cook some soup. I also remember the meat of a wild rabbit that one of us had snared.

Everybody slept in their clothes and blankets. Of course everyone had lice all over the body. The more of them I squashed with my thumbnail, the faster they seemed to multiply. Despite the confinement, the hunger and the daily struggle we tried to get along with each other. It was not so uncomplicated in other *Bunkers*. We even developed a certain sense of humour. We took care of someone if he or she suddenly went into mourning, simply not saying a word any more and just silently gazing into space. We told each other jokes. Yes, we actually sometimes laughed.

"Come on, Imek, sing something – but quietly!"

I still had my clear, high voice. So I sang sad or jolly songs, but sometimes also the saucy songs that the Germans liked to hear from me. I then sang *tadi tada tadi tada...* instead of the dirty words; and that made the others laugh until they had tears running down their cheeks. Pesia Silberman shook her head disapprovingly and covered her ears.

THE CAMP IS LIQUIDATED

April in 1944 was very cold, the long awaited spring did not want to come and fresh snow kept on falling. I rarely slept in the *Bunker*. Waiting, idle and rigid in the constant dark made me feel restless. Inactivity paralyzed me and I was obsessed with the thoughts about my mother. That is why I spent most days and nights in *Koszary* again, queued up to get a warm soup and rummaged through the clothes of those murdered to find something warm to wear. Two or three times a week I took food to the forest. Another reason to keep returning was the importance of having an ear in the camp. Information was often passed on from workers, who had personal contact with Director Beitz. Because of his connections with the SS and to Hildebrand, the camp commander, he often was the first to know about an imminent *Aktion* and warned his people. But he was to remain the director only for a short time. Mid-April the *Wehrmacht* drafted him. Warnings sometimes came also from the young girls, who worked daily in the guards' kitchen where they could overhear their conversations. Before an *Aktion* the men always drank a lot of schnapps and became rowdy. Once news was announced, it quickly made the rounds. Everybody knew within a short time, how the front was progressing or about an imminent *Aktion*:

"Kolomea has been taken by the Russians." or:

"The Russians are stuck in Tarnopol." or:

"They are putting together a new list of dispensable workers. Be careful, they will knock them off!"

Warnings really did not even have to be put into words. If an occupant of the *White House* behaved peculiarly, rushed over to some friends in the worker's accommodations – turmoil spread immediately and rumours made the round. If a raid started, people disappeared like woodlice, squeezed themselves behind double walls, under floor boards and stairs, yes, sometimes somebody even slid down into the latrine. After one of these raids, I stared at the simmering brew below and thought that I would rather die than jump into this dark, stinking hole.

Uncle Israel still lead a miserable existence in the camp and trotted off with

a column of workers every day. No argument could convince him to escape into the forest with us.

"What for?"

he asked. He had no hope and no will to live any longer.

Izik and Shmil did the same as me, they commuted to and fro between one of the hiding places in the forest and the camp. I think Izik was in contact with a group of young men, who lived in the forest and who planned to set up an organised resistance. Lonek Hoffmann and Mendzio Dörfler were part of it, young lads of 18 to 20 years, whom we all admired. They were not afraid of anything, supposedly owned weapons. They provided their relatives in the forest with food from the camp. Each one of us had great hope in these young, clever men. One day we heard that the *Bunker* belonging to Lonek Hoffman had been betrayed by a forest ranger. *Schupo* and militia arrested the occupants and killed them. The news that Lonek had gone to see the forest ranger in his house afterwards and had shot him, hit the camp like a bomb. As a result Commander Hildebrand intensified the search in the forest with all men available. We feared for the brave men in the forest and for our own Bunker. How long would it stay undiscovered?

Despite the front coming closer, labour battalions were assembled and the *Appell* was held. On the 1st of April 1944, Hildebrand, in a coat and gloves, stood in front of the rows of grey and freezing, wretched figures at *Appell* and held a speech. The Russians were close by and the Germans wanted to take their labourers to Jaslo with them now. There was work and even orphanages there. He said all this with great conviction. Then he had the gate to the camp opened and said:

"So that you know I am serious, anybody who wants to leave can go now. I let you free. But I recommend you to come to Jaslo with us."

To his great surprise, about a third of the Jews took to their heels and disappeared into the woods. Anybody could work out that the liquidation of the camp was imminent. Uncle Aaron and Lola also took the chance to escape but, like many others, they only stayed in the forest for a few days because it was cold and they had nothing left to eat.

Life at the camp seemed to return to normal again. On the 13th of April the camp was suddenly surrounded by police and the Ukrainian militia. Nothing was known about this *Aktion* beforehand. Panic broke out among the prisoners. Everybody ran all over the place and tried to hide. At first I wanted to go to the tunnel behind the latrine, but then I saw an Ukrainian standing behind the fence. I just got to the *Zmywak* in time – into the little hole under the potatoes.

Nearly one third of the Jews were deported to the concentration camp Plaszow on this day. Uncle Israel was not one of them. He had been working outside the camp and did not have to report for the *Appell.* I also saw Uncle Aaron and Lola again some time later. Aaron had been given the job to sew a leather holdall for the Director of the town administration shortly before the *Aktion*. He worked in a building directly across the town administration. Lola lay in a hiding place under the floor boards. Aaron was given a warning and quickly hid under the floor boards with her. They stayed there for a few days with a bottle of water and some bread until Viktor Danhofer, a *Volksdeutscher* (German National) let them out. So it happened that Uncle Aaron and Lola were not deported to Plasow. When I met them later, Lola looked miserable and sad. She was not pregnant any more. She had had a little boy in hiding somewhere. During one of the last raids the workshop was searched and they had to hold his mouth shut. He could not be calmed and his crying would have given away the hiding place under the boards. The child had suffocated.

The closer the front came, the more intensely Hildebrand and the *Schutzpolizei* with dogs, escorted by the Ukrainian Militia, searched for hidden Jews in the forests. I believe 99 per cent of all *Bunker* were detected or revealed during this time. Jews caught outside the camp, were either shot at the slaughterhouse or handed over to the SS or the *Schutzpolizei.* They were beaten with sticks until they gave away further hiding places. Finally, they were beaten to death. In *Koszary* Max Heimberg had a part in this, too. Uncle Aaron and Lola were caught in May 1944. They had hidden in a forest *Bunker* for a while. Uncle Aaron survived the beating. His entire body was black, his teeth were missing and his kidneys hurt. Lola's face was swollen, blue and disfigured, and her teeth had been knocked out, too.

Was it not madness to return to the camp just now? I was not the only one to do it. Gradually a large number of Jews gathered in *Koszary* again. I knew exactly that the Germans were going to liquidate the camp and probably kill all the remaining Jews. But, no matter where I walked or stood, worked or slept, all my thoughts revolved around food. Many a time I even saw pieces of bread lying on the ground, which on closer inspection turned out to be a piece of wood or a stone. Like all the others, I ended up in the camp again driven by hunger if I wanted to or not. Of course everyone was determined to escape quickly, before the trap closed once more. Hildebrand appeared more often. He warned us that everyone who was caught outside the camp or who missed the *Appell,* but showed up again as a surplus person at the next *Appell,* would be immediately shot.

Then the 3rd of June arrived. There were still between 500 and 700 Jews in the camp. That afternoon it was announced that there would be a special *Appell* at six o'clock in the evening. Hildebrand appeared in person. And then we saw Menzinger and Schönbach, who were dragging two half-dead, terribly battered bodies along. Suddenly a groan went through the rows. We recognized Hoffmann and Burg, Forest-Jews and fighters, that were our entire hope. One could not recognize the faces of both boys any longer. Lonek Hoffman seemed to have an eye hanging out, he did not move. Hildebrand was standing next to the water pump and called:

"I warned you. These two were caught outside. Hoffmann with a weapon. Up until now you have seen, how nice I can be. Today you shall see that I can be tough as well. This shall be a warning to all of you! Now, this is what happens to everybody who runs away!"

Then he gave Menzinger and Schönbach the order to shoot both lads. The shots shattered the deathly silence. For a while we stood there stone-still until the *Appell* ended silently. I helped to dig a grave for Lonek and Mendzio in the garden of the *White House*. I did not feel any grief. Only the wish for revenge burned inside me.

On the morning of the 21st of June, they let us stand for *Appell* longer than usual. Walek Eisenstein, the head of the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst,* had announced that new identity cards were being distributed. The main gate remained closed. Then shouting started in the front rows and the people ran in all directions. The camp was surrounded by military. Somebody shot from above at the people that had gathered at the gate. I stood near the latrine. Maybe I could get out through our tunnel... ? But everything happened much too quick – impossible to get behind the latrine in time. Very close by, I could hear the panting of a dog, pulling at its lead and a voice roaring:

"Out! Out! Faster!"

Into the latrine hut! First I lowered my legs down into the hole, then I only hung by my arms, my legs in the muck. How deep was it? My hands were already slipping and the muck squirted into my face. Disgust and horror. I found a support under my feet at the back in one of the corners. I stood in the slurry up to my neck. I pressed myself against the cement wall, held my breath and was afraid to get some of it up my nose or through the tightly closed lips into my mouth. Somebody else stood there in the half-dark, a grown-up. He was taller and just stood up to his belly in the muck, made signs at me to keep quiet. I was choking. Motionless I stood there until it was silent outside – an eternity. The other one hoisted himself up and disappeared. It was more difficult for me to get onto the toilet seat and

On the right, the main gate of the central labour camp *Koszary* in Boryslaw, as seen from the inside of the camp, Photo from 1979 (Photo Chaim Segal)

out of the hole. My wet hands slipped a few times and I fell back in. Every time I paused and listened, if someone had heard the noise. I wiped my palms on the cement wall. And then, when I had almost despaired, I managed to pull myself up. My shoes, Bronia's wooden clogs, stayed behind in the latrine.

There was a barrel filled with rain-water at the back of the *White House*. This is where I threw away the clothes. I washed and washed myself and wished for a piece of soap. The stench stuck to me. Possibly forever? I retched and vomited, my throat burnt like fire. I do not remember where I went after I had got some things out of the heap of clothes next to the *White House*. Maybe I ran to the *Bunker* in the forest. I only know that I gave off a horrible stench for many days. But I had survived the *Aktion*.

Again, many men and women had been taken from *Koszary* to Plaszow. Gustek's father was one of them. He was deported to several concentration camps. The Germans killed him in Flossenbürg.

The German's plan worked out. They only had to wait for a small group of Jews to collect in the camp and to grab them again.

I, too, was among the people in the camp, a short time later again searching for food. It was summer, the first half-ripe ears of cereal could be plucked

off in the fields, but the area swarmed with German and Ukrainian Jew hunters.
Then came the day when Red Shmil fell into the hands of the Militia. It was shortly after the second deportation to Plaszow. He had bread and potatoes in his jacket. They drove him into the camp, tortured him and it was as if I was being tortured myself. Our friend remained firm. He betrayed no one. Would I have been as strong as him? I do not know. I saw how Schönbach, Menzinger and Max Heimbach from the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst*, dragged him like a bloody sack into the prison cellar, beating him steadily. Those beatings! You could not bear having to watch it. They always beat without getting upset at all. They rather did it painstakingly, like doing an important job.

Shmil was dead. In the garden of the *White House,* my friend Buroch and I dug a grave for him. Red Shmil was a hero – in my mind I erected a memorial for him.
The next blow came when Gustek and Bronia, together with the other residents our forest *Bunker,* were driven into the camp. The Germans had discovered the hiding place. Gustek soon escaped into the woods again and Bronia found a hiding place with friends, a Polish family. Only seven people from our *Bunker* survived: Gustek and Bronia, Pesia Silbermann, Waldmann and his daughter, Jozek and I.

JULY 1944

Bombers were flying in the sky. Peering through the foliage I tried to see whether they were German or Russian planes. The Russians bombed Boryslaw. Full of hope I watched the growing haste and unrest among the Germans. More frequently I saw German vehicles and *Wehrmacht* troops withdrawing to the West. But instead of packing their cases and disappearing, the SS and the *Schupo* from Borryslaw had nothing more important to do than catch the remaining Jews. Maybe 500 of them were still alive. Everything was in a state of disarray in Boryslaw, because of the advancing front. The *Volksdeutschen* in town had been given the instructions to be ready for their removal to the German *Reich.* Nevertheless there still were some Jews, like Uncle Aaron and Uncle Israel, who had to work in town. Others had work to do inside the camp during the day.

On the 19th of July, German *Schupo* caught 46-year-old Fischl Habermann, who had been a respected merchant in Boryslaw, his 20-year- old son Josef

and Mendzio Dörfler, one of the forest Jews. He had been Lonek Hoffman's closest friend, highly regarded by us all. We all had to report at eleven o'clock in the morning. This was an unusual time of day. Some prisoners still managed to quickly hide away. Hildebrand appeared with Sommer, Menzinger and Schönbach, pushing their victims along in front of them. Hildebrand held a speech again: despite his warning, Jews were repeatedly escaping from the camp. Therefore these three would now be shot in front of our eyes. If anyone dared to escape, they would be treated just like these men. Menzinger, Schönbach and Sommer received the order to shoot. They drove their victims across the yard to the front of the disinfection rooms. There, they placed the pistols to their necks. I closed my eyes.

Three days later the camp guards started rounding up the Jews in the yard. They searched every corner. It was impossible to flee from the camp at this moment. Outside, other armed guards were waiting only to catch escaping Jews. Stooping a man ran over to the *White House*. I knew there was a hiding place in it, but I had no idea where it was. I just ran after him, up the stairs to the attic. It was a big hiding place, similar to the one Uncle Israel had built under the roof in our house back then. At least 15 to 20 people were already squeezed together here. A foot came towards me and hit me in the belly. They wanted to close the hatch in my face and not let me in.

"Get lost! Nobody fits in anymore. You go away!"

I started screaming:

"Let me in, I don't need a lot of space!"

Frightened that our fight would be noticed, somebody pulled me into the hideout in an instant and quickly closed the hatch. Boots stamped around the house. They thoroughly searched all the rooms – the attic as well. We held our breath. Us they did not find. As soon as it was silent outside, I slipped out of the hole first and checked around. I did not want to wait for them to return with dogs again. Nobody was to be seen in the yard. I rushed to the woods – gunshots behind me. Mr. Wolf, the former owner of a paper shop in Boryslaw and his son Milek had come out of the hiding place in the attic after me and been discovered. Mr. Wolf did not make it to the woods. He was shot.

This was the last transport from *Koszary*. 100 or 150 Jews were driven to the station in a column. The people stood in the freight wagons and waited. Locomotives were missing. These wagons were actually meant for the *Volksdeutschen*. They were promised to be evacuated westbound with them. However, it was more important for the SS to destroy the Jews, so they left the *Volksdeutschen* to their fate. Finally an engine arrived. The ride to

Auschwitz usually lasted six days. This train took sixteen days to get there in the summer heat through Poland and Hungary. The prisoners had nothing to drink. Once they were allowed to stand underneath a water-tank for locomotives. The water jet was too strong – they could hardly drink. This train was repeatedly held up until it finally reached Auschwitz.

Why am I telling about the last train from Boryslaw in such detail at this point? Among the prisoners was my beloved Uncle Israel. Perhaps he had not even hidden, was just tired and had become resigned to his fate. In Auschwitz he died an agonizing death.
Bronia's father and her brother Elo were also on this transport to Auschwitz. Elo was murdered straight away. Bronia's father died in a hospital in Linz, after he had been driven from one concentration camp to another. It was one week after the end of the war.
A detested member of the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* was in one of the wagons. When the train arrived in Auschwitz, he was dead – strangled by men in the wagon.
After the last raid, all the buildings in *Kozsary* were thoroughly searched again by the Germans. They shot four people dead.

Of course, I did not know all this yet, on the 22nd of July in 1944, as I crouched in the woods with my eyes everywhere and ears strained – a forest animal sensing the presence of other people before I heard or saw anyone. Very close to me, Olek Schwarz, a friend from the camp, stuck his bald head out from the leaves. He could tell me in what corner of the forest to search for Izik Kudysz. How pleased I was, when I found him in the undergrowth. His jacket seemed to have gotten too big for him. His cheekbones stood out strangely and stubble covered the pointed chin. By the manner he looked at me, made me think that I must have also changed. I looked down at myself. I was a skeleton draped with rags. We stayed together. The front seemed to move closer. We listened to the sound of the retreating *Wehrmacht*, hurriedly leaving to the west.

"They're taking off!"

Now the Germans were busy with different things than looking for us, but now the *Banderowski* had the whole area to themselves. They were often dangerously quiet when they came, they still busted hiding places and massacred the Jews, that they found, on the spot. For sixteen days we constantly changed our whereabouts, watched, took turns keeping guard if one of us slept. You can actually keep guard and constantly look for food on the ground or in the bushes at the same time. We stuffed everything into our mouths that somehow seemed edible: sorrel, beech and birch

leaves and unripe cereals, if it was good for us or not and if we got diarrhoea or not. I imagined sneaking into town at night and stealing bread, even if I risked being slain just shortly before the end of the war.

LIBERATED

It must have been the 6th of August 1944. Artillery and machine gun fire could have been heard nearby for the last days and nights. Izik and I had risked going to the very edge of the woods to be able to judge the situation. Smoke lay over the town. Suddenly we saw a scrawny figure running through the field. No doubt – it was a Jew from the camp. We could recognize him from afar because of his grey tattered clothes, through which his knees and elbows poked out sharply with each of his strange jumps. But he was running through the open field, not crouching nor searching for cover, and yes, he called out something and waved with his arms.

"We are free! The Russians, they are in Boryslaw!"

He must have gone crazy was my first thought. But his words did not seem that odd to me because the war racket had died down a short while ago. Izik tried to catch him, when he reached the woods. The man yelled and cried, jumped up and down:

"It's over, it's over... !"

Already he stumbled on into the forest. I understood his words, but the meaning did not sink in. I only thought of food: if it is true that the Russians are in Boryslaw, it should be possible to go into town in broad daylight and find something edible somewhere. Slightly uncertain I followed Izik, who suddenly had become very excited. We hesitated for a moment, before stepping out of the bushes onto the open road. And then we heard it, before we saw it: a Russian tank came round the curve making a deafening noise, followed by a long column of more tanks and vehicles.

Could we believe our eyes? Were we free? Instead of rejoicing, or shouting or dancing, Izik and I stood there silent as statues and stared at the Russian soldiers, as if they were creatures from another planet.

Behind the wide open gate in Koszary, the remainder of the Jewish Community of Boryslaw gathered one by one. There were just a few, two or three hundred – some of them skeletons with big startled eyes. Bronia and Gustek were alive. Uncle Aaron and Lola were there too. I asked them after Uncle Israel. Aaron only shook his head.

Of the last days I stayed in *Koszary* after the liberation, I only have a few, but very clear images that come to my mind. It was summery and warm, my stomach filled with bread. The Russians brought bread and canned meat to the camp. I had barely eaten, when I thought of bread again. I ate small portions, as I had seen somebody die in the camp, because he had hurriedly stuffed himself with large amounts of food.

I washed myself at the water-pump for a long time, was busy with the lice on my body. I wore a shirt from the Russian army now. It smelled wonderful. But a thought pricked me like a thorn. Why am I alive? Why not my mother, Lusia, Grandmother Pesla, Uncle Israel and all the others?

Izik summoned me to come outside the camp gate with a movement of his head. What did he want from me?

"The Russians are giving us 24 hours for revenge. Come on!"

Warchalowski was in Boryslaw. He had not disappeared with the Germans like other Polish and Ukrainian murderers. How often had I imagined killing the spy Vicek Warchalowski by my own hands! My mother would still be alive if he had not given the *Bunker* away. The wish for revenge had constantly been with me. Yes, it was a reason to keep on living. I gratefully followed Izik without a word. Izik had the pistol. The next day Warchalowski was found. He had hanged himself in his garden.

We asked and feverishly searched for Henek Art everywhere in Boryslaw. This criminal had been smarter than Warchalowski. He had bolted. We asked all the people, pressuring them. Somebody said he had left the country illegally and been seen in Vienna.

Another image from that time: solemn and silently Buroch, the son of the *Shamas*, emerged from his hiding place. A few men came over to us. We were asked to show them where we had buried Lonek Hoffmann, Mendzio Dörfler and the others murdered in the camp. The bodies should be exhumed and buried in the Jewish Cemetery. Buroch and I immediately helped dig up the dead in the garden of the *White House*. At least they were having a coffin out of rough wooden planks and a proper grave. We buried Lonek Hoffmann, Mendzio Dörfler, Fischel and Josek Habermann, Mendzio Burg, Red Shmil and a doctor and his wife, who had killed themselves in the camp. I reckon there were more dead too, whose names I cannot remember. Motel Hausmann, one of the survivors, spoke the *Kaddish*.

Exhumation of the bodies of Jews murdered in Boryslaw camp,
Chaim Segal is the first from the left in the front row. The fourth is Buroch,
the son of the *Shamas*. (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

From my friend Salek Linhard I learned that the Russian Army was recruiting young men to fight against Germany. I yearned to be a soldier. The Russian officer I reported to looked at me with sad eyes. I was still too young. Besides, I was simply too small to make myself older than I really was. Patting me on the shoulder, he advised me to get my strength back first. How I envied Salek, being able to fight against the Germans as a soldier with his 17 years. He moved to Germany with the Red Army and was among the liberators of Breslau. He returned to Boryslaw honoured with a medal for bravery. Salek was my big role model. Whenever anyone spoke of him, I proudly said:

"Salek Linhard, that is my friend!"

Chaim Segal and Salek Linhard after the war in Boryslaw
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

LIFE GOES ON

Everything seemed to be changing now: The light seemed brighter, the air clearer, the sun warmer. Ukrainians and Poles in town were friendly to the Jews now:

"Do you need any clothes? A shirt? Some trousers? Shoes? Here, take this bread. You know I always helped the Jews."

It did not take long before I left the camp. Maybe there was an apartment in town, where one could live better than in the lice infested *Koszary*. I walked down the Zielinskiego like a stranger. To met it seemed to date

back to a different age, when I had strolled around here without a worry and played with my friends. There was our house. Israel's Café was still on the door. Windows were smashed. Pesla's little house – a ruin without a roof. Our backyard. My mother's little plot, her parsley. There was a light in our apartment. I stood still for a while and watched the entrance door. Soon Mamus would open the window and call me. Luisa would laugh at my clothes. My father in the work-shop... .
The door was opened and a strange Ukrainian woman looked me up and down:

"Well, what do you want?"

She was not unfriendly, but she became uncertain, when I continued standing there without saying a word and staring past her at the strange shelves in our *foyer*. I wanted to tell her, that this was my apartment, but my mouth was dried up. I turned around and left.
The Attic! I quickly turned back again and softly went up the outside stairs. Lewenberg's apartment was empty, the wind swept through the wide open door and played with the remnants of a curtain. Our hiding place was locked, the hatch not visible. It had remained undiscovered all the time! I wanted to crawl in once more. Maybe something I could sell was hidden in there. There the bucket stood. Otherwise there was nothing to be found. Just as I wanted to crawl out, I saw something pale right before my eyes. It was paper, that was folded up small and jammed behind the rafter. That is how I found the photograph of my mother as a young woman with her brother Israel and the tiny picture of my sister Luisa.

The beautiful, gentle face of my mother suddenly brought back memories to me. Before my eyes her brown and blue striped dress appeared – tattered to *Schmattes* and worn by a strange woman. Why wasn't I crying? There was no feeling inside me, except hatred. I put the pictures inside my jacket and always carried them with me from then on.
A few days later I met Bronia's cousin, Giulek Pelz. He had survived in the forests and the camp, his family had been murdered. Nobody spoke about the dead. We did what was necessary: we got something to eat and looked for somewhere to live. We found a house in the centre of Boryslaw. Obviously it had been recently left by people in a hurry. Almost ten rooms were fully furnished. Jars with pickled fruit and vegetables were set up on shelves in the cellar, potatoes that were stored in another room, had scarcely started to sprout. Giulek and I moved into one room.

When I awoke in the white sheets in the mornings, I had difficulties to get my bearings and needed several minutes to understand where I was. Only

The pictures I found in the attic in original size. On the left is my mother as a young woman with her brother Israel. On the left is my sister Lusia
. (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

the lice persistently reminded me of the time in the camp. Even months after the war I still had them. It seemed as if my body produced the parasites under the skin again and again. I still remember my first warm bath in a wooden tub, the sense of well-being, closing my eyes and the sudden pang inside me at the same time – the thought, that forbade any feeling of wellbeing: Mamus, Lusia!
Was that me in the mirror? It was as if a stranger was looking at me: this big head, sitting on a much too thin neck, the deep-set eyes, the pointed chin and the cold, dismissive look. But after a few weeks, in which I regularly could eat and sleep, I gradually recognized the earlier Imek in the mirror again. The pale complexion and the dark rings under the eyes disappeared, the cheeks got fuller, the hair was no longer dull and fuzzy. Somehow even my eyes regarded me in a more friendly manner in the mirror.

A persistent restlessness filled me the better I physically felt. I was always very busy. Giulek and I now earned money by trading with various items. It was a time when people lacked lots of things. First we got a *Kromesla* for each, so both of us could carry two buckets. We knew salty springs in the woods near Jasienica Solna, about eight kilometres from Boryslaw. We filled our buckets with water and hefted them back to our kitchen. We boiled the water until only the salt was left. Bit by bit we improved our method of salt production. There were a few Jews among the Russian soldiers. If we needed anything, like paper for the salt bags, we went to them. Or we asked the Boryslaw merchants, who liked to demonstrate to the occupying forces

how helpful they were towards Jews. With the salt bags in our back-packs, we went to the market or from house to house. We were not satisfied until all was sold. This was my first self-earned money.
Our trade with candles was another business idea. Mineral wax could be scratched from the ground in many places in the woods. Candle wicks were available in the market. How could we produce a lot of candles at once? I sketched a mould on a piece of paper with 20 compartments next to each other. I went to a Polish tinsmith, who made the mould for me for little money. For hours we melted wax and poured it through a filter into the mould. The candles burned well. We made a good bargain. I dealt with all kinds of goods on the side. You had only to find out what was needed most of all. There was hardly anything sold in the shops. At the end of 1944 there was no yeast. The Christians needed it for their Christmas baking. A piece of yeast was traded like gold. I got hold of a large amount in Stryj in exchange for candles and salt. The Christians in Boryslaw gave me as much money as I wanted for it.

Through our friendship with the young Russian soldiers, we had the opportunity to jump up on their trucks and drive to distant villages with them, where we did business. The Russians wanted vodka, so we got them vodka. This trade brought more money than I thought. Of course we tried the schnapps, too, squatted together with a gang of boys, who had survived the war, got drunk, sang and laughed. In such a party mood, we decided to go to a photographer and have our picture taken.
How did I feel at that time? I had money and lots of friends, who liked me. I was independent and proud, felt like a hero. Everything was fine, if only the images from the past had not appeared to me in my dreams night after night.
Our house gradually filled with people. Uncle Aaron and Lola made themselves at home in one of the big rooms. Aaron worked in his old job. He wallpapered and renovated rooms for the Russians. Then, one day Uncle Shymek returned from Russia in a tall fur hat. He had already heard in Russia from refugees from Drohobycz that his whole family had been wiped out. He set up a small butcher shop in one of the upstairs rooms. The Russian soldiers helped him get the necessary tools and a heavy wooden table. I still see him before me, when he returned from a village one day with a cow on a short rope. The animal was heaved and pushed up the stairs with our united forces and then slaughtered. There was a deep space in the cellar with ice-blocks stored in it. This is where we were able to keep the meat. Now all the residents of the house had enough meat to eat for two weeks.

Boryslaw 1945, From left: Emanuel Szrek, surviver of Mauthausen, Chaim/Imek Segal, Dzimek/Josef Hecht, surviver of Mauthausen, Tolek Ziller (he escaped from Mauthausen before he could be taken to Auschwitz), Giulek/Julian Pelz, surviver of Boryslaw, (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Memorial service at the mass graves near the slaughterhouse in Boryslaw in spring 1945 (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

In the spring of 1945, after the last frost, the remaining Jews of Boryslaw set up a monument with an inscription, behind the slaughterhouse. It was built from cobble stones and looked like the chimney of a crematorium. Big slabs of concrete were poured over the seven mass graves to protect the mortal remains of 10.000 dead from wild animals. As far as I remember part of the money was donated by the JOINT, a Jewish Aid Association. Further donations had to be collected. I helped the organisation committee going from house to house for days with other survivors in Boryslaw.

It had only been one year since I had survived the execution. Since then I had not been back to the slaughterhouse. When the concrete slabs were poured and the memorial had been erected, the remaining Jews from Boryslaw came together one last time before they scattered in all directions on this earth. There they stood, lost in their infinite sorrow, some of them still in their miserable rags. They wept for their loved ones, who lay here under the ground. This is the place where I had stood on the plank over the mass grave. I also should have lain buried here under this concrete with my mother and Aunt Zosia. It was unreal, like a dream, that I was standing here in the spring sunshine among the living.

El malej Rachamim, schochen baMromim,
hamze Menuchah nechonah...

G'd full of mercy, enthroned in the heavenly heights,
They should find a well-deserved resting place
under the wings of Thy presence,
In the heights of the righteous and holy,
radiant as the brightness of the sky,
all the souls...

At last the melody of the prayer for the dead brought a stream of tears to my eyes.

"I want you to live. One of us must remain!"

I clearly heard my mother's voice again. I had not understood her last wish until now. She took the burden off me to have survived. She named me Chaim. Life.

THE END

EPILOGUE – MY POST-WAR STORY

This is where the story about my survival ends. It was still a long and stony path until I reached an independent and happy life. I would like to tell the most important memories just after the end of the war as follows:
After the war had ended, the door of my room opened one evening – and there was my father. We stood there silently one moment. Then we lay in each other's arms. Again and again he looked at me, shook his head and hugged me. We sat together on my bed. I told him about Mamus and Lusia in fragments. It was the only time we talked about them. Why didn't he ask more questions? He did not want to know details. So I did not tell anything more – I waited. Nobody wanted to look back. Everything was covered up by the daily routine and the efforts to earn a living. We did not want to have our old house back any longer. Nobody wanted to live with the painful memories. We took it for granted that the new house was our possession.

Shortly afterwards, a woman arrived from Russia. My father picked her up at the station. She was called Maria. Father said Maria was his new wife. She was pregnant. Maria was very friendly to me. All of this confused me. Of course I was glad that my father was back with me. But: how could he have a new wife in Russia without knowing if his family had survived? Without looking at me, he answered shortly that somebody in Russia had told him that all the Jews in Boryslaw had been killed. How could he have been sure that this news was true? These questions tormented me all the more, because I could not speak to my father about it any more. They married on the 10th of October in Boryslaw – it was a short formal ceremony without a wedding celebration.

I avoided the increasing tension between my father and myself as much as possible. I was my own boss and not accustomed to being ordered around by him. At first I did not say a word to it. He still saw the little boy in me that he had left behind in 1941.

Meanwhile, I went back to school. Almost four years of education had to be made up for. How strange, suddenly sitting together with a bunch of Jewish boys and girls among the younger Ukrainians and Poles again. Their glances betrayed that their attitude towards us had hardly changed. The omnipresence of the Russian Army protected us. If someone dared attack or mob me – they would be badly treated. I was prepared.

School was no trouble for me. At the same time I was investing in my business. One day I gave my father a gift. I can still see his face before me today – surprise, disbelief and pride when he unwrapped the paper: it was a golden watch. Maybe he realized now that I was not a small child anymore.

My father got hold of a sewing machine and tools and set up a work-shop in our house. He sewed slippers. Soon, two Polish employees helped him.
Months later Uncle Rubin Gartenberg turned up and lived with us for a while. He had turned into a hard, bitter man. He returned to us, after having left the Russian Army at the end of the war. I burnt his coat in the yard. Uncle Rubin was eaten up by billions of lice – not one part of his body had been spared.
One day, we also saw the husband of our murdered Aunt Alta Rosenberg from Drohobycz again. He did not stay with us for long. He found a new wife and went to Israel.

WALDENBURG – HOFGEISMAR – ISRAEL

News were spreading: the Russians were driving the *Volksdeutschen* out of Silesia. Now they were very interested in new settlers for these areas. Fully furnished, beautiful houses were empty and waiting for us. Soon, a real run began. Everybody wanted to be the first to choose the best house in Silesia. My father did not hesitate for long and registered us. I said good-bye to my friends in Boryslaw. All of them wanted to leave Poland. Some wanted to go to Israel, others dreamed of America. Gustek and Bronia moved to Gleiwitz. There Gustek worked in a coal-mine. Both their sons were born in Gleiwitz.

To my great joy Izik Kudysz wanted to go to Silesia as well. Whenever we met we always talked about Henek Art. We had not yet given up finding him. Then the news came that we could move to Waldenburg with a few other families and we packed up as much as possible. Our new house was in the centre of town and was beyond our expectations. It was richly furnished with dark, heavy oak furniture. I looked into all the rooms from the cellar up to the attic. Everything was spanking clean. We were amazed that the family had even left their silverware. I opened the heavy garage door. There stood a Mercedes manufactured in 1936. The colour showed that it had been a military vehicle. And when I found a long black leather coat in the wardrobe, I realized that a high ranking SS-officer must have

Chaim Segal and Izik Kudysz in 1945 (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

lived here with his family and left in a hurry to get to the West, before the Russians arrived. I wanted to sell this coat, but nobody wanted to have it – except for a shoemaker. He cut it up and made ladies' boots out of it.

The population in Waldenburg was very friendly as long as the Russian Army was there. Their headquarters were in Reichenbach, a neighbouring town. The few *Volksdeutschen* that still lived in town, were intimidated and very helpful. But soon one spoke of an anti-Semitic movement and riots in Poland again. It was starting once more. I was not surprised. I stayed alert. I felt confident that nothing would happen to me.

On the 4th of July 1946, Polish anti-Semites instigated a pogrom in Kielce against the Jews. 41 Jews were murdered and 80 injured. Now, we did not want to stay one day longer. My father tried to contact the *Brichah,* a Jewish underground organisation, that helped Jews get to Israel. The borders were closed, so we had to illegally get out of Poland. Everything happened very quickly. Together with several other families, we paid a guide, who knew the way across the green border to Czechoslovakia. Everyone was only allowed to carry one piece of luggage. But Maria, whose pregnancy was well

advanced by now, insisted on taking an additional case with baby clothes. She had to have a real fight with the guide, who accused her of jeopardizing the entire group through this case. She finally forced it through and dragged the case herself. We managed to escape without incidents. We had the impression that the border was not well guarded or the guards looked the other way with the consent of the Polish government. They wanted to get rid of their 'Jewish problem' in Poland this way. In Bratislava 500 to 600 Jewish refugees were already waiting to continue their journey. There were Jews from Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia who were being looked after by the Jewish Aid Organisation, the JOINT. We were put up in barracks and were not allowed to leave the camp. But I had a few *Kronen* in my pocket and together with my friend Joshua Stern, we wanted to see if there was anything nice to buy in town.
We promptly ran into the arms of a police patrol. Joshua could escape. Because I could not identify myself, I was sitting in the police station a short while later. They announced that they would deport me to Poland. The officers gave me something to eat and drink. Obviously they had not quite agreed on how to get rid of me. After three days, they left the door open and went outside to smoke cigarettes. So I walked out and escaped. Joshua had not told anybody about my bad luck because he had a guilty conscience himself.

A few days later, it was our turn to get on the train to Austria. It took us to Vienna where we were taken to the Rothschild Hospital. Hundreds of refugees were crowded into the former hospital that had been partially destroyed by bombs. More and more people were arriving. The Jewish aid organisations did what they could, but it was chaos. Desperate people wandered around asking for relatives. The ill and exhausted had to be seen to. Nowhere was room left for us there. So we quickly found ourselves on a train again, supplied with water, bread and canned food as provisions. We were sent to Bindermichl, a camp for displaced persons near Linz. We spent weeks in the huge apartment blocks in Linz, doing what everyone of the 2.500 camp inhabitants did – waiting. Even more people arrived here. One day Izik Kudysz stood in front of me. I was beside myself with joy. We immediately started our investigation about Henek Art. Although I did not really believe any more that we would find him, we asked everyone who came from Boryslaw or Drohobycz. It was our last chance to find him. And we were not the only ones looking for him. One lunchtime a man came to me, when I was just eating my soup:

"I have heard that you are looking for Henek Art. He was seen here a few days ago and left for Vienna."

The blood shot to my head. I ran to Izik. We drove to Vienna in an American jeep the same day. We asked at the Rothschild Hospital and the offices for exit permits. Numerous times Izik and I described what Henek Art looked like. Had he changed his name? Had he applied for departure? One man knew that he had escaped to Brazil under a false name. We thought him capable of this, and we were pretty sure that he had enough money for bribes. On the other hand he may have laid a false trail on purpose and be hiding somewhere in Austria. The hunt was over. We had done what we could. When I fell in love with a girl in the camp, I managed to banish Henek Art from my thoughts.

The twins Szoszana and Miriam Allerhand with Chaim Segal in Ziegenhain
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Szoszana Allerhand had survived in Krakow disguised as a Polish maid, She had come to Bindermichl with her twin sister and her father shortly before us. However, we were soon separated again. The camp was so overcrowded that the refugees were taken to other DP camps in groups. A rail transport took us to Germany, the country of our enemies. The destination was a camp for displaced persons in the American zone in northern Hesse. Unfortunately Szoszana and I were sent to different camps. We came to Hofgeismar. My girlfriend and her family were sent to Ziegenhain. When they emigrated via Italy to Israel, we still wrote letters for a short time, but then lost track of each other.

Chaim Segal (first on the left, middle row) attending an electrotechnical course in Hofgeismar (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

The ORT, a Jewish educational organisation, offered vocational courses in Hofgeismar. One could, for example, take a course as a mason or car mechanic. I finished a course as an electrical technician. An ORT-diploma was a kind of 'pass to freedom', which increased the chances obtaining an entry permit for America or Canada. For many it was the only document by which one's identity could be proved.
No matter how short the stay in Hofgeismar was, in my memory it is a time in which I could catch up with a bit of my lost youth. The Gordonia

organized lectures and dances. There were performances on stage in the large sports hall belonging to the former barracks. One evening I performed as a solo singer in front of a full audience. I sang a song I had composed and written by myself, however, not with my high voice any more. It was the *Schokoladenlied* (the Chocolate-Song), a very sad song that made the audience cry. In Hofgeismar I began making plans for my future again.
In September my sister was born in an auxiliary hospital in the DP camp Hofgeismar. She was named Sara after my murdered sister Sara/Lusia. It was a miracle that Maria and the child survived the birth: the German midwife had 'forgotten' her. Because it was the weekend, she had left Maria on her own in the hospital and locked her in. My father was overjoyed when Maria and the child were with him at last. A baby – I loved this little creature. But I was not happy. My restlessness stayed. I could not find my place in this family.

In May 1947, we left Hofgeismar. Maria refused to emigrate to Israel. She felt excluded as a non-Jewish woman. My father, who was a Communist Party member by now, was convinced that a new era was dawning in Poland. He wanted to be there when a new socialist and just country was established. We discussed it – I was absolutely against returning to Poland.

Illegal training course ran by Hagana in Waldenburg,
From left: Kuba/Jakob Bleiberg, Chaim Segal, Izik Stern and Leon Morgenstern
(Photo archives Chaim Segal)

Chaim Segal aged 18 years (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

My father could not be convinced that Jews would never be safe there. Finally I complied and we went back to Waldenburg. I was preoccupied with the thought of going to Israel. Secretly I contacted the *Hagana,* which held illegal training courses in Waldenburg to recruit soldiers for Israel. Then I obtained a place at the Polytechnic in Breslau, did my diploma as an electrical engineer and returned to Waldenburg.

Living together with my father and Maria gradually became unbearable for me. I wanted to leave Waldenburg as quickly as possible. People waited an eternity for an official exit permit. Uncle Shymek was sympathetic towards me. He understood my situation and gave me the money to cross the green border out of Poland with the *Brichah* illegaly. In the Italian port of Trani, hundreds of Jews were waiting to cross over to Israel. The name of the

ship could not have fitted better: it was called *Asma 'UT* – Independence. That was exactly what I wished for my own future, when I was on deck of the ship looking out to sea.
In Israel we new emigrants lived in barracks. I took any job offered – as an orange picker, in agriculture and as a chauffeur. I joined the army for three years. This is where I met my future wife Bella. It was a turning point in my life. For the first time I was able to talk about my story and my nightmares.
After I left the army, I began working as an electrical engineer and building up my own business. I was ambitious. My greatest wish since childhood was to build houses. When I received the offer to work for a building company, I initially started out as their electronic technician. On the side, in this company I learned everything an architect or a structural engineer has to know and be able to do. Later I began to work independently and successfully as a builder of houses. Back then nobody asked for the corresponding diploma. All that mattered was that you did a good job.

In 1953 I was a witness in the Nazi crime trial against Hildebrand in Bremen. A few years later I went to Stuttgart to testify as a witness against the *SS-Unterscharführer* (SS-Sergeant) Schönbach. I was troubled by the memories, that came back to me again. I was appalled by the light sentences: Hildebrand received eight years in prison, Schönbach was acquitted. However, a few years later, Hildebrand was sentenced to life in prison in another trial. During the court hearing in Stuttgart, I had the feeling that I was standing in the dock myself, because they tried to prove discrepancies of mine. I noticed a translator twisting my words around in German in favour of the accused Schönbach. From then on I spoke only German in court.
In 1966 I emigrated from Israel to Canada and established a living as a building constructor. I learned the specialized commercial English for my field within three months. My childhood wish came true: with enthusiasm and increasing success I built new houses, housing complexes and commercial buildings in Canada and abroad. I feel grateful that I am alive and have been allowed to have many wonderful experiences in my life. My wife and I have three wonderful children, ten grandchildren and three great grand-children. The Segal family was not wiped out.
My sister Lucja came to Canada in 1969. The younger sister Natasha, who was born in Waldenburg in 1953, died in 1973. A few years later my father and Maria could also emigrate; they lived near our place in Toronto.

Uncle Aaron and Lola were the first to leave Poland after the war. Lola had relatives in the USA and obtained an affidavit, a statement, that they would

Purim in Waldenburg, From left: Uncle Aaron, Uncle Shymek, Ephraim Bucher, the cousin of his wife Sonja (with the Megilla), Sonja with Varda and Lola, Aaron's wife (Photo archives Varda Stieglitz)

finance and support them until they had built a life of their own. Via Belgium they reached America. There Rochele, their daughter, was born. She was given the name of the murdered Rachel/Ruchcia, who had been Lusia's dearest friend. For the rest of her life, Lola cried when she thought of the girl, who was shot in her place at the slaughterhouse in Boryslaw.

Uncle Shymek and his second wife Sonja wanted to stay in Poland. They lived in Waldenburg. Sonja was a survivor of Rymanow. Their daughter Varda was born in 1946 and a few years later their son Izi. Shymek had a butcher shop in his new house, so nice as he never had seen before. As a member of the cooperative *Sgoda,* he was soon well established. His special sausages made him famous again. The family was doing so well that they could even hire a German nursemaid, Marianna.
In 1949, what I had predicted came true: us Jews could not live safely in Poland. I would like to describe this episode in detail: Shymek had just closed the shop door one evening. Then a Pole came up to him. He wanted to buy some sausage. Uncle Shymek pointed to the sign on the door: 'Closed'. He told him it was too late, everything had already been cleaned

up. He should come back the next day for fresh sausages. The man immediately pulled a knife out of his pocket and went for Shymek. There was a scrap and my Uncle, as the stronger one, could wrest the knife from the man's hand. Now the Pole thrust his arms up in the air and ran down the street screaming in all directions that a Jew wanted to murder a Pole! It was incredible: in less than five minutes about 50 to 60 Poles had gathered outside Shymek's shop, as if they had already been waiting for an opportunity like this. If the police and a few Russian soldiers had not turned up, they would have killed Shymek. Two days later he was on a train to the West with Sonja and the children. They emigrated to the USA.

Uncle Akiva Schiff in Israel at his wedding with his second wife Ruth, a surviver of Auschwitz (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

My Uncle Akiva Schiff went to Palestine in 1942. He mourned the loss of his wife Hava and the children, Beni and Hawa. Ruth, his second wife, came from Budapest. She was a widow and a survivor of Auschwitz. They were a loving couple, but their marriage remained childless. They were absolutely delighted with my first two children, Amalia and Roy.

Also, Bronia and Gustek Halpern had to flee from the flaring anti-Semitism in 1950. They began a new life in Israel. Today they call

themselves Halmut. For 37 years Gustek worked in an ammunitions factory and Bronia was an accountant. Today they are retired. They live in Tel Aviv, have two sons, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Even if we live far apart, we are in close and warm contact.

My friend Izik Kudysz reached Israel illegally by the help of the *Brichah*. He continued working as a painter and decorator. He started a family and had two children. We last saw each other for the last time when I was still living in Israel. Izik Kudysz, my great friend, was a real hero. He died about ten years ago.

Salek Linhard emigrated to Israel. He was the chief of police in the city of Ashdot. He is now retired. We still keep in touch and call each other on the phone.

My friend Buroch, the son of the *Shamas*, went to America. Unfortunately I can not remember his surname. I heard he became a well-known Rabbi in New York.

Director Beitz and his wife Else were honoured for their courageous rescue of Jews in Boryslaw. Their names are included in 'The Righteous of the Nations' in the Yad Vashem Memorial.

The Jewish cemetery in Boryslaw, with its ancient tomb stones and the graves of my ancestors, does not exist any longer. It was used as a training area by the Soviet Army in the fifties. The Russian soldiers used the tomb stones as targets and shot them to pieces, until nothing was left. Later on the whole area was levelled and a warehouse was built on the site. Nowadays, only a plaque refers to it having once been a cemetery.
The memorial at the slaughterhouse still stands. But the big concrete slabs were also shot to pieces by the Russian soldiers. Grass and shrubs grew there as time passed. Today you can not find them anymore. The Ukrainian inscription on the memorial reads:

Everyone who passes by, please stand still.
We ask you to bow low
in memory of the innocent people,
who were shot and buried in this place
in the years of 1940 until 1944
by the barbarians of the 20th century, the Nazis.
The Memorial Group

1979, Memorial near the mass graves in Boryslaw, From left: Emanuel Szrek, Chaim Segal and Jakov Bander (Photo archives Chaim Segal)

EPILOGUE

Chaim had not told me that he had been hospitalized a few days before my arrival in Toronto. He left the hospital at his own risk. He was not well, but he really wanted our meeting in summer of 2011 to take place. This trip had been planned for a long time. We have known each other since January 2010. During our weekly phone calls I asked him questions; he told me his story. Or piece by piece I read the text I had written and he commented and added things – all of this in English and German or both languages mixed up. Again and time again, Chaim broke down due to the burden of memories, picked up courage again and continued to tell his story.

Lucja Segal Seiden, his sister, had brought us together. She was born in the camp for Jewish displaced persons in Hofgeismar in 1946 and had sent a request to Germany at the same time as I was doing research about the camp. An extensive exchange of emails began. This is how I learned of her brother Chaim, who as a child and by miracle had survived the extinction of the Jewish community of his hometown Boryslaw in former Poland by the German *Einsatztruppen*. He had come to Hofgeismar after the war as a 17-year-old. The story took a hold of me – his mother's plea, to tell the world what had happened, did not go unheard. I wanted to write a book about it, although I had never done anything like this before. Chaim agreed right away. I had the feeling of only giving the impulse for the realization of his long-cherished wish.

I started off by researching the history of Boryslaw, a city of 50000 inhabitants, and the fate of the 14000 Jewish inhabitants in WWII. I examined the records of the post-war court trials of Nazi criminals. I got more and more involved with the story of the child Chaim. I was increasingly fascinated by his will to live and his abilities – his development from a suffering, doomed child into a fighter.
The Holocaust in Chaim's hometown Boryslaw is exemplary for the method of the German *Einsatztruppen* and their Ukrainian and Polish helpers in former Galizia – and the homicide of hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews between 1941 and 1944. It is a chapter in history that deserves more acknowledgement in the process of coming to terms with and accounting for the Holocaust.

I was welcomed with great warmth by Chaim and his wife Bella Toronto – they did not treat me like a guest, but like a member of the family. Lucja, Chaim's sister, took a lot of time to show me around the fascinating city,

where many different cultures actually peacefully live together. Chaim and Bella took me on an unforgettable trip to the broad, placid Lake Ontario. Thanks to Bella's cooking I was introduced to the delicious Polish-Jewish cuisine. On the first evening, after a delicious chicken broth with *Kreplach*, Chaim asked me questions that had obviously been on his mind: Why are you doing all this? Why are you giving your time for this book? Why do you travel to Ludwigsburg to investigate the records of the Nazi war trials? You are reading all these books about the history of Galicia and Boryslaw. Sometimes I could recall certain events because of this. Why? Is it heaven that sent you or is it my mother herself, who sent you from up there?
Why? I often asked myself these questions, too.
My parent's generation grew up in the National Socialist system in the twenties and the thirties of the last century. How would I have behaved as a young person in this time when exclusion, persecution and deportation of people became social normality? Would I not have been swept along by the "movement" as well, if I had been born in this era? A feeling of responsibility is the closest answer to "why", of having to stay alert and to keep the memories of the past alive for the next generations.
I feel deep gratitude towards Chaim, for the trust he had in me, that he let me help save the story of this child and the names of those murdered from being forgotten.

I would like to thank all those who helped me to complete this book:
Bronia and Gustek Halmut made detailed records. They were older than Chaim back then and could give me more detailed accounts, for example about the conditions as forced labourers and about the map of Boryslaw. They helped me although it was very painful for them to project their thoughts back into these terrible times.
Lev Popel from Boryslaw spared no effort to get further historical and also contemporary photographs of Boryslaw for me.
The Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Claudia Erdheim, Roman Tarnavskyy, Yaroslav Lavryk, Oleg Mykulych and Robert Borzecki from the Museum of Minerals in Klodzku contributed photographs from the old, extinct Boryslaw. Varda Stieglitz added a picture from little Devora to this book.

Thank you to Eirian Sahinkaya for her empathetic English translation.
Many thanks to Lisa Fast for proofreading the English text.

Julia Drinnenberg

GLOSSARY

Affidavit – Affirmation in lieu of an oath

Anders-Army – Army, set up in 1941 by Commander Wladyslaw Anders with Poles deported to Russia after the Soviet Union had joined the war

Appell – Roll call

Bambetel – Small chest for clothes with a padded seat

Brichah – Jewish underground organisation 1944 – 1948 that organized escapes for Jews from Eastern Europe to Palestine

Challa – Braided yeast bun

Chevreman – Someone who knows what he wants

Chevra Kaddisha – Funeral organisation belonging to the Jewish Community

Chazan – Cantor and prayer leader in the Synagogue

Einsatztruppen – special German strike force dedicated to liquidate the Jews in the occupied countries

Gefilte Fish – Traditional Jewish dish. Originally it is a filling of minced and spiced fish, that is put into the skin of the fish. Today often only the filling is made into fish balls.

Hagana – Jewish paramilitary organization

Haggadah – A frequently lavishly illustrated text about the flight of the Jews from Egypt. This book is one of those things on the table on *Seder* evening at the beginning of Passover.

Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement, the highest and most solemn day for the Jews

Kaddish – Prayer for the sanctification of the divine name, which is spoken at the grave of the deceased

Kaskiet – Round cap with a brim made of cloth with a button on the top

Kosher – Food, objects and actions that conform with the Jewish dietary laws are kosher.

Kreplach – Filled dumplings

Kromesla – A curved bar to carry one weight on each side

Matzo – Unleavened bread that the Jews eat at Passover

Pejes – Side locks

Passover – Festival commemorating the Jew's flight from Egypt

Schmattes – Rags

Seder evening – The first evening at the beginning of the Passover festival

Shamas – Servant at the Synagogue

Talmud Torah school – Confessional Jewish school

Tscholent – Stew, which is brought to the boil on Friday before the Sabbath begins and kept simmering on slow heat until ready for the Sabbath

Zmywak – Wash kitchen, an utility room for the preparation of vegetables

ABBREVIATIONS

JOINT – American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

NKWD – Secret police organisation in the Soviet Union

ORT – Jewish organisation for education and vocational training

UNRRA – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

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(http://www.its-arolsen.org/de/startseite/index.html)

Map of Boryslaw 1932: Copyright: Roman Tarnavskyy

1. The labour camp *Koszary*
2. The house of the *Schutzpolizei*
3. The barracks of the mounted police
4. The house of the Ukrainian militia
5. Mass grave in the forest of Tustanovice
6. Mass grave in the forest of Schodnica
7. Mass graves near the slaughterhouse
8. The Talmud Tora School
9. The schools
10. The electrical power plant
11. The slaughterhouse
12. The Cinema Colosseum
13. The Ghetto Boryslaw
14. The Ghetto Wolanka
15. The *Bunker* in the forest
16. The Jewish cemetery
17. The station of Boryslaw
18. The house of the Herzog family (Bronia's family)
19. The house of the Halpern family (Gustek's family)
20. The house of Chaim's family

CONTENTS

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