10

It was Sunday morning. The town of Krasnostav was awake. Many townspeople, as usual, were preparing to go to the county marketplace of Beresdov. The day was warming up and the sky was cloudless. Children were running barefooted to the stream to bathe. Many girls were washing their clothing there; other girls were drying their clothing on the grass. People were happy and did not know what awaited them.

In the evening there was a red sunset. But the sky soon became overcast and there was a clap of thunder. The dark sky lit up as bright as day. More rumblings of thunder, and it began to rain, but not for long.

The townspeople were returning in groups from the marketplace, spreading startling news. German artillery had opened fire on the Soviet Union. People were assembling at the townhall to hear its secretary. He said in a shaky voice: "We have received a report that the Germans, at four o'clock in the morning of June 22, 1941, bombarded four Soviet cities and crossed the Russian-German border at the Polish city of Przemysl." He went on to say that the German plan would not succeed and that the Germans would withdraw to their own territory. Russia did not want war, or foreign territories, but she would not relinquish one meter of her own territory. He finished the speech with a call to the youth to protect their motherland: "This is not the first time that Russian people have had to deal with an enemy. Our people will answer with a patriotic war and the Germans will be defeated. Hitler will suffer the fate of Napolean in 1812. Our motherland must be defended from the Nazi invaders. Down with fascism! Down with the reactionaries!"

The youth and the older people left the meeting place with heavy hearts. Within a few hours an order arrived from the town hall to mobilize the men for the county military command. The

next morning tearful wives and mothers were accompanying their men to the military headquarters in Beresdov.

In a few days the government agencies began to evacuate toward the east to escape the German armies. Many Polish Jews and people from Western Ukraine streamed through the village of Krasnostav in wagons, on bicycles, and on foot. They were headed for the train stations of Slavuta and Shepetovka, carrying a few possessions on their shoulders. They told us to run away with them because the west was in flames. They sat for hours and even days, waiting on over-crowded platforms for any train going east. Some people left on foot for the east. The families of Krasnostav also began to pack. My parents and I were preparing to leave when we heard rumors that everyone was returning because the roads as well as the trains were being bombed, and the rails were badly damaged. My father's mother and his youngest brother and wife came to our house on their way east from Annapole. They buried their baggage in our cellar and went back to Annapole when it became clear that Krasnostav would also be captured.

In the beginning of July some of my family's friends and relatives were hopeful that if the Germans occupied the Ukraine, religion would be restored and the synagogues would be re-opened. They had no idea what Hitler had in store for them. The Ukrainian peasants expressed joy over the advancing Wehrmacht. They believed that they would regain their land once the Germans dissolved the collective farms and they also hoped for the re-opening of their churches. By the fourth of July, the German army had already reached Beresdov county. From that date began the real problems of the Jews of Krasnostav.

Many Ukrainians with whom the Jews had for years lived in harmony dropped their masks and started propaganda against Jews. Since the October Revolution, the peasants had identified Jews with Communists who had collectivized the farms and closed the churches. The old, ugly nickname, "*Zhid*," was again heard in the streets. Slogans against Jews were scrawled on Jewish houses, stores, and schools. The newspaper *Ukrainskoe Slovo* was full of pictures of Jews with ugly faces. Jews were said to have brought on the war while making the Ukrainian people do the fighting for them. "Ukrainians! You shed your blood while the Jews remain in the comfort of their homes." "Jews are fortune makers."

From their headquarters in Beresdov, the Germans ordered every Jew to wear a white armband with the Star of David on the

left sleeve, and to display it at all times. The Ukrainian police quickly organized and began to take care of the Jews. The chief of police, a Russian named Vanka, daily assembled as many Jewish men and women as he could to do hard work, fixing the roads. He beat whoever resisted his work order or who neglected to wear the Star of David. It went on like this for the three weeks that the village of Krasnostav had no official government. The Red Army had left and the Germans had not yet established their government there, because Krasnostav had no military value. Every morning my family would steal out of the village and hide in the fields and bushes for the whole day, ever fearful that the Germans might lose their way and blunder into Krasnostav.

On July 28th I was not feeling well and stayed at home with my mother. In the afternoon, German soldiers roared into town on motorcycles. With the help of Ukrainian police they went from door to door looking for Jews. Two Germans with pistols in their hands came to our house. They tore pictures of our American relatives from the walls and asked us where these well-dressed people lived. In America, I said. The Nazis answered that their army would see them there and would do to them what they were doing to us here. I told them that I was sick, but the Germans made me get up from bed and told me to get going to the marketplace with my mother. There they had assembled all the Jewish men, women and children they could find.

The Ukrainian police made us line up against the wall with our hands raised. I felt that this was the end of us. In my pocket I found a piece of chalk and with it I scrawled the date "28 July 1941" on a pole. I hoped someone would see the date and remember when the Jews of Krasnostav had been killed.

In a few hours, two higher ranking Nazis arrived by automobile. They talked among themselves and gave the order to release us. I rejoiced at being free and seeing my father again. The next day, more Nazis soldiers came and, with the help of the Ukrainian police, found the hiding places of the Jews. My mother and I were hiding in a Ukrainian garden. However, the Nazis gathered only the men. One man attempted to run away and was shot on the spot. Another Jew rebelled against two Germans, taking out a pistol and slightly wounding one of them. They took a terrible revenge on him: he was shot and buried while still alive. At five o'clock in the evening the older men were released and the rest of the men were given shovels to do roadwork. Their mothers, wives and children said good-bye to their loved ones. The Nazis had taken my father and then released him because

with his black beard he looked older than his years. How overjoyed I was to see him! My father, fearing that they would come for him again, requested only one thing—that if the Nazis did kill him, we should bury him in his tallis: he always managed to keep his large woolen prayer shawl with him.

In the ensuing weeks, German motorcyclists came through our town every few days, sending shivers of fear through the people. Rumors spread from neighboring towns that the Germans, aided by the Ukrainian police, had killed many Jews. They released only those men who were artisans, such as shoemakers, tailors and glaziers, because they were useful to the Germans and Ukrainians. They needed tailors, for example, to alter the garments confiscated from the Jews.

I felt that the end might be coming soon. I wrote my name in pencil on the walls of my home. I wanted to leave my mark so that I might be remembered in the future by anyone who might survive. I'd had the same dream so many other eighteen-year-old girls had at that time—to fall in love, marry, have children, and raise them in the same faith my parents had raised me. I was on the threshold of womanhood, when boys had begun to pay attention to me on the street. Now it was senseless to dream. Because I was Jewish the dream had faded.

On the evening of Thursday, August 28, Germans passed through the town. It was thought that they had come to collect money. The Jewish people of Krasnostav went to sleep, not knowing what awaited them. They did not know that this was the last night of their lives.

At daybreak on Friday, as the first rooster crowed, the people awoke and saw that the Ukrainian police were stationed in all the streets and alleys, not allowing anyone to pass. Anyone on the street was chased into the Club (a huge building, formerly owned by one Chuna Kaplan, which had been confiscated by the Soviets and used as a movie theater). With the passing hours, the crowd in the Club grew thicker. Men, women and children were packed into the building. There was hardly room to turn around. The heat was terrible and small children were crying for a drink of water. As more people were forced in, the air grew stuffier. The doors and windows were locked. If someone moved towards the door which opened when more people were pushed in, he was hit. The Germans brought boxes into the Club and shouted, "Empty your pockets! Put your rings and watches—everything—in these boxes. *Schnell. Schnell.*" The people were half crazed, complying with the order, but at the same time praying for a miracle. The

soldiers and their drunken Ukrainian helpers took the better possessions that were turned in—boots and rolls of fabrics. The remaining items were presumably shipped to Germany. My mother's brother Shelik edged towards his young son and whispered, "If you live, do not forget us. Don't be ashamed to beg a piece of bread so you don't die of starvation. Say *kaddish* for us on the sixth day of Elul." Old men were fainting. The screams of the young and the sick grew louder and louder. Two people had already died. The remaining Jews were beginning to envy them.

My mother and I ran into a house on a side street through the back door. Together with Grandmother, Uncle Shelik and family we went into the basement. My mother was crying as she said to me: "My dear daughter – it is not destined for me to take you to the *chuppa*. All my hopes and dreams are coming to nothing. It looks like today we will be separated. No matter how—stay alive! And if God grants you years—and you survive—remember, don't leave our people—I beg you!" I embraced my mother and kissed her, our faces hot with tears. At this time my father was hiding in the attic of my house, praying. The Nazis found him and dragged him to the Club.

German soldiers accompanied by Ukrainian police, both somewhat drunk, entered the house where I was hiding. The soldiers clicked their iron-studded boots and shouted, "*Juden raus*!" Some of them searched the house. I saw one soldier take soap—which was in short supply—from a shelf. We were pushed into the street and guarded by soldiers with rifles. In desperation, as I left, I grabbed a peasant-style kerchief that was lying on a table and tied it around my head. I had been told that I looked like a Christian girl and I hoped that this would help me escape.

I remained at the end of the procession of people to be led out. Noticing that the guards were not watching us carefully, instead of staying with the others, I turned and walked away, trembling. I hesitated, overwhelmed with guilt at leaving my mother, grandmother, and other family members, but my desire to live won out, and so I escaped to my grandmother's house. There I saw Anna—a Ukrainian woman who in the past had helped my grandmother take care of me—stuffing scarves and kerchiefs into the bodice of her dress. Embarrassed at seeing me, she told me in Ukrainian, "*Utikay Duny*" ("Run away, Duny").

I ran out of the house and saw that people were being chased in the direction of the Club. I turned in the opposite direction, not knowing where I was headed. I wandered about, saw empty houses, but did not know whether I should run into one. I heard

dogs barking in courtyards. Then I remembered that my parents had a friend in the village of Yablonovka, near Krasnostav. Anna Maria had known me since I was an infant. She used to help us on Saturdays, cooking cereal for me. She had a boy my age and she would always tease me saying, "Duny will be my daughter-in-law!" I thought of hiding in Anna Maria's house.

At the bridge leading to the Ukrainian section of town, I was stopped by Ukrainian policemen. "Where are you running to?" they asked. "To Anna Maria's. She lives in Yablonovka," I answered. I saw the policemen debating among themselves about what to do with me. After a few minutes, one of them waved to me to go ahead. I started running, looking back, thinking they might shoot at me. When I got to Yablonovka I asked the way to Anna Maria's house: she was not happy to see me.

I told her what had happened and promised that she could have everything in my parents' house if she would hide me. She agreed. She gave me a wide peasant skirt and a kerchief and sent her thirteen-year-old daughter Olga to accompany me to a quiet field. To remain in her house would not be safe: police were searching for Jews who might be hiding among the peasants. I walked with Olga to the field. I sat next to a bush, crying quietly. I looked up at the sky and hoped for a miracle. Each shot that I heard I imagined was aimed at my mother or father or someone else in my family. They must already be dead, I thought. But my instinct for life was so great that I did not want to leave the world while I was so young.

Young and old, mothers and children,
They shot them all like animals.
I lie in the bush and look at the sky.
Birds are flying from one branch to another.
They are free and I envy them.
If I had wings I would fly away to my parents—
Perhaps there is still some life in them—
I would tell them in the last moments of their lives,
I am still with you,
I will never forget your shining faces.

It grew dark and the shooting stopped. Olga came and told me to follow her to her house. I walked with her, my head spinning. Terrible pictures were before my eyes. I tried to visualize how the Germans had killed my family. Anna Maria told me what actually had happened.

From the Club, the Jews were marched to the Huta Forest where graves had been dug the preceding night. Someone who had seen my mother while she was walking, said that she looked terrified, thinking I was already dead.

When the Jews arrived at the forest of Huta (about 5 Km. from Krasnostav) an SS officer with a whip in his hand, ordered everyone to undress. The people stood together in family groups on boards covering the open graves. They kissed and said good-bye to each other. Nobody pleaded for mercy. People were lined up, pressed closely together and they were shot. A single bullet would do for several people: this saved the Germans ammunition. The dead and wounded fell from long boards into a mass grave at the present of cheering Nazis. They grabbed small children by their arms and threw them, dead and dying, into the graves. They covered up the graves but the soil heaved.

The Ukrainian peasants had run into the Jewish homes and robbed everything that remained. That morning many Jews had burned their possessions in their ovens. The Ukrainians searched for hidden belongings. They dug up jars filled with money, and suitcases of clothing; they dragged out pillows, the feathers flying in the street. Krasnostav looked as if a cyclone had hit it.

The next morning I returned to my house with Anna Maria. I did not find my parents or my grandmother, or my uncles or aunts or cousins. All were gone. I wept hysterically for hours. I was terrified, too, at the thought of being alone in the world. We had come on the wagon of Fyodor Filinuk, the same policeman who had waved me on at the bridge. He was Anna Maria's neighbor. I looked on as they loaded the wagon with possessions from my family's home. I saw the black skirt that my grandmother had worn each Saturday to synagogue. I saw a bedspread that my mother had been saving for my dowry. I saw a china closet where my grandmother had kept her good dishes. My heart sank to watch our things being taken in this way. My parents, grandparents, yes, all of them were gone . . . it was no dream. It was all real!

Several weeks later, on Yom Kippur, I once again returned to Krasnostav. I found my uncle Daniel and fell into his arms, sobbing uncontrollably. I learned that Uncle Daniel and his brother-in-law, Berl Goldman, had hidden themselves on August 29th in the home of Berl's father, Piny. They alone of their families survived. Uncle Daniel's wife and their three young children were killed. That evening, Uncle Daniel and Berl came out of hiding in order to pray. I felt guilty for living apart from them. I tore the metal cross from my neck, placed it in my pocket and joined them

in "*Shma Yisroel, adenoy elohenu, adenoy echod.*"

Daniel was in a state of shock. He told me to remain in hiding with him and the few remaining Jews of Krasnostav. "Duny," he said to me, "you are not better than the rest of us." He felt that I must share the fate of my fellow Jews, whatever it would be. He did not want me to stay in Yablonovka. But something told me I would be safer staying with Anna Maria. "Uncle Daniel," I said, "I am younger than you. I want to live." Hearing this, he walked away from me without a word. Sometime during the winter of 1941–1942, Daniel and the remaining Jews of Krasnostav were killed by the Germans in the ghetto of Beresdov.

11

Anna Maria at first allowed me to stay in her stable. I lay on a haystack. I grew accustomed to the smell of the cow and its calf, but my nights were listless. After awhile, Anna Maria let me sleep in her basement. She fed me and I helped her with the housework.

One day, after I had been staying there for a few weeks, she mentioned that the Germans were burning the houses of people found hiding Jews. However, she knew of a Jewish woman in the town who had herself baptized to save her life. "Duny," she said, "I know how much your parents loved you. They wouldn't want you to die so young. We can arrange for you to go to the church to be baptized."

I reminded Anna Maria of my family's Orthodox Jewish beliefs. "How," I asked her, "could I think of turning from my religion?" She answered that being baptized was the only thing that could save me. I felt that I had no choice and agreed. I did not want to die so young.

I could not sleep that night agonizing over the imagined reactions of my family. What would my grandfather Yisroel have said?—he who devoted all his life to Torah and whose home was the center of our religious celebrations? And my grandmother Sarah, who was so sensitive to the needs of everyone else, visiting sick neighbors and comforting them, often sending me to an old sick woman with a glass of strawberry jam or a pot of chicken soup? What would my sainted mother Chanah have said? She always thought of herself last and gave *Tzadokah* with an open hand and an open heart even though we had very little for ourselves. What would the people of Krasnostav, that religious community, have said?

A few weeks later, on a rainy Sunday morning, Anna Maria knocked at my door. Breakfast was ready. I got dressed and went to the kitchen. On the table was milk, bread and eggs. I did not

touch the food. I went with Anna Maria and Fyodor Filinuk in a horse-drawn wagon to the nearby village of Horitz. Filinuk, probably guilty about the looting of my family's house, was willing to let me use his name to create a new identity for myself. In Horitz, there was a church that had been reopened after the German invasion. I heard the church bells in the distance. I began to think of my family. We had preserved Orthodox Jewish ways through all the Soviet government's anti-religious propaganda. How, I wondered, could I now abandon my heritage of which I was so proud?

The church was crowded. Worshippers pushed to get through the door. The candles were burning brightly and I felt faint in the stuffy, incense-filled room. Father Pavel, a tall slender man in his sixties, delivered a long sermon. He spoke about Jesus Christ and his disciples, but not a word about the war or the slaughter of the Jews. Near the end of the service, I was told to go to a nearby room and to remove my outer clothing. I was put knee-down in a tub of water and a crucifix was pressed against my lips. I was given a sip of wine and a piece of bread. Locks of my hair were snipped off in the shape of a crucifix. Water was sprinkled on my head. I wondered if it would wash out the Jewishness from within me. The priest made the sign of a cross over me and pronounced my new name, Maria Filinuk. He concluded, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen." Finally, a silver gilt icon of the Holy Virgin was brought over to me by an altar boy dressed in white. I bowed down and kissed it.

Hundreds of eyes, mostly of elderly men and women, scrutinized me, while tears streamed down my cheeks. I prayed to God for forgiveness. I remembered the story my grandmother Sarah had told me one summer night when I was ten years old, about a mother, Chanah, and her seven sons who lived during the Roman occupation of Israel. They were told to give up the Jewish faith, but they chose death. Then I remembered what my mother had said to me a few days before her death. "Save your young life, my child, any way you can."

The priest instructed me to pray on arising and going to sleep. He urged Anna Maria to teach me the prayers and he told me to attend church every Sunday. People asked me to join them in singing the hymns. "I don't know the words," I replied. When we left the church, I stepped aside for a moment and spat the remaining bread out of my mouth.

After the service, we returned to Anna Maria's house where she had arranged a small celebration for my baptism. The brass samovar was steaming. A few bottles of vodka were sitting on the

table which was covered with the white damask tablecloth that my Grandmother Sarah had used only for Shabbos and holidays. Neighbors arrived with gifts of bread and salt and said they hoped I would be a good Christian and wished me luck. I was numb. I could feel nothing except a headache from all that had happened at the church. Anna Maria told me to stand and to say a grace. I asked her to teach me the words. During the next few days my conscience bothered me and I walked around as if in a daze.

The following Sunday, Anna Maria brought me a certificate from the priest stating that I had been baptized.

Several weeks went by. I seldom left her house for fear of being seen by the police. I was even afraid to go to the nearby well for water. I spent my time helping Anna Maria with the housework. Anna Maria repeatedly reminded me that the Germans were burning the homes of people who sheltered Jews. She hinted that, despite my baptism, it was still unsafe for her if I continued to stay there. It became unbearable for me to remain and I began to think that it was time for me to leave. Anna Maria suggested that I take her daughter's passport so that I could leave safely. The picture was removed and mine was substituted. I was now prepared in my mind to leave Anna Maria's house.

Anna Maria's son Alex had been mobilized into the Russian Army a few weeks before the war broke out, and she had not received any letters from him for a long time. I heard her say she thought he must have been killed. One dark night in mid-October, somebody knocked on the door. Anna Maria was startled to see Alex—in a torn jacket and pants with a bloody bandage on his left arm. Alex bolted into the house and asked for something to eat—he had not seen food for days. After he finished eating, he filled us in on what had happened to him.

The Germans had caught his battalion and some boys were able to escape. Alex, however, had been shot at and a bullet had struck his arm, which he had bandaged with part of his torn shirt. He told me that I could help his partisans by going into the village and stealing food for them. He told us they were in the forest of Slavuta—many of whom had been Russian soldiers—disrupting German munitions shipments by throwing grenades onto the railroad tracks near Slavuta.

Maria packed some black bread, ham, and a few apples in a rucksack and Alex left. I had an idea: I could go into the forest toward Slavuta and try to help the Russian partisans. Whatever lay ahead could not be worse that what I had already gone through. I packed my rucksack and a small torn suitcase and left the house.

I ran through fields towards the forest, excited and nervous. I carried a big stick with me in case dogs chased me. Hungry and thirsty, I walked and sometimes ran until late in the evening when I reached the thick forest on the outskirts of Slavuta, my feet swollen and blistered. I did not see anyone. All I heard were the birds in the trees. When night fell, I lay down on the grass by a tree and slept.

In the middle of the night, I was terrified to see a bearded man standing over me. Speaking in Russian, he told me not to be afraid and I told him who I was. He said that his name was Stephen Pogoda, a partisan, and that there were three men and one girl on a mission. During the night, they went to the village to steal food. He described his job to destroy German ammunition shipments. I immediately agreed to help him.

During the day, he hid. The next night, when it was very dark, I left for a village five miles away. I approached a house with doors and windows closed. I went into the stable and took food for cows and pigs. I was startled and ran away, finding my way back to the forest with difficulty.

I stayed in the forest for almost a week, living like an animal. I ate all kinds of wild fruits and raw vegetables. It was a miracle that I did not die of starvation or the cold. I made several trips to steal food.

One day, the Germans made a raid into the forest. Terrified, I ran back to Anna Maria's house and asked her if I could stay with her for a few more days. She reminded me again that it was dangerous for her to keep me. "If the Gestapo finds out that I have a Jewish girl in my house, they will shoot me and my daughter and burn the house down, as if I were collaborating with the enemy. Our Father in Heaven will watch over you here." She gave me a metal cross and a prayer book. I shook with fear. Anna Maria then told me about Koretz, a town not too far from Slavuta, where some Jews still lived. I walked in the evening under the stars, with no real idea of where I was going. On the way, I saw a former friend of mine, Kathy, who used to eat with me after classes. Now she hardly recognized me. Although she knew that I was Jewish, I was still surprised at how she walked right past me. She had changed radically in such a short time.

I walked for an entire day. Before nightfall, I reached Koretz, on the Polish side of the Ukraine. I hoped that here I would find some Jewish people. On the street, I saw a man with a long gray beard, walking with his head down, deep in thought. All of a sudden, a man in a Nazi uniform appeared, rushed over to him and pulled his beard. The poor man fell to the sidewalk. Another Nazi came

along, took out a pair of scissors from his pocket, and laughing, cut off the beard. Nobody else was around. I was shocked.

This was my first impression of what was going on in Koretz. I walked to the next street and saw several houses with the Star of David painted on them in blue. I knocked on one door and an old woman opened it, out of breath. She looked pale, her eyes full of terror. I told her who I really was, where I came from and she welcomed me with open arms and tears of joy. She said that she had two daughters and that I could be the third one.

Her name was Sara. She had a son in the Russian Army. "Jack was mobilized a week before the war began. Maybe he ran away and some strangers are taking care of him." She gave me food and set me up in her house.

One night, a neighbor, Malka, came to the house and told us that she had been working as a *steubendinst* (maid) in the office of the German Headquarters on the Main Street. "But I was fired today because I am Jewish," she said. "The commandant wants to replace the Jewish workers with Ukrainians to help with domestic jobs." I couldn't sleep that night. I had the idea of going with my alien passport to the Ortkommandater (headquarters) and asking for a job. Perhaps I would be able to earn some money and buy food. I had no choice.

The next morning, I went there. I told the Germans I was a Christian girl from Eastern Ukraine and needed a job. And I showed them my passport. The Germans needed servants and I was instantly hired. My job was to help in the kitchen, warm up the food, wash the dishes, clean the rooms, brush the uniforms and shine the military boots. I was paid a few German marks and allowed to eat the leftovers from the officers' lunches. After I had worked there for several weeks, I asked one of the officers, a Lieutenant Kraus, to give me a certificate stating that I was employed by the Germans. This certificate enabled me to get a food card from the town hall. Now I was able to receive food and share it with Sara and her daughters. They appreciated this and treated me more than ever as a member of their family.

While working, I listened to the German radio. I heard Hitler say: "The Jews are the image of the devil. The German people will regain their health only after they exterminate the Jewish virus." From the windows I saw trucks, camouflaged with branches and leaves, carrying German soldiers toward the eastern front.

Lieutenant Kraus, a career military officer in his mid-forties, taught me how to greet the Nazis when I arrived for work in the morning. "Your greeting will be 'Heil Hitler' instead of 'good

morning.' Use this same greeting when you leave work." He showed me how to hold out my arm when greeting. He once said to me, "Maria du bist ein anschtandig (outstanding) fraulein" It seemed that I had made a good impression on him.

One bright, crisp morning when the frost-covered trees were glittering in the sun, I got to work as usual, cleaning the room, and heard the soldiers talking about the Jews of Koretz. On April 10, 1942, they planned to assemble all men aged sixteen to fifty and send them to a work camp. That evening, when I returned home from work, I passed this news on to my adopted family. The girls spread the word to the people in the neighborhood. Many Jewish men went into hiding. On the appointed day, those who were rounded up were shot. I thanked God that I was able to save the lives of some men, even for a few weeks. And Sara and her daughters were grateful to me.

Day after day, things remained the same. While I shined the boots of the Nazis, I heard them talk about new taxes they would make the Jews pay in 1942, and about collecting furs and jewels from Jews. I gave all this news to the people I stayed with and it was passed on to other Jews.

I continued to work until April 15th. On that delightful spring day, as I was returning from work, I recognized a Ukrainian from Krasnostav working on a telephone pole. He seemed to have recognized me and yelled something; I walked on quickly but he climbed down and tried to catch me, I ducked down a side street. This encounter changed everything for me and I discussed it with the family. I told them that I had decided to quit my job at the Ortkommandater since I was afraid my Jewish identitiy would become known. They agreed that I was making a wise decision.

At dawn on May 5th, a woman neighbor knocked at our window, woke us up and said that German SS troopers had surrounded the Jewish ghetto. I dresssed as fast as I could, gathered my hard-earned diploma from pedagogical school, and the few precious pictures I had of my family. The pictures included photos of my aunts, uncles, and cousins from the U.S.A., photos that I used to show proudly at family gatherings in my grandmother's house in Krasnostav—the only treasures I had left. I had managed to conceal them all this time in my clothing and now I knew I must destroy them. Burning them in the oven, I felt as if I was losing all connection with my past.

I was in a state of turmoil. The future frightened me. I said goodbye to my friends in the house, wondering if I would ever see them

again. We heard shots in the street. About an hour later, two Ukrainian policemen broke into the house, after banging on the door, and chased us into the street. I showed them my passport, baptismal certificate, and German work certificate, to convince them that I was not Jewish. But they weren't interested in my papers. They brought us to the marketplace, and I was taken to a German SS trooper. I told him that I was from the Russian Ukraine. The Ukrainian policeman, however, said he thought I was Jewish. The SS trooper asked me who I was and why I was found in a Jewish house. He wanted me to produce Ukrainian identification papers. I showed him my documents including the certificate from the Kommandater and my passport. I told him I was dragged in by mistake. The trooper let me go with the warning, "Stay away from the Jews." I left quickly, not knowing where to go. I was so agitated that I was afraid I would faint. I asked myself what my crime was that I had to run away. Being born Jewish?

I ran over earth chilled by early spring frost. I saw from a distance how the SS were herding our people like cattle, then tears clouded my eyes. In the street lay the bodies of those who had resisted and had been shot. I heard the dying cries of people on the sidewalks, the shouts and screams of the condemned. I smelled blood and children's urine.

I ran towards a highway with my rucksack and torn suitcase hoping to hitch a ride. I stood on the highway for hours, tired and hungry, until it grew dark. In the distance was a house. I approached it. It was dark inside but there were dogs barking. Frightened, I stole around the back to the barn and fell asleep exhausted, in a haystack. I woke up in the middle of the night and began to think of my parents. I felt that little hope was left for me; it would have been better to have died together with them. It was still dark outside. So I headed back to the highway and I waited for a vehicle to pass. After sunrise, I saw an open truck come towards me, a German military truck with soldiers. I asked for a lift and the driver answered, "*Fraulein, kommen Sie bitte auf.*" I climbed into the back of the truck. We passed villages, beautiful countryside, with white blossoms, apple trees. The soldiers offered me a piece of bread and asked where I was going. I told them I was going to Dubno to find my sick brother. We approached Dubno around six o'clock in the evening. I got off the truck and the driver said, "*Auf wiedersehen.*"

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I knew nobody in Dubno. This was the first time I had ever been there. I had not changed my clothes for many days and I had to pick lice off myself. I was hungry and thirsty, and didn't know where to turn. I wandered about for awhile, looking for a Jewish face, then I sat on an empty bench. I was thinking of what to say if someone were to ask me what I was doing there. I decided to say that I was from Eastern Ukraine and that I had come to Dubno to find a brother who was in a hospital for war prisoners.

Spring was in full bloom and I planned to spend the night sleeping on the bench. I wondered if any Jews were still alive here. Dubno was a town in the Ukraine that had belonged to Poland. In September, 1939, the Russian Army marched in, meeting little resistance from the Polish Army, and took over the city. At that time, I was teaching school not far from the Polish border. I remember being told by Communist leaders that the Russian soldiers had crossed the border to lend a helping hand to the Ukrainian people who were being exploited by Polish capitalists and landlords.

After a little while, a couple in their mid-forties came over and sat next to me. The woman looked at me sympathetically. They asked me what I was doing there alone, looking so serious. "It looks as if you've come here on a trip," the woman said. I told them my prepared story about looking for my brother in a prisoner-of-war hospital. The woman, Sophia, introduced herself and her husband, Ivan Vlasov. I told them that my name was Maria Filinuk. On my neck I was wearing a large cross. Sophia studied me closely. She said that among people one cannot get lost. She invited me to go home with them and to sleep the night in their house because it was too late to look in the hospital for my brother. I thanked them and accepted their offer. I told them

that they were kind people. I thought to myself that this couple must have been sent to me from heaven.

The three of us went to the Vlasovs' house. I could see that their house had belonged to a rich Jewish family before the war: it was well-furnished with a mezuzah on the doorpost. In a corner bookcase there were still some Jewish books and in a china cabinet I saw a menorah. Among other things, Mrs. Vlasov told me that there was a Jewish ghetto in Dubno where Jewish artisans received coupons for food. These people were important because the Germans needed their services. The major streets, however, were free of Jews. I listened and was happy to hear that some Jews still remained alive.

The next day I told the Vlasovs that I must go to the hospital to find my brother. Sofia decided to go along with me while Mr. Vlasov went to work at a packing and shipping plant. Mrs. Vlasov and I walked over a bridge and beyond for about an hour until we finally came to a jail with a tall fence around it. I told the warden my story about my brother and he let us in past an iron gate. I saw some ex-soldiers looking very pale, some on crutches, some with bandages. The warden called out the name Vasily F. Filinuk but nobody answered to it. He called again. After that the warden said that maybe the soldier had died. "Lots of them have died during these last few months. Or maybe he was transferred to another hospital."

We went to the information bureau and they told us there was no soldier listed there by that name. However they admitted that they did not have all the papers for each prisoner. It was lucky for me that they didn't. We left for home. On the way, I sobbed, pretending I was heartbroken, to convince Mrs. Vlasov that my story was true. The Vlasovs offered to let me stay with them and I accepted, telling them that I would continue to look for my brother, perhaps even look for work in town.

On May 26th, during the Shavuoth holiday, I went out to look for a job and came upon scenes that are still engraved in my mind. I saw a big procession stretched out in the middle of the street, endless lines of weary men, women, and children, pale, frantic and desperate. Surrounded by police, they plodded through the streets with sacks and bundles, taking their last steps to their graves.

The police, with revolvers swinging at their hips, were hurrying them on. I stood, almost paralyzed, staring at this horrible scene. It was a living nightmare for me to again witness the horror of Krasnostav and Koretz. A bearded old man stopped, un-

able to take another step, and eased himself to the ground. A German SS man moved over to him and simply shot him. A younger man, possibly sick, stumbled and could not get up. He was prodded a couple of times and shot also. There was a wagon full of dead bodies at the end of the procession. An elderly woman was clutching a baby with her left arm and holding the hand of a five-or six-year old girl with her right hand. The girl was crying out something that sounded like: "Don't take me with you, Grandma! Let me go to my mama!" The grandmother tried to explain something to her, pointing up to the sky, and they continued walking. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian police were running wild, whipping people on. Some old people were tethered to horse carts. . . I had to move away from these executioners as fast as I could. I could no longer bear to watch it.

I did not look for a job as I had planned but returned to the Vlasovs' house. Sofia gave me a sandwich and a glass of milk, but I could not eat. I said the Catholic prayer at my bed, aware that Sofia was looking at me and was apparently satisfied with my story. I asked her for a pail of hot water to soak my feet which were blistered because I had no shoes. I hardly slept that night.

Sunday afternoon was a warm spring day and the sky was friendly, without a cloud. After dinner, around seven o'clock, some neighbors congregated on the doorsteps of the Vlasovs' house, for small talk. Some of them were slightly drunk. They started to talk about the war and about Jews—how they were cowards and swindlers.

Tanka, a plump short woman, wore a high-fashion dress formerly belonging to a rich Jewish woman. The dress was too tight for her but she probably had never worn such fine clothing before. "I can't wait to take over the Goldberg house," she said. "How long do you think will they stay there?" A man answered her, "He is a doctor. They'll hold on to him for a while." I felt that the Nazis were succeeding in Dubno because there was no opposition from the local population.

Vasily, a tall man with a red face said, "The Germans are well-armed and try to impress the people with their strength. They have taken away all the animals and killed them and sent the meat to Germany." Mr. Vlasov agreed, adding that at the shipping plant, all the machinery was being sent to Germany. The Nazis were also taking the best Jewish belongings with them.

The door to the house was open, and now and then their voices fell into a whisper. They were discussing the fact that a number of Jews were on the loose. "If somebody is hiding Jews, they will burn down the house," an older woman said. "You know, Sofia?

This girl in your house looks very Jewish. She even talks with a Jewish accent." I became very frightened, realizing that I was not convincing everyone that I was one of them. Just then Mrs. Vlasov came into the house for a drink of water. She looked me over and asked me to join the others outside. Everyone stared at me with doubtful looks. I told them about my imaginary brother but I don't think they bought my story. I was terrified: they might turn me in to the Germans. How long dared I remain in this house!

In the morning, I jumped out of bed and dressed hurriedly. I went into the kitchen for a glass of milk. Mrs. Vlasov was still sleeping as I went out into the street to find work. On the way, I read several posters nailed up on doors and walls in the street. "Men and women between the ages of seventeen and fifty—register at once at the Arbeitsamt!" "Go to beautiful Germany. Thousands of Ukrainians are already there waiting for you to join them." "You will help to win the war against your enemies—the Jews and the Bolsheviks." "We need to recruit as many as we can to help the German factories fill in for workers who have gone to the front." "Ukrainian men and women! Germany offers you an opportunity to do useful work. You will be well-provided for, your families will be cared for. They will receive financial support." "Men and women should appear at the labor exchange at Dubno from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.—General Commissioner Brigadierfuehrer Brand."

Pictures showed smiling Ukrainians working happily for the Germans. Hitler had said: "All human culture depends on the success of the German Army. The Fuehrer of the German Reich freed you from the criminal Bolsheviks. Come to Germany to show your gratitude. It is in your own interest to work for Germany!"

I thought it over and decided that going to Germany would not be bad for me because no one knew me there. What could I lose? The man from Krasnostav had recognized me. And the Vlasovs were suspicious of me. Going to Germany seemed like my last chance for survival.

I registered at the Arbeitsamt as Maria Filinuk: age – eighteen, single; occupation – maid; religion – Greek Catholic. I received my *arbeits karte* (labor card). I was sent for a medical checkup to see if I had any communicable diseases. I was examined, X-rayed and pronounced healthy.

Before the medical, however, I was interviewed by a young woman who spoke fluent German, probably a *Volks Deutsche*, a German Ukrainian. Sitting at a big table, she asked me why I

wanted to go to Germany. I told her that I had a brother working there and that I wanted to see him, adding that my brother had written in his letters that he was well-treated and awaited my arrival. She was not surprised at my answer and gave me a number, writing my name on a long list.

After I was accepted, I returned to the Vlasovs' house to get my few things. I threw my valuables—some woolen fabric that had been sent to me by my American Uncle Henry, a pair of worn shoes, a kerchief, and my life-giving identity card—into my battered cardboard suitcase. I tried tying it up with rope, but it would not hold together, so I had to stuff everything into a rucksack instead. Mrs. Vlasov did not want to let me go, and I knew immediately that it was a mistake to have come back. She asked me to wait until her husband returned from work, and my legs began to tremble. I pleaded with her to let me go. I told her that I must not delay any longer in looking for my brother. She asked me for my kerchief which she liked. I took it from my rucksack and gave it to her. Then she let me go.

I ran, as if from a fire, with my rucksack over my shoulder, exhausted until I reached the train station in the outskirts of Dubno. It was crowded with people waiting to go to Germany. I avoided looking at the other faces, afraid that I might be recognized. Before I was allowed to board the train I was told to report to the medical center where I was deloused.

The train, a converted cattle car, waited in the station. On the outside of it were painted slogans: "Learn the skills of civilized work!" "True Patriots, Hitler brings bread, Stalin brings death."

Promptly on Monday, June the 1st, 1942, at 3 p.m., I left Dubno with two thousand others. There was a blast of the whistle, and the train started slowly to pull out of the station. Mothers, sisters, and friends ran alongside the train, waving handkerchiefs and blowing kisses. No one said good-bye to me.