

A Memoir of Michael Nosanchuk

Notebook Given To Michael Rimer of Israel,
Translated from Yiddish to English September 2001:

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When the Soviets first took power (in Polesia, in 1939), they initially allowed the Jews to work and run their own businesses. Later, they slowly began to liquidate the big factories and the larger stores. It took some time, but one evening, a few Soviet officials came into our (Nosanchuk's grain) mill (in Rubel).

When I saw them, my heart sank. I knew the day would eventually come when I would have to give over the mill. Something poked in my heart. Not even asking if our mill grinded straw or corn, one of the officials shouted: "Stop the machine!" He had some corn and asked us to grind it. The machinist stopped the machine. "Where is your boss?" the official asked. I replied that I was the owner. They then took out a piece of paper and read: "From this moment on, the mill belongs to the Soviet Union."

I had to give everything over to them; the corn, the wheat and the machines. I no longer had any rights to own them. The machines now belonged to the government. I gave them everything. I even handed over my keys. One of the officials went over to (my nephew) Shmoyel and proceeded to search his pockets. When they were not looking, I took the money out of my pocket and gave it to our forman. When they searched me, they found nothing.

It took a few hours for them to write everything down. After I signed all the papers, the officials came home with me. (My sister) Gonia had already heard what had happened. She was very upset. They looked at us smiling and asked if we had sold everything. (Gonia was in the process of moving from Rubel to Stolin). Then they told us not to worry and we should be happy to be alive.

Meanwhile, they began searching our home, opening up all the cupboards. Gonia joked that she was embarrassed our cupboards were empty. Her children were scared and (the youngest) Akivaleh kept asking his mother: "What are they looking for?"

(Gonia's late husband), my brother-in-law Berl, had a few good luck charms. The officials thought they were worth a lot of money.

These bureaucrats brought a peasant named Pavel (Zinovchik) with them. They told this peasant that from that day on he would be our boss. They asked us to stay on as workers, weighers, to help them run the mill. They fired Shmoyel and told me that I could stay and help Pavel run the mill.

Pavel took the key and tried to turn it. He then began to cry and said: "How did I become the manager of your mill?" I calmed him and explained that it was not his fault and that we had no choice. The next morning the whole village knew what had happened. People passed me by in the streets and shook their heads in disbelief. Women were wiping their tears with their aprons. Others made fun of our new manager and called out: "Hey boss!" And some even called him (my father's name) "Morduk" (Mordechai).

Our new manager knew nothing about running a mill. I just remained silent, and tried not to get involved.

Pavel was not a foolish man. He understood that he had to be good to me. He told me from the start that I should do what I want, as long as it is good. I began to work and everything went as normal. Gonia received her portion (of the grain) as well. Pavel made sure that Gonia and the children were well looked after. He made sure they lacked nothing. *(A widow with seven children, Gonia's late husband Beryl was formerly a co-owner of the mill with the Mordechai Nosanchuk family).*

I was able to go home when I wanted. We lived very peacefully together with Pavel until the devil sent us a new boss; A miserable Jew.

When this character learned I had been the previous owner he let me go. Now, without work, I had nothing more to do in Rubleh. Gonia suggested that we should all return to Stolin. So one morning, we sold our bit of poverty and moved back to Stolin. I immediately began to look for work. All of my friends had big positions as managers, but I couldn't find a job. My pedigree as a son of Mordechai (a successful businessman) was not impressive (to the Communists).

When my brother Maishel couldn't find a job for the same reason, he went to Pinsk and found work there. He took a job organizing workers and soon became the director of seven factories. I had no luck in Stolin. When I couldn't find work, I decided to move to (David) Horodok. In Horodok I met an acquaintance, who told me about some work back in Rubleh. This job consisted of preparing and carrying wood from the forest.

Gonia got settled (in Stolin, her oldest daughter) Chaiyeh got a job as a teacher and the rest of the children went to school. Gonia had two militia men from the NKVD who used to eat at her home, and in return, they used to bring her provisions. (Her son) Shmoyel found a job in Pinsk and every month sent a few hundred rubles home. Our brother Maishel and our father helped her out. The children and Gonia lacked nothing.

The authorities ordered us to accommodate in our living room, a family from Siberia, a couple with a few children. We lived very well with them. In order not to bother us, especially mother's kosher kitchen, my father built them an oven of their own. This made them very happy. My father was feeling good. He no longer had to worry about the mill. We lived for each day. Our parents were happy that Maishel and I were both working.

April 2nd 1941

In the evening, I came home, pulled off my boots and lay down to rest. In walked a sergeant holding papers in his hands and smiling. I immediately understood that something was about to happen. He told me I should grab something to eat and when I finished he would show me something. I took the paper from his hand. I was being called to meet with the Commission on the 13th of April. I was being drafted.

Truthfully said, I was happy. Going into the forest day after day was getting to me. One of my tasks had been to run from house to house asking people to go to work. This work paid very little and

nobody wanted to come out to work. I often had to carry all the wood by myself. Five thousand metres of wood had to be laid out every month, and I was very tired. The Gentiles didn't go to work for the money. If they did come, it was to do me a favour. If I had the choice between work or army, I would have chosen the army, but I didn't believe they would take me into the military since I was the son of a well-to-do father and the manager of the mill - that was not an important occupation (of interest to the army).

When I stood in front of the Commission my heart pounded when they asked me what my occupation was. I told them the truth. I explained that I worked for my father at the mill. I omitted the fact that the mill was registered under my name. Nobody knew. After the interview I received a red card which meant all was good. I had two days to appear with my unit in (David) Horodok. With the red card in my hand, I ran to the (forestry) director and transferred the work related to the wood job to him.

I was ready to go to who knew where? Nobody knew. All I knew was that I wanted to get home quickly to be with my parents and family for the first Passover Seder. At the Seder I didn't tell my parents anything about the army. My sister-in-law Frumkeh was there with the children. For the first time, (her husband), my brother Maishel was not at home for the Passover Seder.

My sister Gonia came with the children. She told us how in Stolin people were being called up to the army. There was even talk of war. I wanted to see my friends, and tell them my news. I went to Lasien - (*Zvi is the name correct?*) my last love. I talked with my guys (friends) that we'll meet late in the evening. When I said to Lasien that I was drafted in the army, at first, she didn't believe me. When I showed her the red paper, she changed her mood and started laughing. "You! A soldier? You are kidding!"

Then she started crying. My friends started to look for me. We met, we sat and talked all night about many things. Was there really going to be a war? Or were they just going to "break a few bones?"

I didn't sleep very much that night. I went to my sister Gonia and told her the secret. They started to pack up some food. My mother was upset. I hadn't told them the night before. Had she known earlier, she could have prepared more food. Chaiyeh, my sister Gonia's eldest daughter, sat that whole day of Passover and sewed me a backpack. All the neighbours came by. The house was packed.

Father sat quietly, with tears flowing from his eyes. My friends waited for me outside the house to accompany me to the train. Around two o'clock I said good-bye to my father. He was too weak to walk with us. He sat on the porch with tears in his eyes. My mother, Frumkeh and Gonia accompanied me part way. When I said good-bye, I used all my strength not to cry. Among my friends, the guys were laughing and the girls were wiping away tears. That is how I left Stolin on April 14th, 1941.

On the Parachod (steamboat), I felt torn to pieces. Tearing myself away from friends and family was difficult. I told myself it would not be long before we would be together again. The place where I had to meet my unit in Horodok was packed. On that same day five hundred soldiers were being mobilized. The city was full of people with huge packs, about five pud (measure of weight), packed with bread

and sala (pig fat). Beside every pack was a recruit with his family sitting and eating sala and bread. Everywhere you looked mothers were crying.

The boys were being called up one after the other. When all the paper work was done they asked the families to leave. It became very noisy with the screams and cries of parting. The orchestra began to play and we had to march to the music. The streets were packed with people. Yet at that moment I felt very sad and lonely as my close friends and family were not with me.

We walked quietly. A mother broke into our line to kiss her son while bitterly weeping. I never imagined this would take place. Everyone was feeling something. There was no war. This was much more emotional than it should have been.

We began to travel in the direction of Pinsk, toward Yanoveh. And within a few minutes we were far from town - far from our loved ones, but nobody knew where we were going. When we arrived in Lahkveh we were told to sit in wagons. Meanwhile the station was empty. I lay down, put my head on my backpack, and took a nap. Then, I wrote a post-card home. I was with two Gentile boys that I knew from Rubleh. They stayed by me the whole time. My backpack, compared to theirs, looked empty. There was even a little guy whose backpack weighed about ten kilos. While we waited for the train they all went into their bags and once again began to stuff their faces with bread and sala. At dawn a group of 40 men arrived. Once again we lay on the floor and slept. They woke us at every station, where more men boarded the train. Each time, we heard the crying voices of mothers saying good-bye to their sons.

In Yanoveh we were held up for a few hours. We were able to go out of the train and look around. I couldn't believe my eyes! My brother Maishel was going from (train) car to car looking for familiar faces. He had a feeling he would find someone he knew. We fell into each other's arms and Maishel began to cry. "For whom did you leave your parents? Woe is me! What will become of our parents?"

My brother gave me a few hundred rubels in case I would need the money. He knew we were headed toward Kobrin. "Be a 'mentsch' and try to come home." We said good-bye and the train pulled out of the station. My brother ran after the train weeping bitterly.

Approximately five kilometres from Kobrin we had to build an army camp for about six thousand men and an airfield. At first they divided us into a battalion and later into smaller companies. They gave us things and put us to work building barracks. We were to build barracks until the first of May. We had to march six kilometres back and forth daily.

May 1st was the official opening of the new barracks. That evening, they showed films and brought in actors to entertain. We worked day and night. When the airfield was almost ready, the word was that we would be soon going home. I wrote home three times a week. I also received letters quite often. By this time, a lot of my friends were mobilized. Some were sent to Brisk, near the German border.

Saturday night, June 21st 1941, I received a letter from my friend Nissel Malotchnik. He wrote: "Our neighbours are walking on our heads." He meant that the Germans were dropping bombs, and the talk

was something was about to happen. That night we lay on our beds and I told everyone about Nissel's letter, about impending war.

Not anticipating anything, we all fell asleep. Suddenly, there was a loud boom and the windowpanes shook. Soon after there was another boom! And then another. At first we thought that this was thunder. Neither dead nor alive, we all ran out of the barracks. It was then that we noticed that airplanes were bombarding. What a terrible noise. I ran outside. It was four o'clock in the morning, and the German messerschmitzen were dropping bombs like flies and shooting from machine guns. We went to hide in the cornfields near our barracks. Suddenly all was quiet.

Fifteen minutes later the airplanes returned shooting at our barracks. We didn't know what to do. The boys were tearing at their hair. It was so noisy. Our officers grabbed their wives and children, packed them into cars and escaped toward Pinsk. There were small Russian tanks in the forest. Seeing there was nowhere to run they returned after a short time. Fifty men remained in the forest and began to head toward Munaveh. When we left our barracks, the peasants who lived in the area went in and stole everything they could.

The bombing from the airplanes continued all day as well as machine gun fire from the German planes. The planes flew very low and shot a lot. The Red Army ran deeper and deeper into Russia. We, the working battalion, remained without a leader. No one showed any interest in us. We began to head toward home. What will be will be. We were a few guys from Stolin who stuck together. We were also with a guy from Velemish. He was able to guide us home by the sun.

After the first day of walking, I had white blisters on my feet. The sun was burning, my shoes had shrunk. I eventually took them off and walked barefoot. At first everything was OK, but then my feet began to burn like fire. We continued walking for eight days, from Kobrin to Stolin. My feet were so sore, and swollen, I walked like a drunk. We walked very slowly as everyone had the same problem. We all walked with rags wrapped around our feet.

The peasants we met were friendly, and gave us food and drinks. I observed that they were happy to see that the Red Army is on the run and that they hardly can await the arrival of the Germans. We walked mainly at night. We tried to be careful not to fall into German hands. We Jews would stop in small villages where the peasants would feed us. The peasants gave us bad news that the German army had already penetrated deep inside Russia. They talked with us openly, as if we were Bolsheviks, not realizing we were Jews. They told us they believed that it was the Jews' job to go to war. This made us feel uncomfortable. The only Gentile in our group was not at ease with us, and on one nice evening, disappeared.

We arrived at a shtetle, (village) Farech, where the river flowed in the same direction we were walking. We asked the local people how far this river flowed. We decided to travel by water. We found a wooden raft whose chain had been cut. With large sticks we began to paddle down the river. We didn't have to paddle hard because we were sailing with the current. We sailed all night, stopping occasionally to empty the water from the raft. We were finally able to rest our feet.

By daylight, the German planes were flying again. The planes were flying so low, we thought they could see us. One of our friends became frightened and confused and jumped into the river. The raft filled with water and floated away. We had to swim to shore. Two of us swam to one river bank and the others to the other side. There was so much mud that the mosquitoes started to stick to our skin. I had seen mosquitoes before, but never ones this big. They were biting without mercy. Water, mud and weeds were everywhere. In the morning we thanked God that the sun rose and warmed our bones. Even the mosquitoes let up a little. We cursed our friend that had jumped into the water.

An old farmer had seen us standing on the river banks. We began to shout at him and he came to us. We told him what had happened and he advised us not to travel by raft any longer because there was a bridge up ahead and he knew the Germans were up on the bridge. He said he would take us to where we could walk. On the eighth day I thanked God that things worked out the way they did. We dragged ourselves to a spot not far from Stolin. I took off my shoes, and slowly crawled on all fours. I crawled all the way home, my heart pounding. God only knew what was doing at home.

When I arrived at home it was very noisy. People were running around everywhere. People noticed that I had come from far away. All the children came running towards me, Gonia, Frumkeh and Mother as well. They dragged me home. I looked terrible. I was sunburned, unshaven, with swollen feet.

Gonia put compresses on my feet and people came by hoping to hear some news from far away. I didn't have much to tell them. We received sad news that the Germans killed the Jews of Brisk, Kobrin, Yanaveh and Moteleh. Stolin became a place for thousands of refugees, especially the youth who were trying to run for the borders. When news hit that the Russians were opening the borders, all hell broke loose. Anyone who had the strength, tried to find a way to escape. Many fifteen and sixteen year old girls left their homes and ran toward the Polish-Russian border. When they arrived at the border, they were not allowed into Russia and faced great disappointment. They were all sent back. My sister's children Chaiyeh and Freideleh tried to run away but had to come back.

Meanwhile, Maishel came home. He also had wounded feet. Shmoyel, my sister's son, came running from Pinsk. Shmoyel asked me to run away with him, by joining the one Russian Army unit that had a chance to break through and join the Russian forces, but I could not. Firstly, I couldn't imagine leaving my parents, and secondly, my feet were still bleeding and I had no energy. My sister said nothing to Shmoyel. No one was able to give Shmoyel advice. Anyone who could, ran away. Shmoyel ended up leaving with a couple of hundred young men. Many of them lived through the war and are alive.

It was horrible to watch Shmoyel say good-bye to his mother. She had seven small children. My sister had enough strength to tell Shmoyel he should try to save himself. When he left, he said good-bye to everyone for good. I saw Shmoyel after the war.

With great fear we wondered what would be. Meanwhile, the Germans were moving deeper into Russia. They were almost at Kiev, leaving behind the Polesia region, and then they were encircling the towns and villages they left behind. With the Germans invading, the peasants' joy was increasing daily. At first the Red Army reappeared, but they were retreating slowly.

Various events were happening. We tried to organize ourselves. We organized street patrols. The Russians left behind a lot of weapons and we were prepared to use them. But a group of non-Jews also organized themselves. They would sneak into the Jewish streets at night and beat up Jews, break windows, and rape women. One Sunday I was sitting on the porch with my brother Maishel, my sister, my sister-in-law, the children and our parents. A group of bandits came by and demanded we give up our weapons. We answered that we had no weapons. One of them picked up a stick, and hit my brother on the head.

The children began to scream. They continued to beat us. A few Jewish boys joined us, there was quite a fight. My father, an old hero from way back, found an oar and began to swing it left and right. One of the guys was bleeding. I don't remember if it was me or Maishel who made that pig bleed. They soon realised that they shouldn't mess with us. They ran away. We washed and cleaned ourselves. I'm sure my father had prepared this oar in advance.

Not long after, a group of bandits came to our house. I was home alone with Maishel, two against a hundred. I told Maishel that we should not be fools and we should run away. They approached us and attacked like wild animals. One held a revolver at Maishel. (His wife) Frumkeh came in screaming. Her screams distracted the murderer, and she grabbed the revolver from his hand. Meanwhile, a second band gathered on another street. On that street, the Jews had the upper hand. They made so much noise that their attackers became confused. Maishel ran into the garden jumped over the fence and ran into our stall. I joined him in the hay and remained there. The murderers looked around and could not find us. When they could not find us, they went to my parents and asked where their sons were. They then proceeded to beat our parents.

When night fell I heard that things became quiet. I went home to find they had broken everything in the house. I then returned to the stall. Mother called to us as if she was talking to the hens. She told us to lay still, they are still here, pretending to shout at the chickens but actually warning us. Mother came into the stall and asked us to go down. Maishel came out of his hiding place and went to sleep at home. We were sure they would return at night. Maishel and I decided to spend yet another night hidden in the stall, yet we knew we would have to escape around eleven o'clock at night. The bandits surrounded our house and once again robbed us. When they came to the garden, I helped Maishel dig a hole into the next garden. I peeked out of the stall and saw where the bandits were situated. I finally got tired and left. I came into the house, and saw how frightened my sister's children were. What a horrible night. I couldn't believe I was still alive. I could not remain in Stolin. The bandits were looking for me.

I decided to leave Stolin for Rubleh. My heart was heavy, but as soon as I arrived in Rubleh I felt freer. Things were quiet in Rubleh. Compared to what we saw in Stolin, Rubleh was paradise. All the familiar peasants in Rubleh greeted me warmly.

I met up with a non-Jew (Pavel Zinovchik?) who had been working in our mill. He gave me the key to our mill. I took the key and all the peasants were very happy to see me. Some were so naïve to believe that we could go back to old times. I took the key to (Aunt) Goldeh's (Rimar) son Yakov, and asked him what he thought. "Take it if they give," he said. I didn't like the idea and returned to the mill.

When Alexander (Dimitriovski, a mill worker) saw the key in my hand his whole face changed. He did not like the whole situation. I then said to Alexander, "let's go to work." I then returned the key to him and told him to do what he wants.

There was not enough bread. My parents and Gonia could not do very much. I began to bring bread and flour back to Stolin. I brought as much as possible. Half of Stolin's eyes widened when they saw the packages I was bringing. Mother no longer had the strength to deliver the flour (charity) from door to door. In order to get by, the Jewish community of Stolin began to bribe the bandits with whisky, rings and watches. Meanwhile, police were becoming organized in Rubleh. They became nasty toward the Jews. They would beat up on old Jews, but luckily they had respect for me. The bandits did not let up.

The Germans had a very difficult time fighting a war in the mud. The German tanks went very slowly through the swamps. We heard the engines of the German tanks from miles away. Out of fear, I spent several nights in the forest. When in the forest, I would sit for long hours and think what would become of us. The peasants were showing some kindness, but not as much as earlier. They looked forward to the German's arrival. As a matter of fact, they ran to Berezshnoy to greet the Germans with butter, eggs, milk and flowers.

They would often stand around laughing. I couldn't laugh. I didn't know what lay ahead. The few Jews in Rubleh continued to work very hard. Shoemakers, tailors, everyone worked, trying to gather as much food as possible. (Work was paid with food). Auntie Goldeh's son Yakov worked day and night.

The Chassidim would sit around the table talking about the wonders of the German army. They compared the situation to the story of the Maccabis. They didn't want to believe what was coming. Yehuda, the big one, was a regular visitor around the table, with his roaring voice that was claiming that all the stories from the Warsaw Jews are lies.

Meanwhile there was no good news. The dark clouds were approaching (David) Horodok. Horodok was becoming noisy and unsettled. The Russians, while back in Horodok, brought prisoners to chop down the forest near Rubleh. One prisoner whose name was Vanko, escaped and hid with a gentile from Rubleh named Ivan.

When the Germans arrived in Horodok, Vanko joined a group of bandits that attacked the Jews. They started with a plot by hiding in a Jewish garden, an old metal box full with iron bars and an old rusted rifle. Vanko and his gang came out with a story that the Horodok Jews are planning to attack the gentiles of Horodok and in the surrounding villages.

I myself wondered when quiet gentiles, whom I knew well, used to come and tell that the Jews in Horodok are planning to kill them. Some came up with a story that the Jews in Rubleh are also hiding weapons.

One Saturday night, I was sitting at my Aunt Goldeh's. Suddenly I heard children shouting: "The Germans are coming!" I looked out the window, and saw many soldiers surrounding the village. The

peasants were sure nothing would happen to them. They thought they would be able to leave. But the Germans let no one in and no one out. The soldiers and police ran around banging on the windows shouting for all the Jews to come out. We had no choice. Yankel, Avremeleh, Yehuda, the big one, and myself all went out together. The Germans were standing in the middle of the village. They would not let us walk together.

Each person had to walk alone. With our hands up in the air we had to walk toward the church. I walked with my head down in great shame. Our Christian neighbours were looking out of their windows. The soldiers surrounded us from all sides. I looked around and saw everybody there. I looked at all the faces, particularly the young ones. The only one who didn't look frightened was Yehuda, the big one. He even tried to smile and have a conversation with a soldier. The soldier quickly silenced him. Soon a German officer asked who among us speaks German. Meir, Aharon's (son) said he did. Someone had told the Germans that the Jews had weapons. They went searching the Jewish houses for weapons and said if they found any we would be shot.

Looking around we noticed that the Rabbi was not among us. The Rabbi's wife said he was hiding and soldiers were sent to get him. When they found him they beat him. We were all standing around worrying about our fate. After waiting for a long time, the officer returned and said he did not find any weapons and that we can all go home. He didn't have to say it a second time - we all quickly ran home. Most of the peasants were happy we survived this ordeal. Some were disappointed. I noticed these reactions and remembered them. I realised things could get worse.

The next Saturday they called all the Jews out again. On that second Shabbis they called the Jews out for a meeting at the synagogue. Instead of going to the synagogue, I decided not to go to the meeting and headed down the street toward the mill. If anyone asked where I was heading, I would just answer I was going through the gates. If anybody asked why I did not come to the meeting I would just pretend I didn't know about it.

The main reason I didn't want to go to this meeting was because among the bandits, there was a man they called "The Ram." This man had once attacked my father and then was sentenced to six months in jail. I didn't want to meet him. He was waiting for the right moment to catch me.

When I arrived at my own mill, I had to sneak in. The machinist sat and worked. I felt like a stranger in my own mill. I began to work as well. Soon a policeman entered with a stick. He had a little respect for me. He then asked why I didn't come to the meeting. I told him that I didn't want to go and I asked him if he had come to get me. The policeman then said: "I told them I would bring you."

At that moment, I was feeling brave and I responded: "Tell them I didn't know." "Good" responded the policeman. "Don't go away," he said as he left the mill. I quickly looked out the window to see if he was returning. I saw Uncle Yossel through the window. I took great pity on him, he couldn't even speak. He was beaten up. He just shook his head as if to say "Look what they did to me!"

They gathered up the Jews in the Synagogue, and Vanko took a little bit of merchandise from everybody, suits, money. Everybody carried something in his hand. Everyone had his own needs in

mind. I don't know if it was a dream or a vision, but then and there, I had a clear image of what was to come. Nobody believed me.

In the meantime, a new story was spread that the Jews were carrying food to the partisans. There were even "witnesses" who said they saw people carrying food. An order was issued that Jews were not permitted to leave the village.

The local Police Commandant happened to work with me in the Rubleh forest. Together we used to go fishing. Knowing how much I like fishing, he came and told me that I could go anywhere I want. There was nothing for me to do in the village, so every morning I took some bread and went behind the village. Yakov would laugh at me. "We will soon have fish for supper," he said.

In fact, I was in no mood for fishing. Instead, I did go deeper in the bushes and would sit for hours thinking: Where should I go? What should I do? How can I save myself? I was upset with the fact that I didn't go with the Russian Army.

But so far our situation (in Rubleh) was not so bad. I would take all that I could from the mill. The gentiles of Rubleh were good to me. I was happy to still be in the village. Maishel stopped hiding and began to help the Jews of Stolin. Money was still helpful. We were able to pay off the police in gold. At times even the bandits could be bribed. There was no way out.

I could not understand why the Jews in Stolin were not alarmed with the bad news from David Horodok. They found out that with money, you can still save their lives for a while. (But) Maraiko, the bandit from Horodok still had his plan to kill all the Jews and take all their goods.

A Russian Navy unit remained stuck not far from Horodok without a chance to break through to join the Russian forces. They decided to destroy their boats and were getting closer to the town of Horodok and were shooting at the town with artillery. They were so close, it seemed like thousands of soldiers were surrounding the city. The panic was great and Maraiko's gang panicked the most and ran away.

The Russian unit, after consuming all the ammunition, retreated after causing little damage - burned some houses and some people were injured. When they left, we felt our salvation had come. We knew we would never have our old life again. With all the shortcomings of the Soviet regime, it was paradise compared to what we were seeing. We would give up everything just to go back to what was.

Maraiko, the bandit from David Horodok, and his band returned willingly and with out shame. They used the moment to travel to Luninietz where the S.S. was stationed. They informed the S.S. that the Jews of Horodok were armed with grenades and were in contact with the Russian partisans. The S.S. sent troops to Horodok.

By Sunday morning, six a.m., Horodok was surrounded by S.S. officers. They and a group of Horodtchukas went from house to house, taking out the men, as if they were taking them to work. Some men were taken out in their underwear. They searched everywhere. It was very hard to hide. They gathered a group of 1,250 men ranging in age from fourteen until old age. These unlucky men,

believing they were going to work, grabbed bread, merchandise and money. Perhaps there will be something to buy? Upon departure, they were not allowed to take anything. This is how the Jews of David Horodok were taken away.

The men were stripped naked and shot. Some were buried alive, fighting death. The earth moved for a few hours.

After the murders, they went into the Jewish homes and told the sad widows they had fifteen minutes to leave town. The sick who could not leave were murdered. Children had to bury their own relatives. Gentiles from surrounding towns came to fill their sacks with Jewish goods.

Vanko, (Vineka) the bandit, took advantage of the moment, gathered a group of Meshchanes and young gentiles - shgotzim - from Oholitz and left for Rubleh.

At the time, nobody in Rubleh knew what had taken place in Horodok, therefore, nobody thought about leaving. Everybody was home working, trying to earn just a little more money. That Sunday, I went out of the village like always. The gentiles looked healthy and were very happy. I couldn't understand their laughter. I went into Aunt Goldeh's house and there was Yakov working (at harness making) as usual.

The sly gentiles knew what was about to happen but they wanted to get just a little more work out of Yakov. I watched him work and wondered how he could be so relaxed at such a time. I said to Yankel: "Come, let's go fishing." Yankel laughed at me. Yankel said "You go fishing, I'll catch up to you with the wagon when I go to collect." The gentiles laughed at Yankel's joke.

I couldn't sit. I took a piece of bread and went out of the village. I had the desire to catch some fish. I sat and thought how nice it was to be alone, away from the police and the stares of the gentiles. Meanwhile, it started to rain. At first I took shelter in the trees. Then it started to pour. The rain didn't bother me at all. It was around four o'clock in the afternoon, but the dark rain clouds made it feel like night. I didn't want to return to the village. Suddenly, I heard shooting from nearby. Something pulled at my heart. This was a different type of shooting, three shots followed by silence, another three shots followed by silence, again and again. I hid deeper in the bushes. The rain chilled my body, the gunshots chilled my blood. I tried to take shelter to warm myself up. It became late.

I slowly made my way back to the village. I saw Simon who was also fishing in that area, approached, and seeing me, he asked whether I heard the shots fired and what could it be?

I answered that I had no idea and that I'm going to the village to find out. Simon looked at me with bewilderment and asked for what? He said if there is good news, we will hear and if the news is bad, there is no sense going to the village.

He saw me shivering from the cold. He took off his coat and gave it to me to wear. His stall was not far and he invited me in to warm up by the fire.

He said he would go immediately to find out what had happened. I was to lay by the fire until Simon returned with the news. I couldn't wait for him to return. I went to the village. Approaching the village, I saw a gentile from a distance. I soon recognized him to be Marko. When he saw me, he crossed himself and didn't look at me. I ran toward him and asked him what happened in the village. Instead of answering me he began to curse.

Marko then told me that all the Jews (of Rubel) had been shot. I felt ashamed. The devil took me fishing. Now I am alone, the lone survivor! Why was I spared and not killed with all those holy men? Marko then said they had killed everyone in Horodok and Stolin. What do I do now?

I had a crazy idea to go back to the village. Marko shouted at me to go back and sit in the stall. Soon more gentiles began to arrive. Everyone ran around confused. Even for them, this was a lot to handle. They had lived among the Jews for years. When they saw me alive, they ran to me and kissed me. They assured me that the children were not tortured.

When they shot the men (of Rubel), the women came out with heart-rending screams. They were also driven out. They gathered the men at the fire station as if they were going to have a meeting. They tied them up in threes, took them out of the village. Meanwhile, the non-Jewish boys were hitting them with sticks. Yankel - Moishe and Feigel's son - was very brave. It was like leading sheep to the slaughter. Yakov, Auntie Golde's son, wrote a few words on a piece of paper and asked somebody to give it to me. Nobody wanted to take this note in their hands. They shot three bullets into him, and he was still standing. The fourth put him down.

Shloimkeh, the blacksmith's son, was lightly wounded in his ear. He fell among the dead. Suddenly he stood up and began to run. He was caught and shot. All these stories were told to me by the gentiles who saw everything. They didn't sleep all night. They sat up smoking as each gentile had had a Jewish friend.

The police quickly caught on that I was not among the dead. But night fell and they were busy with other things. They couldn't search for me. I spent more time on the street than indoors. I lived like a wild animal with sharp ears and sharp eyes. I went deeper and deeper into the darkness. At dawn I left the gentiles and I told them how I will tell everybody they were good to me. In the morning I crossed to the other side of the river. It was then that I realised there were 53 dead. I recited Kaddish (mourner's prayer) for all the names I could remember and I cried hot tears.

I wondered what was doing in Stolin? Were my loved ones still alive? If they were alive, I must let them know that I am alive. I couldn't hear or see anything. I remained among the dead for the rest of the day.

I heard footsteps approaching. Perhaps they're out looking for me. I then heard more footsteps and whispers. Then I recognized Simon's voice calling out: "Mikhoel, Mikhoel!" I wondered how he had found me. He told me he had been searching all morning. He brought me milk, bread, matches and paper. He told me the (Jewish) women and children of the village were taken away. I wanted to go

farther away and hide. There was no talk about returning to the village. I was thinking where to go? What to do now?

I thought I should go deeper in Horisheh (Hotomel) among the harvest, but I should wait till darkness. At night there were dogs barking. My feet were crumbling under me, my heart was pounding. I had no idea how I would escape this situation. At one time (World War I) when the Balachovitzer gangs attacked Jews in Rubleh there was a good friend Avdeus (Siroshik) who did hide Maishel and (my other brother) Beryl. Whenever I would go fishing, I would bring him (Avdeus) a package of tobacco and matches. He would often treat me to dried fish. Without speaking, I approached him. When he saw me he took me in his arms, and began to cry. "Come to me my son, don't be afraid!" he said. "I won't let them touch a single hair. An angel from heaven sent you to me. Come with me into town I don't want anyone to see you!"

Late that evening he took me to the stanoch (barn), fed me and washed my shirt. "Eat my child," he said. I hadn't eaten for two days. I could barely open my mouth to eat. The old man pushed the plate to me and encouraged me to eat. "I hope you like fresh fish," he said. "I will add a little pepper, maybe that will give you an appetite."

The old man was very angry. He said that those who cause such a tragedy should be cursed. After I ate and calmed down a little, I told the old man I wanted to go to Stolin. Maybe people are still alive? I was so lonely. He warned me that he had heard that all the Jews of Stolin were at home and feeling fine. All night I thought about what might be doing in Stolin.

Sitting by the fire, with smoke in my eyes, I thought about how brave the old man was. At dawn, he put me in a small boat and sent me to the small island at Horisheh. The island was densely covered with white birch trees and bushes and situated between Bereznoye and Rubleh. Before leaving, he told me to hide and that as soon as he would have a chance he would return.

Lying in the bushes, I heard the banging of the wagons of the gentiles returning from the village with their families. I overheard them talking about the Jewish women from Rubleh and Horodok who were driven out from their homes and were heading in the direction of Stolin. The gentiles of Bereznoye were quite friendly. They brought milk and bread (to the women and children) and allowed people to stay to rest. From my hiding place on my island I was able to see the comings and goings. I could see a large group of women carrying heavy packages and babies, while the children with smaller packages were trailing behind them on their long journey.

It was already quite late when the old man returned to me. I recognized him from his cough. He told me things were quiet in Stolin, but I should stay put. He apologized for not coming sooner. He left some milk and bread for me and told me he would come back soon to take me away.

The old man's son, Chvedar, (Feodor Siroshik) a "sly one," began to watch his father, and become suspicious that his father was hiding me. After seeing his father come to the island, he came later to the island looking for me. When I heard his footsteps, I hid even deeper. At one point I heard coughing and was sure it was the old man. As I slowly crawled out of my hiding spot it was a terrible feeling to see

Chvedar's face with that criminal smile. He found me, and was very pleased with himself. I was not happy, but there was nothing I could do.

I fell to my knees and tears began to pour from my eyes. "Mikhoyel", he said, "I will not harm you!" He was very angry with his father, but not with me.

I told Chvedar that I was anxious to go to Stolin to find out what had happened there. He told me that at dawn he would go to Stolin, and would return to me the following day with a report. I nervously awaited him the whole next day. Finally the old man (Avdeus) showed up in a boat and took me back to the stanok (barn). I was looking forward to talking with the old man whom I loved so much. I told the old man that I was going to leave and that he should not be frightened. What has happened has already happened.

The old man brought me everything I needed including a plate, a spoon, matches, and a flint for making fire from stone. Seeing that he was not asleep I could not fall asleep. I sat up and thought about all the martyrs. I was jealous of all those who were free, all those who could go where they want. I didn't sleep all night, I sat up and listened to the wind. I looked up at the starry, starry sky and asked: "For whom is the sky so beautiful?"

It was already three nights that I spent with the old man. It was already four days since the martyrs of Rubleh lay in the ground. Are they still alive in Stolin? Do they know I am still alive? The old man looked me straight in the eyes and rubbed my head. He didn't want me to think so much. In an effort to distract me, he told me stories from when he was a young handsome soldier.

At daybreak, Chvedar came to milk the cows. He told me they found Noson Ginsburg who had been in hiding near Rubleh. The Rubleh police found him and shot him. He then told me that the women and children are somewhere in the town of Bereznaya, and that in Rubleh, the bandits came and looted the Jewish homes. They even pulled off the windows and doors.

In one house they found Yehuda Boruch and Moishe Budensky, who by some miracle remained and saw the women being taken away. Not knowing what would happen to them, they came out of hiding. When the local gentiles saw Yehuda Boruch walking on the street, they joyfully ran to hug and kiss him.

But some began to shout: "Jew! Jew!" And they began to run from one end of the village to another. Old and young came to see what was happening. Those awful people became busy with stealing Jewish goods. Meanwhile they took Yehuda Boruch and Moishe Budensky, two old Jews, and took them to what was once Yehuda Durchin's cellar in Rubleh.

This was the only closed cellar in Rubleh. Three people had escaped from the massacre in Horodok. Simcha, the butcher, Nocheh, the wig maker, and another young boy who's name I cannot remember. They were all in a stall in Rubleh. Simcha the butcher, chose the stall and when the gentiles arrived, Simcha came out of hiding. Simcha asked the man for bread. The man said he would go to the village and bring back bread and other things. When the gentile returned, he brought a gun instead of bread.

He then brought Simcha to Yehuda Durchin's cellar. When the old man Lipsky, who bought Lipe's house, saw what was happening to Simcha, he ripped his shirt, fell to the ground and cried.

There were now five Jews being held in the cellar. That same night, they were supposedly shot. The old man (Avdeus) reluctantly told me this story.

In Stolin, after hearing about the horrible news from Horodok and Rubleh, the Jewish Community didn't rest and tried all in their power to find ways to help those who were left alive.

My brother Maishel had survived the Rubleh slaughter and was afraid to ask of my whereabouts. Finally a Bereznoye gentile who saw all that happened, told my brother that I was still alive. He swore he had not seen me among the dead, but did not know where I was hiding. After that, some other gentiles from Rubleh who came to Stolin confirmed that I am alive and hiding somewhere.

Shloimeh Ginzburg managed to escape from Rubleh. When he arrived in Stolin, he told them that he ran through the village (Rubleh) and the police ran after him. Many were enemies of the Jews. He managed to escape because he was healthy, young and strong.

The whole time, I remained on the island. The old man kept me up-to-date on my brother Maishel who managed, together with the Jewish Kehila, to arrange that that some militia men will be sent from Stolin to Rubleh to find out if there are some Jews left alive. This arrangement cost a lot of money.

The two Militia men from Stolin, dressed in Ukrainian uniforms, arrived at the cellar in Rubleh some minutes before the five Jews were scheduled to be shot. The Rubleh policeman got frightened and let the Jews go free. The Militia also said that no one should touch the Jews. The five who had been sentenced to death did not know what to do.

Later they (militia??) found Zalman Dudin from Rubleh who escaped the massacre of the 53 Jews since he was pasturing his cows in the fields near Rubleh. One thing was sure, that staying in Rubleh was not the solution. Hearing that in Stolin, Jewish life is going on, they decided to leave for Stolin.

Soon after they left, Vanko the bandit returned, and when he heard what took place, he began to laugh and punished the Rubleh policemen.

Hanna, the wife of (Avdeus) Zoyes' Chvedar, seeing all that happened with the six (?) Jews, came running to the old man's house, telling him the good news and told him to bring me back from the island. When she saw me, she ran to me crying and saying: "Oh my son, don't be afraid! Everything is OK now!"

There was nothing much left for the robbers to steal. Things had become calmer and quieter. I was curious to return to Rubleh to see what they did. I was thinking then: "Why am I going here? What is the reason?" Maybe I wanted to show everyone I was still alive. I wanted to see with my own eyes the things I couldn't believe. I wanted to see my friends and family. I couldn't believe something so terrible could happen.

When I arrived in Rubleh it was already dark. Although I was assured all was quiet, I was careful to avoid people. I went slowly to the village hoping to find familiar faces. Everything looked normal. The peasants were carrying their buckets. Others were busy with their horses and pigs. My heart was beating fast. I stopped to look around. I approached the home of Afanovitch with my heart beating faster and faster. Where was I going? Some of the gentile boys came running towards me. "Don't go there!" they shouted. "Vanko is now in the village and he's sitting and drinking with the machinist. If he sees you, he'll kill everyone."

They wouldn't let me go. They took me with force into the garden and they made me swear I would not leave. I wanted to see the machinist. One of the boys brought him to me. I saw he was nervous. He was surprised to see me alive. I asked him if he had the opportunity to please send a bit of flour.

Meanwhile, my gentile friends prepared a package for me with bread and cheese. They also gave me a jacket. These were the same guys that took the boots off uncle Yehuda's feet. Uncle Yehuda was paralysed, he lay in bed and couldn't move. When he wanted to speak, only strange noises would come from his mouth. Rochel and Mirl cared for him. When the women were taken away, they couldn't take Yehuda with them. They dressed him, put boots on his feet and left him. When the gentile boys came, they stole the boots off Yehuda's feet. These were the same boys that helped me. Go try and understand them!

With a full sack of food and a torn jacket I returned to Horishe. I didn't want anybody to find out that I was staying with the old man. Seeing my sack full of food made the old man a little more cheerful. He was happy to see that others were caring for me as well.

Waiting for Chvedar to return from Stolin, my heart nearly fell out of my chest. When he finally returned around eleven o'clock at night he took a note out of his pocket and handed it to me. I immediately recognized my brother Maishel's handwriting. I was delighted to find out he was still alive. I knew that I would be assumed dead until they would actually see me in Stolin. Alive in Horishe, I began to think about how to return to Stolin. There were police in the villages and I was afraid. I would have to pass through Vonkevitch. I knew the town was filled with bandits.

I decided to wait a few more days. By Saturday, I finally decided to head towards Stolin. The old man didn't want to let me go. He offered me as much fish and bread as I needed and told me I should stay until things calmed down. But my heart was tugging at me to go to Stolin. I swapped my pants and shirt with the old man. Dressed in peasant clothes, with a sack over my shoulders I began my journey through Dobrove and Belahush to Stolin. I knew the road so well, I had travelled it so many times. But everything looked strange to me. I didn't speak to people that I saw along the way. I didn't want to bring any attention to myself. Dressed in peasant's clothing, nobody recognized me as a Jew. The most difficult part of my journey was to see the sad Jewish women in Belahush going from door to door begging for a piece of bread.

The priest and his wife helped care for these women. Chaikah, Moishe Faivel's wife, recognized me and began to scream: "Mikhoyel is alive! Mikhoyel is alive!" People came running from all directions.

For a moment I felt very embarrassed since these women's husbands were dead and I was still alive. One woman began to complain and asked me why I didn't bring her husband with me.

Woe is me! (vey iz mir!) If Auntie Golde's Chaiyeh had not been there I don't know what I would have done. Curious peasants began to gather around. Chaiyeh began to shout: "Let him go! The police will be here soon!" I passed Belahush in peace.

As I continued towards Stolin I saw many women from Stolin carrying food for the less fortunate. I saw from a distance my sister Gonia and her children carrying baskets of food to Belahush. My sister could not believe it was me. She embraced me and said: "My dear new-found brother! Are you really alive?"

She told me to go home quickly to see mother. I walked through the back streets and gardens until I reached our yard. Father was sitting on the porch, and Mother was working in the yard. When she looked up and saw me, she couldn't budge. She spread her arms wanting to run toward me but she couldn't move. I fell into her arms, I couldn't say a word. I only sobbed.

Father let out a cry through his thick lips "God in heaven, we never believed we would see you alive again." Suddenly Maishel fell upon me. He tried to hold back his tears but couldn't. "Woe is me!" he cried. "You escaped the murderers!" When Frumkeh saw me, she became hysterical. By the time I calmed her down, all the neighbours began to arrive. It was hard to believe that for seven days I had been close to death, and now, here I was with my Mother, Father, Maishel, Frumkeh, Gonia and the children. It felt like a dream.

Father gathered a minyan (quorum of ten men) and began to recite Kaddish (mourners' prayer) for Yankel. We loved Yankel very much. He and Father had been such good friends.

The Stolin Jewish community had a big task. They had to rescue and help the widows from other towns. They paid off the police and brought as many women into Stolin as possible, filling up the synagogues with destitute women who had nowhere to go. Those who had friends stayed with them. Stolin was now providing for many hungry and poor.

The doors of Stolin were never closed. Women and children went from door to door asking for bread. Auntie Goldeh and Chaiyeh had moved into my room. Rochel and her two daughters moved into (Gonia and) Maishel's place. At Gonia's, the house was packed. Even though Mother had many problems of her own, her door was open to every hungry person. Uncle Sholem's daughter Chana, together with her husband and child, also moved in with us.

The Germans had captured Uncle Sholem, taken him behind the village and told him to dig his own grave. After he finished digging they told him to lie down in it. When they saw it wasn't quite deep enough they made him dig deeper. They hit him and tore his beard. As they were about to shoot him, a group of soldiers passed by and didn't let the other soldiers shoot. With great fear, Uncle Sholem told us this story of his survival.

The leader of the Stolin Jewish community was an engineer from Lodz whose name was Berger. Berger spoke German very well and was a man of strong character. He was able to be strong in the most difficult times. He was the first to deal with the murderers. The Rabbi's son-in-law was scared and sat at home. The other members of the Jewish Community were Boruch Goldman, Aaron Shimen Turkenich, Shloime Pollak, the wagon driver. He was the one who handled the bandits of Stolin.

It was now two weeks before Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish new year), but it did not feel like a festive time. Every one was worried about what lay ahead. There was not an empty spot in Stolin. There were many refugees coming to Stolin from Poland. Jews who escaped death in other villages were arriving in Stolin. A large part of the (David) Horodok women who could not find a place to stay, left for Dombrowitz and Sarne. Many of them died on their way, others were raped and robbed.

There were a few Jewish families left alive in Dubnow, the peasants came in at night, chopped off the hands and feet of some, and chased the rest out of town.

Stolin was right on the Ukrainian border. The Germans had the Ukrainians willingly on their side. They allowed the Ukrainians to do whatever they wanted to the Jews. A few Ukrainian nationalists arrived in Stolin and took over. Berger tried to connect himself to them. Bribing them with money and whisky, he tried to prevent them from bothering the Jews. This was a crazy time. From time to time, the Ukrainians would bother the Jewish girls. We tried, as much as possible, to stay off the streets. The surrounding peasants came to Stolin daily. They could not understand what was happening or rather not happening in Stolin. Compared to what was going on in other villages, Stolin was like paradise.

Some truly believed that the Jews of Stolin had been saved thus far due to the presence of the holy Stoliner Rabbi. The holy Rabbi didn't even want to hear about the tragedies befalling Bialystok, Rovno and Pinsk. "Stolin is different," he would say. "This won't happen here."

Everybody was searching for bread. People sold everything they had worked all their lives for, for a piece of bread or potatoes. Gentiles from Rubleh, friends of our family, would often come by to see how we were doing and to bring us some bread. My parents believed they were doing this out of true friendship. But I noticed, how their horses were ready and how they eyed everything we had in our house. I knew their intentions. Every day these guests would come, thinking that the tragedy would soon befall Stolin and they would be able to steal all the Jewish possessions.

They would come bringing potatoes and flour, but then in return, ask my mother for various items. I had nothing left. The few things I had in Rubleh were stolen on the day we fought with the bandits. My father had very little. My mother still had a few tablecloths and kerchiefs that she sold, rather gave away for next to nothing.

Every time my mother would find a blouse, a napkin or a kerchief, she would give it to Gonia who had to divide it up among the children. She began to give away all the things sent from Rubleh. How could I not allow her to sell things at such a time? We had to be silent because we heard the peasants would soon be forbidden to have contact with the Jews. The house was quickly becoming empty. Gonia would often say that if we survive, we will get everything back.

Maishel was not often at home. When he returned in the evening, he would shout: "What are you doing! Why are you giving everything away?"

Rosh Hashanah (1941) was approaching and we were becoming more and more frightened. Usually at this time of year we worried about having a good cantor, new clothes or about cooking and baking. This Rosh Hashanah, we were overcome with fear. In the evening we went to synagogue one at a time. We were afraid to light large fires so we just lit a few candles at the Bimah.

Yakov recited the prayers in a quiet voice. Like thieves, we snuck to and from the synagogue. Maishel, Frumkeh, and Gonia came to hear Kaddish. Where was the holiday meal? Chaiyeh and Goldeh let out bitter cries. Rochrl and her children cried after their father. And in this bitter time, even the men began to weep. Instead of shouting at the women to stop crying, we cried with them.

Maishel had a plan; to hide whatever belongings we still had between planks of wood in the stall. We hid a few pillows and a few blankets in case we would have to spend some nights there. I buried a few pieces of silver among our things. We didn't have much to hide. Most of what we had we used to buy bread.

In the morning we went to synagogue. Behind closed windows we prayed like corpses wrapped in prayer shawls, weeping quietly. Everything was as if dead. Everybody cried through the Rosh Hashanah prayers. Our Maishel cried hard for the suffering and troubles that had befallen us. He didn't know this was to be his last day alive.

While we were in the synagogue we noticed a lot of movement in the street. A few cars full of Germans drove by. They were wearing brown uniforms and red armbands. Everyone was petrified. We hadn't yet finished praying, when they began running around in anger. They were carrying rifles. We looked out of the windows and it seemed they were running around like mad men preparing something.

I was tired and went to lie down. Maishel came in. When he saw me asleep he shouted: "How could you sleep at a time like this? Come into our place and we'll drink some tea." I didn't have a lot of energy. I suggested to Maishel we go to our hiding place. Maishel said it was not yet necessary; it appeared that things were becoming calmer.

I went to him. Frumkeh and Zelda Finkelshtein were sitting and talking. Maishel began to joke with them and tell stories of his bravery. He feared nothing. Suddenly we heard footsteps on the porch. The militia had arrived and began banging on the door. Frumkeh yelled "Save the children!" But it was too late. Another militia was standing at the back door. Both entered the house with rifles. One of them had a broken gun and demanded from Maishel that he give him a hammer and nails. Maishel gave them a hammer and nails. They shouted: "Leave!" Not knowing to whom they were speaking I stood up.

"Not you, sit down!" They dragged Maishel out. Frumkeh began to cry. She began to ask them to leave Maishel. She offered money but they did not allow her to speak. As they forced Maishel out of the house he turned around and said: "Don't cry! Be strong! I'll be back soon!"

This was his final journey. He didn't come back to us.

They took fifty Jews from Stolin. They tortured them, they jabbed them with swords and kicked them. Even a brave man like Maishel couldn't take it. His last words were: "Vey is mir - Woe is me!" as they tortured him in the corridors of the Stolin jail.

Blood ran from Maishel's open wounds. The murderers poured iodine into his wounds. The greatest suffering was to his holy soul. Around midnight in the Stolin jail two of the fifty died. One was Maishel. The rest were held longer and tortured. Six months later, I found my brother's body and buried him in his prayer shawl in a grave near Auntie Goldeh's.

With tears in his eyes (his son) Lyova recited the Kaddish at his grave. Zelig Fishman was with me at the burial. He was very helpful to me. My brother's face was difficult to recognize. I recognized him by his beautiful strong hands. Frumkeh, Gonia, Chaiyeh and Rochel came running and joined the funeral. We did it without the Germans knowing, as it was forbidden.

After my brother's death, the most difficult days began. I was the only one left from the family surrounded by widows and orphans. I would look at the children; especially (the youngest, Maishel's) Avivaleh and my heart would be ripped to pieces. Aunt Goldeh was fine but suddenly she went out like a light. It was Chanukah time when her soul was raised. Many widows from Rubleh were in our home. We made a big funeral. We were not afraid even though it was forbidden. A heavy yoke lay upon me to take care of all the widows and orphans. I had to see that they would not go hungry.

There was always a quorum (minyan) in our home. My father, may he rest in peace, together with Lyova, would say Kaddish for the dead of Rubleh, for my brother Maishel and for my Auntie Goldeh. Father would say little and bite his lip in silence. He would only get angry when the women would cry, yet he would himself often weep. I had to play the role of a hero, but hiding in a corner where no one could see I would weep as well.

We were not allowed to go outside after seven o'clock in the evening. We would sit with closed shutters. Gonia and the children would often come to us through the garden and we would tell her what was going on. This is how we spent the whole winter.

On the eve of Passover 1942, Gonia was driven out of her home, and soon after, we were driven out of our home. Zelig Fishman was very helpful to us. Rumour had it that they were going to build a ghetto in Stolin. By the eve of Shavuot the ghetto was completed. It's hard to describe what happened. We received a command that everybody could take only what they could carry in their hands. We had to live. Father, may he rest in peace, walked into the ghetto, bent over with tears dripping from his eyes into his beard. The ghetto was surrounded with fifteen wires on sticks that were three metres high.

We were given a small room. We shared it with uncle Yakov's Chaiyeh-Goldeh, her small five-year-old son and my parents. Gonia was not far from us. Frumkeh and the children were also not far. Once in the ghetto the real difficulties of life began. People were dying daily. They were swollen from

hunger. I would look at my parents' feet and shudder. People thought of nothing except where to get something to eat. I found a way to smuggle some food in.

Soon the news came that everyone will be shot. How could that be? Small children, the elderly? This can't be right! It can't be true. The dark day arrived.

On the Eve of Rosh Hashanah 1942, 7,000 Jewish souls were killed. The graves were ready. They stripped everyone naked and lined them up in rows. Then with machine guns, they shot them all.

I will never forget the last night in the ghetto. I was with my parents until three o'clock in the morning. We said good-bye, we kissed and cried. I even kissed your (brother Beryl in Canada) pictures and said good-bye to you. Father recited Kaddish. Mother washed, and put on the nicest dress she had, preparing herself for death. They sent me out of the house. "Leave us now" they insisted. "You will survive! You will one day take revenge and you will be the one to tell everyone what happened to us!"

At that moment I could not believe the words spoken by my parents. I should leave? How could I go when we were surrounded on all sides? I decided to go in order to make things easier for my parents. They wanted so much for me to remain alive.

That is how I departed from my loved ones forever.

On thousands of occasions I cursed the moment that I left. More than once, I wished I were lying with them, hugging just before death. After the slaughter, I lay in the cellar for eighteen days with Vellen Meloshnik. While in the ghetto I thought of plans of escape. My heart told me that as soon as I would be able to leave the ghetto I would know what to do. Vellen was with me, his wife was still alive. Sholem Durchin, was also in hiding with his wife and child. Their family was still intact. I was already an orphan. I met them at night and tried to convince them to leave with me. They were hoping for miracles. They remained. I continued to try to think how to get out.

On the eighteenth night, I decided to crawl out of my hiding place and go out in the darkness like a wild animal. I felt I was walking on dead bodies. My hair stood on end just from the thought. Where should I go? Everything was locked, closed tight. At that moment I met a living person. I immediately approached him thinking another unlucky soul was walking around searching for a way out. I was shocked when in front of me stood a large Gentile, who had been the biggest thief in Stolin! I became cold with fear. The thief showed me the way out of the ghetto. Later I heard that Velen, Baile, Nisl and Shloime had been shot.

This is when my (terrible) days began. I felt like I was the only man in the world, wandering and hiding. Lonely as a dog! I finally arrived in Horishe to my good friend, Chvedar. He helped me, and sent me with great care and protection to the partisans. This was war. Taking revenge left and right. My experiences that came later are not important to write about. Being with the partisans was not easy. (honey on the lips???)

I think this is all I remember, this is what happened. From the day the Russians came until the last day when I left home leaving my loved ones and dearest behind allowing them, to fall into the hands of the Nazis may their memories be erased.