

ANTONINA KHELEMENDYK-KOKOT

KOLKHOZ CHILDHOOD AND GERMAN SLAVERY

MEMOIRS



ANTONINA KHELEMENDIK-KOKOT

•

**KOLKHOZ CHILDHOOD
AND
GERMAN SLAVERY**

MEMOIRS

"I hope my memoirs will also be read in Ukraina by my people, my friends, will be read by their children as well. It is just because of this that I decided this book to be edited keeping the spelling used in Ukraina."

I DEVOTE THE FIRST PART OF MY MEMOIRS TO
THE GRANDSON OF MY SISTER MARIA
PESHCHEROVA - PROFESSOR ANATOLIY
ANATOLIEVICH PESHCHEROV IN MEMORY OF
TORTURES HIS GRANDFATHER FEDOR
PESHCHEROV SUFFERED

I DEVOTE THE SECOND PART OF MY MEMOIRS TO
ALL UKRAINIANS WHO WERE TAKEN OUT TO
GERMANY FOR FORCED LABOUR, TO THOSE WHO
RETURNED TO UKRAINA AND TO THOSE WHO
GRIEVE ALL THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR NATIVE LAND

Author

•

*This book can be bought addressing Antonina Kokot, 228
Cabot St., Oshawa, Ont., L1Y 5S1 Canada*

Printed in Ukraine, 1993



Antonina Khelemendyk - Kokot. Photo 1958 Canada

PREFACE

I am not a writer so let the readers forgive my not thorough stylistics or composition of my memoirs. Memoirs are not work of art after all.

If my life had not been typical, I should not have written about it, however I was born at the time when Ukraina was covered with dark clouds of Stalin collectivization, during which death with its scythe of hunger stroke millions of my countrymen.

We still did not quite recover from one disaster when another came: German occupation of Ukraina, in the result of which I, as well as hundreds of thousands people like me, became slaves of Hitler "novogo ladu" (new system). I was taken out to Germany for forced labour.

This fell not only to my lot and that's why I decided to describe it, to describe everything as it was, without any prettyfying or darkening certain facts or episodes from life. In my memoirs I describe my orphan childhood and my youth in slavery. I describe to let our offsprings know how dreary our life was. I was also urged to write these memoirs by the fact that in Ukraina the fate of those taken out to Germany for forced labour was shown till now as the fate of betrayers of Motherland.

There is "nema zerna nepravdy za soboyu" (no corn of lie), I have nothing to hide. But I have something to show: Stalin and Hitler regimes cruelty to the children, youth and all other people.

I should not have written these memoirs if I were indifferent to my Motherland or if I had forgotten it, if I had forgotten all my people in Ukraina and also those with whom I lived for years in slavery.

We, taken out to Germany for forced labour, have clear conscience, we did not do anything wrong to our Motherland. And the fact that many of us found themselves in the West after the war and did not return home is not our fault. The reason was terror, famine, death, prisons, injustice which we ourselves and our people suffered from Stalin regime.

About detailed reasons why we did not return to our Motherland I write at the end of these memoirs.

Author

PART ONE

KOLKHOZ CHILDHOOD



This is the map of Zaporozhye region on which it is shown: Gulyaypole - region center for village Kopani in which I was born, Pologi - railway station nearest to our village, Orikhiv and Berdyansk - towns where I studied in medical schools.

ORPHAN CHILDHOOD BEFORE COLLECTIVIZATION

I was born on the 24th of April 1925 in village of Kopani-Liman, Dolinskiy village Soviet, Gulyaypole region, Zaporizhye province. Gulyaypole is described as a town in Zaporizhye province, UkrSSR, region center on the river Gaychuri. (Dniپر basin), 8 km. to the South-East from the railway station Gulyaypole. 17 thousand people (1964). Plants: agricultural equipment, brick and tile, butter manufacturing, mechanical shops, shoe producing factory, industrial and food group of enterprises, inter kolkhoz building organization, region amalgamation "Sil'gospstekhnika". Schools: 10 of general education, one for working people and musical school. The town was founded in the 18th century. Well, as for Zaporozhye province, it is known to everybody, — the center of springing up and development of Ukrainian Sich Kozatstva. From here comes the name of the city Zaporizhzhya and Zaporizhye province.

I was named Antonina, my second name was Petrivna Khelemendyk. My father, Petro, came from zaporiz'kikh kozaks. My mother came from the family of middle peasants, but her grandfather and grandmother were rather prosperous although they almost never hired help but worked themselves with their family. My mother was also of Kozak origin, from Andrushchenko family and her name was Melaniya Petrivna. She was from village Nizhnya Danilivka, Orikhivskiy region, Zaporizhye province. Village Nizhnya Danilivka almost flew with town Orikhiv.

I became an orphan when I was eight months old. My mother died from pneumonia, being seriously ill for two weeks only. At that time there were few doctors and that's why she had to leave this earth life. My mother was married before but her husband died two years earlier also from lung disease. They had one daughter, Mariyka, she was four years old when her father died.

At that time my father worked in their farm, he looked after horses and cattle and he was a full orphan since he was four-years old and he had to work as a farm labour in my mother's family.

My father, Petro, lived together with Zinchenko family, that is with the family of my mother's first husband. He was very hard-working, respectful and my mother and her first husband loved him greatly.

After the death of my mother's first husband my mother married him, this orphan, a hard-working and kind chap. He, as they said, came to know the particulars of the farm and all jobs in it.

My mother's first daughter was left without her father and so my father began to bring her up and soon, in a year after my mother's second marriage, I was born. It was, as I had already said, on the

24th of April 1925.

After my birth my mother lived only for eight months, she died and we, two sisters, were left orphans with my father. My sister was five then. She also had maternal aunts and grandmother. It was they who incited her to live with her grandmother because my father was only stepfather to her. So our mother's death separated me from my sister for many long years. When the grandmother, having lived for ten more years, died, my sister was taken by her own aunt to look after her children. So my elder sister became a hired hand of her own aunt. Her life was unenviable. She did not have an opportunity to go to school. She went to school only for two years: she had to do the work about the house.

When my sister was 17 she married a man who was older than she was, he was born in Donetsk and he took her to the town of Artemivsk, so she left the work at her aunt's in Orikhov. I did not see her since 1926 and I did not know whether my maternal sister lived anywhere.

This was our life, it was not merry, it was mangled. She knew that she had her own sister somewhere but in those years of terrible Stalin regime, at the time of "ezhovshchina" and then "berievshchina" you could not allow yourself to look for your dear close people. It was the time of cruelty, famine, exile, arrests, the time which enveloped all our country.

At that time what people in the Ukraine wished most of all was to hide themselves well from persecution. Before the revolution there was tsar regime in Ukraine, alien people kept power in their hands. Soon after the revolution it became still worse, at first they gave land to peasants but in a short time they took it from peasants by Stalin's order. They did not only took the land away but began cruelly pursuing those who were working hard, who by their sweat and corns achieved better life. Representatives of power spied on those who were as they thought enemies of the new power. At first it was said that the new power came to liberate poor people from tsar yoke to give equal rights to everybody, they advanced slogans according to which the whole land should belong to people and all plants to workers. People and especially poor people believed their promises at once. Many poor people began to collaborate with the new power, they began to serve the new power, some of them became clerks. And soon it happened that these former poor people were the people who began to take away the belongings from prosperous people which they earned by hard work. They took it away in spite of the fact that the prosperous people and their families worked hard on the land which the Soviet power gave to them and so they became just a bit richer. The whole income which the prosperous people earned during many years was taken away from them, well organized agricultural farms were destroyed. The tide of organizing kolkhozes led at first to borrowing some stock from



My mother Melaniya Andrushchenko-Zinchenko. Photo was taken in 1920 and mother died in October 1925. Mother was buried in village Kopani, Gulyaypil's'kiy region

**Oh, mother, mother! What can I do with myself?
All my orphan life I grieve for you!**

prosperous peasants and then these peasants to avoid their joining kolkhozes volunteered to give them either live-stock — a horse, a cow — or some stock — a cart, a plough, a seeding-machine and so on. But it was not enough for the builders of the new system. In villages, they began to take away peasants' property using force. At first, as they said, carts were riding along the street and the founders of a kolkhoz dropped in the farm forcing the owner to "pozichit"* to kolkhoz either a horse or a cow, or a calf, or a cart, or a harrow in order, so to say, to give the kolkhoz a start and then some time in future it, that is, kolkhoz would return everything they borrowed. But these were just words as everybody knew that not a single kolkhoz would ever return what was borrowed. However the peasants "pozichali" to get rid of the impudent new masters of the village.

At that time my father had other troubles because he buried his wife and was left with an infant in arms. My father could not manage to take care after me. And I was crying being hungry and I had no nurse and he had a farm to work at. Thus my father gave the kolkhoz some of his stock on condition that when he could need some stock or a horse, he would have the right to take it from kolkhoz to do some job. An agreement is an agreement but my father never made use of what he gave to the kolkhoz. It was not because he did not want to but because he could not — he was not given. He had to cooperate with neighbours, they shared livestock not horses, because none of them had already had horses at that time, but they shared cows to harness.

It happened so that under new kolkhoz system even cows were hard pressed. Instead of grazing, chewing and giving milk they had to learn to go with horse's collar on and sometimes they had to do it from two to nine weeks. However the cows had to give milk because new power taxed each farm and the taxes should be paid by natural products: it was necessary to give milk to the state and each time the quantity of the milk required was increased. Those people, who most of all tried to achieve easy life in kolkhoz, some idlers, drunkards wandered about the yards, peeping into each corner.

Father after my mother's death had hard times, he was worn out... he could not drudge on: a lot of work to do, the man had no wife and the child was motherless. The field was not tilled, the cattle was not looked after, the child was constantly crying. And it was terrible, all these kolkhoz executors did all they wanted to with the peasants. Volodimir Il'ich Lenin was dead, he was done away with, Iosip Vissarionovich Stalin came to power, who ordered to take everything away from prosperous peasants, to organize kolkhozes and radgosp, to make people work in kolkhoz, and those, who did not want to, should be punished — exiled to Siberia, to Kazakhstan, to

* "pozishit" - to lend.

cold steppes, or to the far taiga, they should even be punished to death.

Peasants became anxious, worried, they did not know what to do. Nobody wanted to leave their home, set up by their fathers, grandfathers and whole generations. At first the peasants were so scared that they gave up for taxes even hens, pigs, calves. New power determined the quantity and kind of what they had to keep and give up to the state. The requirements were constantly increasing. Stalin introduced "p'yatyrichka", which set restrictions on peasants and their further requirements. Fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers were crying, grieving, cursing the new power, cursing their unenviable fate.

At that time my father was twenty two, at the time when my mother died. My father was carrying me in his hands, he was chewing bread for me, calming me down, trying to stop my crying. Once a young woman came to our yard and saw my father in despair.

She had heard from some people that my father was widowed and was left with a baby. The woman was a widow too and had two small daughters. She began talking with my father and offered him to help with the child. It was three months later after my mother's death, I was almost one year old. Father having found out that the woman was a widow proposed her to marry him, to unite their widowed fates, to bring up children together, to work together, at the farm. The widow agreed and he married her.

It became a bit better at our home but not for a long time. New order showed its real worth. The representatives of sil'rada and kolkhoz were constantly going to the farms and registering everything and demanding to lend them something because they considered that the owners had too much. They asked to do it by peasant's own will but this voluntereness was imposed. At that time we had two cows but father had to share them with my sister and he gave one cow to the grandmother to feed her granddaughter. And he did so with all other things, we shared everything with the grandmother meaning for Mariyka, my sister. As my father said everything was my mother's property.

Father married for the second time, his wife was also from a rich family because all its members were working hard and all together, they kept common household, save money together and gradually became rich. They had a large field, a large garden, in which there were many nut trees, and they also had a large bee-garden. Thus they lived as prosperous peasants, nobody was idle, everything was done in time — ploughing, sowing, mowing, reaping. They had many horses, all stock required at the farm such as ploughs, harrows and others. They had quite a lot of cows, pigs, let alone hens, geese, ducks. They also had a large flock of sheep.

* "p'yatyrichka" - five-year plan

Everything was their own.

Thus the new power decided to appropriate what was accumulated by this hard-working family. Everything was inventoried and the host himself was entered in the list. Then the grandfather called the family council and knowing the policy of the new power, they decided to give to the kolkhoz what they wanted. Then the grandfather called the representatives of the kolkhoz and said to them to take what they needed. Carts from the kolkhoz came at once, the executives loaded 12 sheep, hehs, geese, ducks on them. And they thought that the question was settled.

But it did not happen as they thought. At least they did not think so in the sil'rada and kolkhoz management. The grandfather was entered in the list of "kurkul's" and for some time the grandfather did not know about it. When father's wife removed to us she brought a lot of things given to her by her father. Thus she brought a loom, on which one can weave linen for any cloth needed in the household. At that time in villages they weaved various bed-spreads, thin linen for trousers and still thinner for shirts and skirts. All this was homemade.

And so in our "hata" (house) appeared new mother. She was very hard-working. When I was older I began to understand that my stepmother could turn her hand to anything, she could do everything — she seemed to be a professional dressmaker, villagers brought her cloth to sew any thing — from warm coat to felt boots of sheep felt hair, which were worn in winter. Father liked it very much, he was proud of such hostess.

But that was not enough for a woman. Except hands of gold my stepmother lacked a broad sincere heart, lacked a common gift to bring up somebody else's child. That's why I grew as a blade of grass at the road. Some years passed before I understood that she was not my own mother. It was very difficult for me to live, knowing this. And when I was four years old my stepmother made up her mind and told me the following: If somebody asked me, I should say that I was the daughter of another woman. At first I did not quite understand it and when somebody asked me I answered as I was told. Some neighbours told me the truth, they told me that my mother was in a grave. And then I seemed to feel some vague blame before my stepmother because I was not her own daughter. Her attitude to me was very cold but I understood that she had her own two daughters, she cherished them, she nursed them. And I was left alone and was sitting somewhere in the corner trying to behave so that nobody would scold me for some fault. I understood that children used to do what was not right. I was crying more often. Nobody caressed me, nobody pat on the back. I had no mother, I had nobody who could press me to his chest. I took it to my heart, I felt it keenly. And thus I began to run to my mother's grave much more often and there, lying on the grass, I was crying and asking my mother to rise from her coffin because it was very difficult for

me to live with the stepmother. And so I was lying and crying on my mother's grave till late at night. I was searched, called, they did not know where I was. Then our neighbour said I was at the cemetery near my mother's grave. They came and took me away and began to scare me, they said that a dead man would come out of the coffin and take me with him. And then I realized that my mother would never rise from the coffin and I stopped going to the cemetery.

Since that time I was scared, especially when it was getting dark, and was totally scared at night. I, as it was getting dark, ran home.

When I was four years old, I was ordered to do this or that — to pick some grass for pigs, to feed cattle. And all this I had to do without any complaint being afraid of beating.

I always liked to go to the field with my father, I liked to ride on horseback, I liked to lead the horse when weeding, when hilling potatoes or maize or sunflowers. As far as I remember I always led the horse. It was my favourite horse, he was named Arsentiy. Later on this horse was taken to the kolkhoz and was lost there. At that time there were many horses in the kolkhoz and somebody who did not like kolkhozes poisoned horses. I heard it from my own father as he was passing through the kolkhoz yard and telling my stepmother, his wife, about it. Many people were suspected of poisoning the horses, later on some of them were arrested and shot and among them were innocent people.

My stepmother's elder daughter Anna was seven and it was she who looked after me, and saw that I should not fall when I was still a baby. I was very grateful to her for her guardianship when I grew older as I was growing like grass at the road which could be trampled down by everybody. We had good neighbours, they had two daughters and two sons. Their eldest daughter died from some lung disease and was buried near my mother's grave. So aunt Paliivna always kept in order her daughter's grave and my mother's as well. I was glad to have such kind neighbours, they helped me many times to complete some work about the yard. Most of the work in our yard was put on my weak shoulders. My father started working in kolkhoz although he was not a member of kolkhoz yet, and my stepmother was forced to weave linen for sacks for kolkhoz. Then I and stepmother's daughters were left at home to till our kitchen-garden in summer, to tend pigs, rabbits, they were all hungry. I often sent the geese to the grass and I should watch them not to do some harm and the geese liked to give me some losses as that kolkhoz Stalin system did to all people. So I thought then for some reason.

And really as I later came to the conclusion, the new system did harm to the people and mostly, as it seems to me, to the Ukrainian people. Because in Ukraina the peasants did not want to join kolkhozes, they did not want to do what they were told to do by "dvadtsyatipyatitsyachniki" sent from Moscow. However our people were put "pod stenku" i.e. shot for disobedience, they were

considered to be the enemies of people, enemies of the party, enemies of the leader of all peoples, "father of all oppressed" — Stalin. People were in low spirits, they were very upset. From day to day they were waiting for something, something which they could not foresee. All were not sure of the very next day, nobody knew what would follow then.

Though I was small, I was listening to people talk and though I was far from being adult, I began to understand something. Sometimes sitting in the corner and listening to older people talk, I was pondering over the destiny of people. Father and stepmother were constantly talking in low voices that all would be forced to join kolkhoz, and those who would not volunteer, would be punished, they would take their property away. Mother and father were talking about it quietly, they were whispering. At that time I had already had a brother Ivan. He was three years old yet and I was about five. My little brother was a very clever boy and all of us loved him — he was the youngest one. My father subscribed to a newspaper, the title of which was "Komunist". He brought it in the evening and was reading to the stepmother as she was spinning and weaving all the evenings for us and in the day time for kolkhoz. My father was very obliging if somebody asked him to do something, he never refused. Father did not join the kolkhoz yet and it became a problem for us, my father sent me to school, however at school the teacher said if a father did not join the kolkhoz, the child of such father had no right to go to school. He said that there should be a certificate from kolkhoz management. I came home and told my father about it. It happened so that my two step-sisters went to school and I was not admitted because they began going to school when there was no prohibition to children, whose parents did not join kolkhoz, to study at school.

My father had nothing else to do but to join kolkhoz. So he joined kolkhoz nominally, took the certificate from kolkhoz management so I could be admitted to school and gave it to me. I took the certificate, came to school and gave it to the teacher. He registered me in the first form. My father was a bit mistaken, I was not seven yet, I was only five years and six months old, but I longed to school, I wanted to learn reading. I learnt the alphabet rather quickly and began to put letters together. I took that large newspaper "Komunist" and looked through it together with my brother and my sisters.

Even then I could find from it that Stalin system tried to bring new order everywhere and to call to order those who refused to join kolkhozes. Fatal danger was approaching people. There were talks in the village that this or that one "zabrali"*, somebody was

* "zabrali" - was arrested.

killed and some people died from heart attack. In the whole village there was hubbub, cry, uncertainty in the next day. The most incredible rumours were afloat. People gathered in groups, talking, trying to predict what would happen in our village. In the village people knew each other, as all were growing before everybody's eyes, there were many people who became related, there were many God-parents, the villagers knew people who came from neighbouring villages.

Every evening our father left home and went to kolkhoz house where many people gathered. Some of them were playing cards, some were watching the players. Then talks began about this and that and then turned to the most painful questions — what the new power would devise next, what Stalin and his brothers-in-arms would devise. Father always returned with some news. We, children, always helped mother to wind spinning thread on the bobbins, which mother put into the loom, she was working at it till late at night. Father also helped with the loom, binding threads and doing something else while they were talking about different things, about the future of people and. I made sure, everything what they foresaw in their talks, really took place in some years.

People began thinking how to hide their belongings lest to be taken away. Father started digging a hole in the garden, in such a place from which it could not be noticed. Others did the same forced by the circumstances. People buried maize, potatoes, wheat, beetroots. There were rumours that the new power was preparing the law according to which everything might be taken from people and then they would join kolkhoz. There were endless talks that Stalin had already signed the order to dispossess kulaks, take all their belongings and to exile them to Siberia, cold steppes or taiga.

One day father came home and told mother that he had seen the list of those to be dispossessed and among them were our grandfather and grandmother and all their family. Those who were to dispossess, would go around houses and register the number of people in each family. As soon as mother heard it she started crying and her hand dropped from the loom. When she came to herself she asked father to go to the grandfather and take the large trunk in which her trousseau was. They both went to take that trunk, told the grandfather everything, said that the situation was bad and the family was in danger.

We, children, were also filled with this misfortune, we sympathized the parents for the danger to which they were exposed. We heard and understood from their talks that it was the time of injustice, that the system was not good. Father agreed with the grandfather that he would take his youngest son, that my stepmother would bring him up like her own child as he was still small. Quite natural the grandfather was glad that his son had a chance to save himself.

Father and stepmother took the trunk which was on the wheels

and full of various things, rolled it to our household and brought the grandfather's youngest son as well.

In a week the "sil'rada"* announced that they would register the number of people in each family. We had a good dog Vovchik, who guarded us well, barking as soon as a stranger came up to our yard and sometimes as if he felt that a bad man was going, he barked at the top of his voice almost suffocating from barking. At the time of Stalin regime even dogs felt anxiety, uncertainty, some threat, thus when a stranger was passing by the dogs became mad.

One morning, it was at the end of November of 1929, that is in late autumn, two men on horsebacks rode into our yard. It was about nine in the morning, mother had already prepared everything she needed to spin. The trunk was covered with some rags to make it less striking. The house was cleaned up, we helped our mother and there were four children already. Thus mother and father heard the dog barking, somebody was making noise in the yard. Mother took a rag and put it on the loom, making it look so as if it was out of order, as if some parts of it were missing. The comers were the head of the sil'rada Ivan Prikhod'ko, it was he who came from the neighbouring village where his parents lived. He was still young, not more than twenty five years old. And the other was his friend from our village who knew a lot about our villagers. He was a bit older than head of the sil'rada. He was about thirty five. Naturally, he knew all the people in the village, he even needn't to look into the lists to know who lived here and there. The head introduced himself, said that he came from Bobashi, that is from the neighbouring village. This village was well known to everybody as there lived a very rich man, landlord Bobash, and it was he who founded that village, people moved there and worked, some worked in the field, but some in a private smithy, some at a private mill. This farm was very useful for neighbouring villages.

Thus these two men entered the house, greeted my father and mother and we, children, hid in the corners. Our father had told us before that if a stranger came into the house we should hide either on the "pich" (oven) or in another room and be quiet. Thus we were sitting quietly and we were eager to know what they would talk about. And we heard that these two men came to borrow separator to separate sour cream from milk. It was known in the village that we had a separator as we had some cows. And our neighbours who had cows also came to us and used it to separate sour cream, to make butter and to regale on "maslyanka". Father said that the separator was disassembled for drying and that he would bring it as soon as he assembled it. These two men again assured him that they only wanted to borrow the separator and when the kolkhoz became

* "sil'rada" - Village Soviet.

prosperous they would buy their own, large separator because there were a lot of cows in kolkhoz, and they could not manage to separate so much milk with such a small separator.

What could father do? It was unreasonable to refuse. So he said to them that he would lend the separator and even explained to them how it worked and how it should be disassembled after using it and how it should be assembled. And so it was. When they were leaving the house, they said that kolkhoz needed sacks and asked father to lend them.

They took our separator and sacks and then asked mother to come to kolkhoz farm with her loom and spin there as not a single woman could spin. And what could mother do? She could not refuse the representatives of the new power as everybody knew that under new power you could not refuse anything, otherwise you could be made the enemy of the party and so the enemy of people and such persons had to be annihilated.

Thus father and mother "shared" with kolkhoz, so that "wolves were fed and sheep were save". They shared but suffered from their losses because nobody gave anything free to them, they had to earn everything with their own hands. But what could be done?

Rumours were going around that it was quite enough to bear it, that they should leave everything and go to some other place of the world. These people were not used to common economy, and in kolkhoz or radgosp they had everything in common, they said about common beds, blankets and so on.

COLLECTIVIZATION OF VILLAGE

Thus our village ended by what they proclaimed: everybody to a common yard, that is to kolkhoz! People began moaning still more but they saw that there was no way out. Some villagers had already left their farms and went to Donchchina, to Donets'k itself, then named Yuzovka. There were large coal mines and therefore miners, mills, bakeries as well, so there should be food-stuff. One day our neighbour, and he was our uncle Ivan Zinchenko, brother of my mother's first husband, came from there. They, that is grandmother and grandfather Zinchenki, had a large house, a large household, they were well-to-do. They had horses and cows. But it did not last long — the grandmother died and soon died grandfather. Everything was left to uncle Ivan Zinchenko, who after his parents' death lived with his family in "zemlyanka" (a dig-out) in the same yard, and the house, stable and the rest were given to kolkhoz to avoid troubles. He thought that if he gave all his wealth to kolkhoz, he would be left alone. But it did not happen so. Uncle Ivan found that he was in the list on dispossession. He quickly took some things and left for Yuzovka. So did other people, a lot of them went to mines in

Donechchina. People knew that dispossession was equal to throwing out from the house, even outdoors, and still worse — exile to far Siberia, taiga or cold steppe, Kazakhstan.

They paid well in Yuzovka mines, so uncle Ivan knew that he did. He took some things necessary for him and asked his wife to pack everything and be ready to leave. And indeed in some time he came in a cart from Donetsk, Yuzovka then, took his wife and children and they left. In the morning when we got up there was nobody in "zemlyanka".

It was the time when people were afraid of each other because one could say something about other's belongings. Those, who by the order of Stalin, built new Kolkhoz system tried by different means to create hostility among people and with this aim they started dividing people into kulaks, middle peasants and poor peasants, and at last into so called podkulaks, that is those peasants who, although were not rich, but for moral reasons sympathized with kulaks and even helped them in their troubles.

In some weeks after uncle's Ivan Zinchenko family left, we got a letter from his wife. She wrote how they settled, how they lived and so on. But their happiness did not last long. Soon we found that uncle Ivan died from some lung disease. It appeared that it was not easy to work in a coal mine, there was much coal dust, no ventilation and lungs of a peasant were accustomed to clear air, to spaciousness. And there was darkness, stuffy air, dust. Thus it came that a peasant had no way out, he could not be saved from kolkhoz, wherever he went, he was followed by his misfortunes, which came with Stalin plan of collectivization of village, organization of kolkhozes and annihilation of kulaks as a class. In fact, this meant physical annihilation of all peasants, who worked hard not only before the revolution but after it as well on the land which was given to them by the Soviet power.

In uncle's Ivan former "zemlyanka" the kolkhoz settled some other people so we had new, strange neighbours. People's life was controlled by kolkhoz. Christmas was coming. Some time ago Christmas holidays brought joy, people were merry, preparing for the holidays, they treated each other with "svyataya vecherya", "golodna kutya" was carried from one house to another, wishing hosts all the best in the coming year. And then time came when one could not wish all the best to people because all knew that it would be still worse, than at that time, that you could not expect something good from Stalin programmes of collectivization of village. And this took place all over Ukraina, as everywhere was the same power, strange to us, which did not care for keeping our traditions but, on the contrary, tried to destroy them by various means. Nobody was the owner of his belongings, even was not the owner of his life, everything was in the hands of the new power. People, having lost hope for better life, were crying, moaning and complaining.

The new power did not only destroyed people's households, but began to destroy their sole, it, this power, promoted denouncing, incited one against another. But this was not all, to reshape people the new power involved teachers in it to make informers of the children so that they informed about their parents. Thus they poisoned age-long traditions of Ukrainian village, Ukrainian people. At school children were ordered to watch after their parents, what they did, with whom and about what they talked, how they lived, what they baked and cooked.

We, children, understood the sense of it and realized what the teachers tried to find. We came home and told the parents everything what the teachers demanded from us. Our father was very strict and he ordered us that if we told anybody what was going on or said in our house, he would cut our tongue. We were scared of it, who wanted to live without the tongue? Though we knew that father only threatened us, that he would never cut somebody's tongue, but his threats were a good lesson for us. What our parents hid from other people hearing or seeing, from the representatives of the new power was also a good lesson for children, we realized what this regime led to.

At school we learnt to read and write. We often had to read Stalin slogans such as: "Long live the Communist party of bol'shevics!", "Long live comrade Stalin!", "All to fight for total collectivization of village!". And we realized that the last slogan was terrible not only for our village but for the whole Ukraina as well, which lived in sorrow because of what was brought by Stalin regime, Stalin "p'yatirichka", Stalin collectivization of village, total collectivization, dispossession of kulaks, annihilation of kulaks as a class. We, children, saw everything each time realizing more what was going on.

They began to attract children to school, promising to make our life easier, they cooked some soup there, and later they listed children in "zhovtenyata"* organization. We were explained that no science would do us harm, that we should know everything, the more children knew, the cleverer they became. We brought all this news to our father and mother and asked their advice whether we should join "zhovtenyata". We were also eager to find what kind of organization it was. Father said that it was not so awful as it seemed, as many children joined it, we should join either, that there would be some sport exercises, that may be we should learn something there.

Father allowed us to join "zhovtenyata" organization. We, all "zhovtenyata", got yellow ties, which were put on our necks like horse's collars on cows' necks. We, children, devised this comparison ourselves, but it came true because since that time they demanded from us too much responsibility, they ordered us to eavesdrop parents and all grown ups in general, what they were saying about

* "Zhovtenyata"- children organization.

the new power at home, or maybe somebody was saying something in the street or maybe peasants gathered somewhere. It was difficult time indeed, a lot awful things were going on. To withstand kolkhozes horses were poisoned and horses were the main support in collectivization of village, there were no tractors at that time, the earth was tilled by horses.

While horses were dying, the authorities suspected those who avoided joining the kolkhoz. They came at night, took the host, and he was never seen by relatives or acquaintances again. This was happening in our village.

After joyless holidays they announced again that they would inventory belongings of those listed to kulaks, that these belongings would be sold to poor peasants and they would use the money got for buying tractors or seeding-machines. At village gatherings they explained that horses were poisoned, they had nothing to till the land with, it could not wait for tilling and raising new horses took much time. Thus the kolkhoz needed money to buy tractors, which had already been produced by Kharkiv tractor plant called KHTZ. If kulaks were accused of horses death so their property would be sold and tractors would be bought. The announcement on measures against kulaks was displayed prominently, so the whole village knew what the prosperous peasants should expect soon. Father and mother had time to take hens from the grandfather, they put them in sacks and brought home at night. We, children, fell asleep, but parents could not sleep. They were thinking of saving the grandfather and grandmother. Mother having brought home a sack full of hens was very tired but father emptied the sack and went to the grandfather again to take some more hens.

He did it stealthily like a fox hunting at night. He brought hens for the second time, went to bed for a short sleep because at eight in the morning he was to be in kolkhoz farm, to get the job to be done on that day. But before it he had to feed our own cattle.

Days passed in this way. Besides working in kolkhoz, they had to work about their own household. To milk cow was mother's duty but to filter milk, to clean up after the cows, spread fresh straw, feed them were father's duty. Women besides milking cows, looked after hens, picked eggs and put them in the shed and then gave them to cooperative or sold in the town. Everybody had enough work to do, as we did not work in the field in winter.

Thus worked those who though forced join kolkhoz, wanted to live properly, not in poverty. Everything a man got, had to be got by his hard labour. An honest man could not rely on somebody's work, on something earned by others. It was a tradition during whole generations, everything saved up by parents came to sons and daughters. And then the new system, Stalin kolkhoz system, Stalin regime destroyed all previous traditions and customs and way of life.

There was no joy in the village, nobody was merry, nobody

wished to give to kolkhoz the rest of livestock, the last corn. And again they announced that seeds should be given to kolkhoz for sowing, as well as potatoes, peas and so on — anything peasants had.

The peasants expected it, so they had made hiding-places beforehand in some imperceptible corners of their farmsteads in order to hide something for themselves to plant in spring in their own kitchen-gardens. My father also dugged a large hole and had time to cover it with brushwood and soon it snowed, father digged the hole in the garden where bushes with long roots were growing. Bushes were growing between trees so one could hide there. I still remember the place and the hole which father digged. Once there was a well, then it was filled with soil, there was no water yet. Father knew where to choose the place to dig a hole and he made a good hiding-place, in which he put carrots, potatoes, beets, swedes and the like. There was even cabbage which was not frozen till late spring.

It was the eve of January 1930. Sowers from another village came up to our house and sang: "I'm sowing, I'm sowing, I wish you happy new year!"... We jumped out of our beds, when we heard their voices. They were brave chaps, they were going along the village and singing New Year song. Nobody was sleeping already, mother got up too, it was time to milk the cow. Father got up as well. Well, we, children, also got up early on that New Year day.

During breakfast father addressed the children and said that we should learn to save ourselves, in case of some troubles which could be expected from the new power, from Stalin regime. Father said that it came to ruin people. He also said that next morning he would take Igor to Donetsk, that is, to Yuzovka, as it was called then, as he would go to school there. Igor was not our brother as I thought him to be, because he was small. Then I found that he was my uncle, whom my parents took from the grandfather and grandmother, when they were threatened to be dispossessed.

Father prepared everything for Igor, they got up early and went to the station. The rest of the children got up too to help mother with the cattle and hens, the number of which increased considerable during the previous night. Mother explained us that she and father went to the grandfather at night, that grandmother was rather old and she could not manage with her household. However, we, children, were no longer fools and then we eavesdropped what they were talking about between themselves. But we thought that it should be done so, let older people cheat us lest a child, who did not understand what was going on, blabbed out anything. It was hard time, old people began thinking like children, they got lost, they did not know what to do. Children, on the contrary, became grown up very quickly, they had no time for playing, they sensed the anxiety, which was spread around them. That's why they started thinking like adults, they speculated, devised, they knew when they could tell the truth and when it was better to keep silence. I

experienced it myself and I can say that we had no childhood at all in those restless and even terrible years. The whole village lived in restlessness and it was passed to the children, they were restless too along with the grown ups, their parents and grandparents.

From time to time some poorly dressed people came to our village. They came up to the house and asked for bed and a piece of bread. They all were saying about some misfortune. Father, who was not used to refuse the needy people, brought an armful of straw into the house, spread it on the floor, mother covered it with a sheet. After supper father and newcomers were talking for a long time, the guests told him where they came from. The talks seemed to prove that troubles were approaching our village. Those people as they said, were withdrawn from their own homes, they were deprived of the right to work and all this happened because for a long time they did not want to join kolkhoz. They were withdrawn and did not know what to do. And such people came not only to our house but to other houses as well, there were many of them, the whole village knew what was being done with those who opposed the collectivization.

Having heard what the dispossessed people told them, our villagers started worrying and deciding that it was necessary to leave the village until it was not too late. Some people without further delay, put on the sledges what they could load on it and ran away at least five kilometers from the village not to be seen by those who tried to build kolkhoz system by somebody else's labour. Nobody wanted to be fingered at and called kulaks. But in fact they were not kulaks at all. They only had two horses and some cows. Could they be kulaks? And was it necessary to take away everything from them? They had earned them by their own labour, own sweat, own corns. Rather often they were former poor people, former farm-hands, who having got from the soviet power a strip of land, worked hard and acquired a pair of horses and some cows.

Thus peasants were forced to leave their household for strange villages, strange places. In this way villages were cleared of a kulaks and podkulaks. This was how Stalin desired, he desired richer peasants not only leave their villages but in general to be exiled beyond the borders of Ukraina. And strange people came again, they became poor, they were in trouble and mostly they were women with little children. Their husbands if they had not been arrested, must have run to towns to hide there to save themselves from disaster sent by Stalin to Ukrainian villages. And people accepted them, those women with children, and shared with them what they had.

DISPOSSESSION OF GRANDFATHER

February of 1931 came. I began to attend the first form of the primary school. I went there in the morning together with other

children though I was not six yet. However I went to school with great joy, I was dreaming about it. And because of this father in spite of my age sent me to school. I went to school with a daughter of our neighbours, Mariyka Paliy. We were friends with her. We had a good time together. Even in summer when we had some work to do in the kitchen garden, we hilled potatoes together, it was easier and we were merry doing what our parents told us to do. Children should work about the farmstead because mother and father had no time to do it — they worked in kolkhoz. Thus they only hoped that the children would do it.

I liked to help about the house, in the kitchen-garden, I was very obedient, as I understood that I was an orphan. Father and mother who led hard life, were often irritated because of what was going on, sometimes they pushed me if I did not do at once what I was told, sometimes took a stick, threatening me, sometimes shook their fists pretending to beat me. But I did not pay attention to it, I did what I was told to do. And now I know that I did more than I could. But I realize it now, when many years have passed and with my present experience. All village children had to work hard about the farm.

I always had a good memory and I kept everything in mind. I remember perfectly well as they announced that our grandmother and grandfather, all member of their family who lived together with them would be exiled. They said that during two weeks all their property would be sold and they would be exiled to Siberia, Krasnoyarsk region. Some representatives of the sil'rada said this.

Although we expected it as we knew that they were in the list for dispossession, we were greatly upset, were at a loss. But in spite of despair we had to do something. Mother took a sack and I went to her parents to take more hens and bring them home. She returned from them and said that they felt themselves so as if they were going to die.

The village Soviet sold all the belongings of our grandmother and grandfather, people bought them almost for nothing. However the grandfather did not allow to sell his and grandmother's sheepskin coats as everybody knew that Krasnoyarsk territory was real Siberia, there were severe frosts and long winters. Once the grandfather owned a lot of sheep and they had quite much of sheep wool. They made mittens, stockings and alike of it. All this was necessary for a long trip to that cold territory. The grandmother and grandfather were not the only ones who were going to far strange land. Their son Ivan was going there too. He was newly married. I even do not remember the name of his wife. Ivan was a member of kulak family so he had to go too as it was ordered by the authorities. Their other son, aunt Nastya and their youngest daughter were going too. Strange as it is but grandmother's sister Gorpina and grandfather's sister who was old then were ordered to go as well. That was ordered by Stalin inhuman power. Nobody could do anything against that power, and in general nobody could argue or prove anything. Once

there was the order — to go, one had to go "without talks" as they said then. Thus they were desperately crying, tore their hairs but were packing as some of them were kulaks and some only lived with kulaks. And all of them were chucked out from their native village, from Ukraina!

After the sale of grandfather's belongings they came to our house, they came to us. Some food should be cooked to be taken in their long journey. They took dried crusts, dried fruit, salted fat, they cut hens.

I remember that period very well. As I was playing with hens heads and our dog Vovchik, sensing blood, tried to take these heads from me. I did not give them to him, teased him and Vovchik trying to catch a hen's head, cut my stomach by his sharp fangs quite by chance. Blood showed first on my skirt and then on my coat. I was taken to medical station and there a village midwife as there were no doctor's assistant, washed my wound, cleaned and dressed it. The dog was taken to the veterinary to check up if he did not go mad. Vovchik proved to be healthy as he did not run anywhere, he was always chained up and ate what we gave to him that was what we ate. After the check up the dog was taken home, his chain was shorten and I was ordered not to approach him. That lasted only for some days, my wound closed and all returned to their usual place, our former relations with Vovchik resumed. Vovchik was a clever dog and we liked him and he liked us very much.

The whole family was busy with preparation for the departure of grandfather's family. They were boiling soap from various bones, mainly from hens' ones, and while boiling they added some stone which dissolved the bones. Now I know that it was caustic soda that is sodium hydroxide, which dissolves organic matters, bones included. But not all bones were dissolved then, there may have been a shortage of caustic soda. The larger bones were out dissolved and were thrown on snow. Our Vovchik dug them out and ate. His intestines were burnt. Poor dog ran to haystacks and died there. It was in winter and the frost was severe. We called him many times but he never came. We found him in some days when the sun was shining and it was thawing. It was in March. We, children, buried our Vovchik, dug him the grave in the elder thicket in the garden so it did not hamper anybody. We never had another dog. At that time there were no dogs at all, they disappeared somewhere.

March 15, 1930. In the early morning our grandfather and his family settled on the cart, two horses were harnessed, everything prepared for their long journey was loaded on the cart. The cart was very big, we called them "garba", they were used for carting bulky load—straw, hay and so on. We all went to see our grandfather and his family off, to Pologi station which was about eighteen kilometres from our village and maybe more. The road went uphill, the horses got tired so we got off the cart and were running near it. The road

was wet, there was snow in some places, it was the time of thawing. When the road was a bit straight we got on the cart and then got off again, we were running trying to get warm. Our grandmother was very weak and so was our grandfather, he had a weak heart and all these disasters which nobody could avert did not help him to feel better. But what could be done - the order came from Iosip Vissarionovich Stalin himself to exile all kulaks beyond the borders of Ukraina, so the head of the kolkhoz and Volosyaniy* well schooled by Stalin regime did not hesitate when sent sick, old, feeble people on this long journey.

At that time the head of the sil'rada was Prikhod'ko, he was sent from village Bobashi, which was in two kilometres from us. There were ponds near that village and in summer children often ran there to fish or catch lobsters. There were good carps there. Having caught them we made a fire and baked them. Thus we were going to Pologi station to see the grandfather's family off and we reached the station by the evening. Pologi was a big station. There we saw many people, they had already been waiting for some days for the cars to load them with their baggage and get in them themselves. These were kulaks, they were lingered everywhere and called exploiters. But they were not exploiters, they themselves with their families were working hard from early morning till late at night growing wheat not only for themselves but for sale and other products besides bread - meat, butter, oil, eggs, linen and so on. And then they were exiled to unknown places, having been deprived of all their property earned not only by themselves but by their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. Cold steppes or Siberian taiga were their punishment for their industrious life.

All of us foreseeing long separation, maybe for ever, surrounded grandfather and grandmother, we were crying together with them but could not comfort them, sorrow was everywhere. We embraced our old people and they stroked our hair saying that they would never see us again. We loved our grandparents very much, we often ran to their farm, to their garden, where we picked walnuts, various fruits, there were very many of them in grandfather's garden. We asked grandfather who would live in his house then. Grandfather answered that maybe wolves would run from the forest and live there. We did not understand that grandfather was joking saying about wolves, we thought that in their house would live wicked wild wolves which could bite us.

The crowd at the station was growing, people gathered in groups, whispering something among themselves. Militiamen with red bandage on their sleeves were passing through the crowd. They

* Volosyaniy - elected head of volost (small rural district)

were speaking Russian. If somebody started speaking louder, they said: "Don't make noise, break up, don't gather in groups". We heard these words and others: "Chto, chto, nichego, nichego"*. We did not quite understand them, their language was strange to us. We had not heard it till then. Older people may have heard it but children who never left their village had not known, had not heard it. We asked grandfather what language they were speaking and he answered: Russian.

Grandfather said if we went to school we should study well. While we were talking with grandfather, our father fed horses so that they could get us home to our village. It was drizzling. People said that soon spring came, it was the time for sowing and that people would work hard in kolkhoz under new system.

Soon we heard the train whistle. The train which was to take the grandfather and others to Siberia. We said good-bye to my grandfather, grandmother and other exiled. Everybody was crying, few could say something. The train stopped. Militiamen with red bandage were running quickly, trying to put order. They were taught by the new power how to behave with kulaks, class enemies, they shamelessly urged on old and feeble people. They opened wide doors of the cars and pushed them to get there quickly. In the cars there was straw on the floor. Militiamen cried: "Get on one after another" but people pushed each other trying to get a better place because there was a long road ahead. We saw that when people got on cars they came closer to each other to warm themselves. To leave no doubts I say they were freight cars which usually carried cattle.

Then time came when the militiamen closed the doors of the cars. It was the end — we did not see our people, we could not speak with them! Stalin regime put an impassable wall between us.

We heard a whistle, then another. Those left at the station were whispering to one another as if they were afraid that they would be pushed into the cars as well. Militiamen cried: "Move aside!". All moved aside from the cars in which were our grandfather with grandmother, our relatives, pushed like cattle into freight cars.

As they wrote later, it was very cold and very crowded, wind was blowing through chinks, there was draught, people put straw into chink in the car walls but it was in vain as these cars were intended for freight and not for people. The peasants leaving the station were preparing for the worst, they even reconciled themselves with the death, they did not hope to live through this journey. It was unbearable cold, people covered themselves with everything they had — mattresses, homemade sheets, sheepskin coats. Sheepskin coats were the best to save from cold. Pushed into freight cars our people were looking through the chink saying good-bye to

* Russian "what, what, nothing, nothing."

their relatives and to their native land. We, children, realized that some minutes ago we saw our grandfather and grandmother, our aunts and uncles for the last time.

Everything was left behind except our gloomy thoughts, while we were going from the train to our cart to return to the village. Others who came from neighbouring villages, as fate willed it, to see off their relatives were going to their carts. Sadness, grieve on their faces, they were missing their relatives, their beloved. God knows how many people were separated from each other, how many links were torn between relatives, how many exiled chaps left their beloved girls, and girls left their dears! Nobody took it into account, nobody was interested in human feelings, as humanity itself was of no importance. That was cruel time, and, as it appeared later, it was not over yet. But I shall tell you about it later.

Our father harnessed horses and we settled on the cart, our legs down. We were sitting, dangling our legs, beating one against another to get warm. On the way home we also got off the cart, ran along or behind it to get warm. Night came, we were tired of the trip to the station, of sad feelings because of our separation with relatives. But we could not remain on the cart, we had to warm ourselves running near it. And it was good as young body overcame tiredness, cold, night and sleep. I remember it very well, I can see it as if it were now — what Stalin regime did with my dear grandfather's Shcherbakh family. I still cannot forget that crowd at the station. Though I myself experienced still worse later, but those were my first shocking impressions. It was they that made me hate the new system, hate even the name of Stalin.

KOLKHOZ WEEKDAYS

It was Friday or maybe even Saturday, as it was very late when we came from Pologi station. Our mother did not go with us though her parents were exiled that was because at that time we had already had a baby sister, born recently. Beside somebody had to feed the cattle, and as to the father he had to go because he was to drive the cart and of course a woman alone with children could not go as far as eighteen kilometers to the station. Thus she stayed at home, having said good-bye to her parents, brothers and sisters. Mother was watching what the kolkhoz had not taken away yet.

The peasants were not only deprived of everything (sometimes "pozichali" for good) but were also imposed new obligations. One of these, rather annoying duties, was to give milk to the kolkhoz. They took all the milk which one got. Just after milking mother gave to one of her girls usually full bucket of milk to take it to the kolkhoz. There milk was passed through the separator (in some places it was called centrifuge), cream was left to the kolkhoz, and

we got the rest, that is skimmed milk. We had to be satisfied with it, longing for fat, high quality milk. We enjoyed this "svyato" when a cow calved. Then mother prepared beestings for us which we liked very much. Such milk was not given to the kolkhoz because cream could not be got from it. So we were waiting for calving as if it were a great holiday.

This was our life. And what could be done if the majority of people had desired a new system, new power. A group of peasants could do nothing against them. The majority was the supporters of Stalin regime, without knowing or understanding it. And when they understood, when they were swelling of hunger and dying, it was too late. Those who organized kolkhozes, who became party members not because of ideological considerations, who took power in their hands that is in sil'rada or in the region, in the committees of poor people and so on, they had almost everything, they had at their disposal all belongings taken from kulaks, they did what they wanted with everything given to the kolkhoz by common peasants such as my father and mother.

We, common peasants, from the very start of collectivization suffered the new system greatly. Older people as well as younger ones and even children — all had known much sorrow under Stalin kolkhoz regime. Teachers at schools checked who of the children came from richer families, as these children had no right to attend schools. It was then that many children ran away somewhere, they hid in somebody else's "stodoli-kluni", saving themselves from exile together with parents to Far Siberia. Children as well as their parents were afraid of dying on the way there. And there was no place for these children in their native villages. Many older children went somewhere much further from their villages, even to Donechchina and there got some job in coal mines pretending to be older, saying that they were older than indeed.

The day when we took grandfather and grandmother to the station and saw they off to the long trip was kept in my memory as a very sad one. We sat at the table, recollected them, tried to imagine their way, their grief in the freight cars. They were going to unknown place as far as thousand kilometres to Siberia almost to eternal frost. We were consolling ourselves that they would not be hungry, as they had taken salted fat, dried fruits, smoked and cooked hens, bread crusts. And since the very first day we started waiting for news from them, from far Siberia. We were waiting although we knew that they had a long way ahead. They seemed to be still with us.

Summer came, peasants were busy in their kitchen gardens, all the corn sown began to spring. We planted much garlic and onion, as long term experience taught us that garlic and onion were a good remedy for almost all diseases. Though, by God's will, they did not smell nice, they gave taste to peasant everyday meals. People considered this crop to be their doctor.

Children did not go to school, because of summer vacations. So they had time to help parents in the kitchen gardens, and not once or twice but during the whole summer. Father and mother went to work in the kolkhoz and we spent all our time working in the kitchen garden, either weeding or picking the crop or hilling. Parents having or often having not fulfilled the task given to them daily by brigade-leaders, did not have strength enough to work in their own kitchen-gardens, all their strength was taken by kolkhoz fields. About eight o'clock in the morning having looked after their own cattle they went to kolkhoz and often returned at midnight, it depended on what job could be done in moonlight. Our mother was constantly spinning some cloth for sacks in the kolkhoz yard. So her work lasted till the evening and when the loom was out of order, she was sent to the field to do some work. Kolkhoz managers never let anybody to stay without work.

It often happened in the kolkhoz like in time of "panshchina"* when a pregnant woman went to kolkhoz field and returned home with a new baby born under a haycock. Till the evening the baby was crying under a haycock or a sheaf while mother had to weed or bind sheafs or hill. Elder children stayed at home. Elder ones were looking to the younger children. It lasted till they organized kindergardens in villages. Since that time mothers brought small children there and left them for the whole day but it was in case if there was nobody at home to look after the child. Mothers took their children from kindergardens on returning from work in the field or in the pigsty or in the cow-shed. On coming home they had to work about the house and the farm, to cook meals for children, for her husband and herself for supper and for tomorrow.

When we attended school we were taught to be devoted to the Party, its leader, the leader of the whole Soviet Union, the leader of all progressive mankind — Iosip Stalin. We were said about the necessity of training people devoted to the party. We were taught that the new system was the happiness of the mankind. But at home we heard different. Not only heard but saw with our own eyes that sorrow and scorn to working people and peasants was everywhere. Everything we heard at school turned to be untrue at home. Father kept saying that Stalin system was based on lies. Everything was "brekhnya"*** he used to say. People learnt to hide their thoughts. Nobody had enough courage to say what he thought, nobody came out for their common human rights. Customs and traditions were changing too. People learnt to steal, they thought that if they worked in kolkhoz without any proper payment and often free at all then they could take from the kolkhoz anything handy. They stole to save

* "panshchina" - system under landowners.
** "brekhnya" - lie.

their children, their family. Nobody got rich on stolen, they stole to survive. Everything saved for decades by hard labour, was being exhausted. One kept only memories of the former well-being. So it became a common habit when returning from work to hide in the bosom or in a pocket or in some other place either a handful of corn for hens so that you could have your own eggs or to exchange them for something else in the shop or they hid something else which could be used as food for people or for poultry.

Time passed and almost three months passed before we got news from our relatives. It came from far Siberia, Krasnoyarsk region. Aunt Katya, who was fourteen then, she and aunt Nastya being rather literate, described their way there. We were glad, we hoped that they would be aunt Katya or aunt Nastya who would write us a letter. On their way to Siberia our grandfather died and soon after him our grandmother died too. So we lost two oldest members of Shcherbakh family — mother's parents. They were put in a sack, each one separately and thrown from the train into the Ural river, ice had already melted. Thus they were buried even not reaching Siberia. Aunt Katya also wrote that aunt Nastya was weak but the rest of the family was not bad. But when they reached their destination, they found that local people there often had the disease of the gums — scurvy, the cause of which was the deficit of vitamin "C". So aunt Katya asked in her letter to send them onion and garlic as much as possible lest they had scurvy or avitaminosis as it is called now.

Older people in the village told us that scurvy was inherent in prisoners and exiled. When a man had scurvy his gums were rotting, teeth came out and he was unable to take food even if he had it. There was a good garlic and onion crop that year. We, that is mother and father as if foresaw that he would need garlic, a lot of it, so they planted garlic and onion on the vacant land near our yard.

Once we heard about this disease, described in the letters of our people and found that some of them, had it too, father and mother began to post one parcel after another to far Siberia. They sent garlic, onion, dried fruits, bread crusts. There was mail and airmail to Siberia, so parents posted parcels by airmail so that they came sooner to Siberia, how they suffered until they settled somehow in huts, how hard was their work in the forest and how many people died. We, children, listening to all these, were filled with hate to Stalin regime but we could not express our feelings as each one was afraid of another, a neighbour was afraid of a neighbour, an acquaintance of an acquaintance and it happened that a brother was afraid of his own brother and a father was afraid of his son. We were just looking at one another and guessed what we thought.

I went to school in autumn to study in the first form. I liked to go to school, I liked to study. We lived rather far from school, and in winter we faced the problem of footwear, all we had was torn and there was nowhere to buy new one. Sometimes I took

mother's boots, which were too large for me, or father's shoes as father had "valyanky" that is footwear made of felt wool. People learnt to make footwear of some old homemade mattresses, folding them some times then mother stitched it on the sewing-machine and made some footwear of it. We put insole of straw inside, which kept our feet dry. This footwear did not last long but it was warm. Besides we wrapped our feet with some rags not to get cold. Before Christmas we went to school on foot but after winter vacations when it was snow-storm, the kolkhoz management allowed to give us sledge and our fathers in turn drove us to school.

It was very difficult for us to live under Stalin regime, under total collectivization of Ukrainian village. We, children, remembered our previous life and older people told us about it during long evenings, they recollected that even under tsar regime the life was better though there was quite a number of poor people in villages. These poor people were to blame themselves as there were many drunkards and lazy persons among them. It is true that there were many people who were poor through no fault of theirs but because of the underdevelopment of socio-economic system under tsarism.

At school we heard from our teachers that we should be grateful for all we had to our leader, the cleverest man in the country — Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin. He was our father, our sun and our joy. But we proved ourselves that there was no joy for us and from our parents we heard that Stalin was the bitterest enemy of our people and all working peasants and in some years we saw ourselves that it was through his fault and through his supporter's fault that in Ukraina, as it was counted and admitted even in the Soviet Union, about eight million people died of starvation. It was then that we realized that it was Stalin who was to blame of our people annihilation first by dispossession, then by starvation, could not be called our son, our father. All we were taught at school about Stalin, his regime seemed to be false and based on lies. It was one of the reasons why people became cruel, like hungry wolves, as they were hungry, barefooted and nearly naked. We were speaking about all these things at home, however to avoid eavesdropping we had these talks mostly late in the evening and even then our father went outside and around our house to see if there was nobody strange there.

One evening our father said to our mother and we all heard it that we had to save some food. And we all thought about the hiding-place. They came to the conclusion to dig a large hole somewhere in the thicket of the garden, in a place where it would not go bad or grow mouldy. The best place for it was one they digged earlier, where was a well filled with earth later. At that time father foresaw the kolkhoz comissioners when going about the yards to take corn for sowing in kolkhoz fields, would not be satisfied if one said that he had nothing for sowing but would look into all corners in the house and cattle-shed. And really the kolkhoz

country was in such a state that when spring came, it appeared that they had nothing for sowing at all.

FOREBODING OF FAMINE

This is how I recollect foreboding of famine in our village in Ukraine. Father strictly ordered the children that we should not answer anything if somebody asked us about corn in order not to say about our intention to hide corn. Father and mother said that there appeared people from other villages and surroundings, they came hungry, they were going in search of something that could save them from hunger. Soon we could feel ourselves happier as we had already hidden maize, which could be well kept in the cellar.

There were all sorts of stuff in that cellar-hiding place. Mother sewed linen sacks in which we put maize corn and father took them to the hiding-place. Besides father hid beets and potatoes somewhere in the kitchengarden. We had quite a large family, besides our own family, we had some relatives thus it was necessary to have big supply to survive ourselves and to help others.

While working as a farm labourer, and later after the revolution father learnt to do a lot of things, he had hands of gold. So he did everything reliably, after careful consideration, so that what he hid did not go bad, the hiding-place could not be seen, but so that he could get the hidden easily. At that time people had already been afraid of hunger, they were thinking how to survive it.

We were still going to school, they organized a kitchen there and we were given soup there. The teachers seeing half-starving children asked them why they were sad and the children complained that they were hungry. I know that the teachers tried to solve this question at kolkhoz gatherings, they put the question — what to be done further with pupils. It was decided to supply the school kitchen with some food-stuff, to cook soup for the children and feed them. And as we saw the teachers also ate eagerly the soup prepared by our cooks. This hot soup, as I recollect, was tasty indeed and it helped many children to survive.

Going to school, we often got wet during snow-storms and mother constantly had to dry our linen onoochas* which we wrapped round feet. Though it was the beginning of spring we had to be careful lest to catch cold as underfed children could easily get ill with tuberculosis, and at that time one could not survive if taken ill with it. Though we were small but seemed to grow up, we became more careful trying not to get into a puddle and get our feet wet. Children from other villages became ill with scarlet fever. My sisters

* "onnoocha" - cloth wrapped round feet.

got the infection from them and stayed in bed for a long time. I avoid this disease, thank God, but my youngest brother, whose name was Ivan, died when he was three. He was injected against it but it did not help him and he died in father's arms. We grieved for him greatly as it was he who often cheered us by that newspaper which he "read" holding it upside-down and without a smile he "read" it - repeated everything about Stalin regime which he heard when father and mother talked. He may even have understood something as the whole people was in trouble, misfortune was common.

One day we were going home from school, it was thawing, there were many puddles, so we stumbled against dead bodies which were frozen and till that time were lying under snow. They were the bodies of a woman and two children. We came home and told our parents about them and they went to kolkhoz office at once and said that children found corpses on the road. These corpses had somehow to be taken away from the road and dug if they could not be buried like human beings should be, lest, when it became warm, and it would soon, these dead bodies would stink. People were very much afraid of some infection, some misfortune. The people foreboded still greater disaster.

Spring came, there was much water everywhere, peasants were going with showels making ditches to let water flow down quickly in springs, to make the ground dry more quickly for sowing. People in the village began to stir and here we, children, found corpses on the road. The village became agitated, they tried to guess - what could happen with the woman and two children who froze? They began to guess that it was the woman who pulled sledges with her children on them. She may have been exhausted, stopped to rest a bit and fell asleep in the frost, and fell into everlasting sleep and so her children did. Terror-stricken people were talking among themselves that it was the wife of a dispossessed peasant who tried to escape before exile to Siberia, so she made for somewhere, further on from her village, taking only children on sledges. She may have decided to look for some nook in this world but did not find it but instead she found everlasting rest on the road. There they were snow-clad and they lay under it till spring.

People took the dead and dug them in. At that time perhaps nobody could imagine that soon they would dig in many people in the same way, that they would pick up them on the road. We again received news from Siberia, got to know how our aunts and uncles lived there, we again posted parcels to them with some food, in particular we sent garlic, dried fruit, dried crusts, dried sun-flower seeds. As we still had enough food left so father put in parcels seeds of spring wheat so that our relatives could try to sow it as we found out that winters in Krasnoyars'kiy territory were very severe and long so winter wheat did not grow there. Thus father thought they would sow only spring crop which might grow and they would have something to live on.

WEEKDAYS OF THE FAMILY

Our father was respected in the village. He was very industrious and always ready to help those who needed it. If people needed something they always knew that Petro Khelemendyk could get anything, give a piece of food, advice, and help. He never refused anybody. He was called to kill a pig as he could do it, so we often had fresh-cut meat earlier which people did not have on weekdays. Mainly people did without meat using mostly oil as they sawed a lot of sunflowers in the outskirts. Before collectivization people certainly had enough oil, it was added to cooked, smoked and baked food. Oil is more healthy than fat. Makukha* was given to cattle and they enjoyed it greatly and one could hear the cows chewing it with pleasure. Even children often kept a piece of makukha in their pockets and nibbled at it when they were hungry, nobody was angry with them for it.

Mother often gave us dried oiled crusts and we enjoyed eating them and even licked our fingers.

Our young uncle Igor was still studying in Donetsk, he hoped that after finishing school he could easily get a job in the town. Father visited him from time to time. Uncle Igor was capable, he studied well and father loved him very much as if he were his own son. Later when he finished school we found that he entered an institute, graduated from it, joined the army and was a frontier guard somewhere. I do not know it for sure and what I do know was from what father said.

As I had already said, in summer of 1931 we, children, helped the parents doing what we were told either in the kitchen garden or in the garden. We also picked fruits and berries, cut what was necessary to, throw off seeds and dried them first in the sun and then in the oven. It was an easy and pleasant work both for children and elder ones — to sit and make fruits and berries ready for drying.

In winter nights all children hulled beans, peas and in summer as well as in winter when we became a bit older, we also worked about the house. In summer we also cut grass for the cow, took pigs to where grass grew, picked different kinds of grass for the rabbits. We did everything what we were told by our parents as father and mother, as I had already said, went to work to the kolkhoz and often came home late at night. It happened so that we, children, could not be idle, we had no time to play hide-and-seek or other games. We did not complain as we knew that parents had nothing to do but make us work about the house. We knew from adults' talks that this was the fate of our peasants, so we grew sharing their thoughts and worries. As I can see now, after so many years have passed, children hands could do a lot.

When parents returned from work they saw what was done and could afford a short rest, as they had to go to work again in

* *makukha* - oil-cake.

the morning for the whole day. We helped them eagerly as we could see ourselves what Stalin power and kolkhoz system did with them as they were given large daily work quota. After the working day our parents were so tired that they were hardly able to drag their legs. The adults, that is our parents and others, told us and we could see ourselves as they working in the field stopped for a minute to rest under a sheaf or a haystack. Children brought water to them as they were bothered by the sunshine and they themselves could not go to get some water as the field was far from the well and sweat was pouring down their faces. Women happened to get exhausted in the field and lost consciousness. Sometimes they had to call for ambulance, as they themselves could not help these people to regain consciousness. They were taken half-dead to the hospital. Such was Stalin kolkhoz regime when I was small and was going to school. And all this happened when everywhere one could see slogans about prosperous kolkhoz life. But when I recollect it now, I am seized with terror. And no wonder as people could hardly drag their legs, they hardly survived but everywhere were slogans about cultural rest, rich, cheer kolkhoz life. People were tired, exhausted but there were red banners everywhere which were said to be the symbol of freedom, of victory over evil. This was not only in villages but in towns as well, "Long live comrade Stalin!", "Long live our father!" — they irritated eyes. And they sang the song: "I do not know any other country where a man breathes so freely!"

Children began to do various harm, they composed various verses, various sayings. I recollect as children yelled among themselves — "Long live and browze Yolop* Vissarionovich Stalin himself!". It even happened that children stole up to poster-slogan, tore them down and threw away. It is clear that they did not do it in groups but alone or in two lest a child give up the disturber, one could not guarantee that someone of the group would not inform the teacher as we were taught to inform on "enemies of people", enemies of kolkhoz system. Thus we made various disturbances and accustomed ourselves to conceal what we had done, to tell lies.

Although we were taught at school that we should like the new power, should love Stalin, we, however, knew Stalin regime to annihilate people both in towns and villages. We ourselves saw with our own eyes how kulak belongings were being sold, how peasants were exiled to Siberia. We also knew or heard from adults that the new power often shot innocent people without any questioning, it was enough if somebody calumniated a man. This how it was — "I do not know any other country where a man breathes so freely".

"Work-day** — give us bread just for a day!" — we composed

* *Yolop - blockhead*

** *work-day - unit of work on collective farms.*

and wrote it in the kolkhoz yard. Adults passed, read, shook their heads, someone mocked at it, sometimes a crowd gathered. And we, children, were happy to be able to do some harm to the forcibly organized kolkhoz.

Thus our childhood was passing. In summer we hilled potatoes, were deadbeat, got tired and sat to rest for a minute, fell asleep in the kitchen garden. And the sun was warming so nice that we did not want to get up and hill potatoes with a chopper. We, children, did not have enough strength to work without intervals and we got more tired in the sun. Our work happened to be interrupted for two hours when we fell asleep and nobody made us to get up. So we suffered in the kitchen gardens and about the house and our parents in the kolkhoz fields. And we often had no food as all left by our parents was already eaten, so we fortified ourselves with some fruit or greens, vegetables such as peas, radish, spring onions and so on.

Sometimes mother cooked borshch* in a big cast-iron pot and said that when we would do this and that to warm up borshch for ourselves. We were used to it, we warmed up borshch and regaled with it as after hard work it seemed to be tasty for us.

In summer on Saturdays we run to the ponds to bathe and catch crawfish and fish. And when we caught it we made fire there and baked them or we brought some pot from home, we took water from the pond and cooked fish-soup. We often did the same on Sundays. This was entertainment in summer.

Summer passed quickly, autumn came and with it came slyota**. We were going to school again, again we had to start studying, we called this science "children torture". When we were going to school, mother often gave us a panful of just got milk to drop it in the kolkhoz yard where it was passed through the separator. If a peasant had a good cow, if it was milked three times a day then the host left the dinner milk for himself, it should not be taken to the kolkhoz. We had a good cow, so if it was milked three times a day, we had our own high quality milk, that is dinner milk and earlier evening milk as well were dropped in kolkhoz. Under the new Stalin regime even the cows appeared to have plans of milking imposed on them, so they were also involved in the fulfilment of Stalin p'yatyrichka***. These contingents**** were a great misfortune for collective farmers. They were imposed not only contingents of giving milk but eggs as well. And there were periods when hens did not lay eggs, then you had to buy eggs and take them to cooperative.

That year, 1931, the representatives of sil'rada came to all

* *borshch* - rational Ukrainian dish.

** *slyota* - slush, mire.

*** *p'yatyrichka* - five year plan.

**** *contingent* - quota.

peasant household and registered the number of pigs and sucking-pigs. They counted, registered and ordered that without permission of sil'rada no one could cut a pig, one's own pig, fed by one's own forage could not be cut. So it was necessary to have a written permission of sil'rada to cut a pig for oneself.

I remember father dug a hole in the ground and made a shed there, in the ground. We were feeding some sucking-pigs without sil'rada knowing it, with various grass and badylyya*. Once father and mother cut the pig and pitched it with dry badylyya. It was also a crime as the authorities ordered not to pitch pigs killed but to flay them and give the skins to cooperative. They made footwear, of pigskin at shoe factories, it was immediately known they were made of pigskin as dressed, it had spots on the bristle. If someone killed a pig without permission or even having permission but if one did not flay it and give the skin to cooperative, he was punished — fined and there were cases when people were tried. Under Stalin regime everything was submitted to force and court was a real force.

Father and mother found ways to conceal the fact of killing a pig from the authorities. They did it mainly at night, stealthily, cut it into parts at once, salted and hid them in a stack of straw so deep that even dogs could not smell them. I was growing up very quickly, since the very childhood I was very obedient, I did everything what mother and father told me to do without arguing. Still then I realized how hard life was under Stalin regime. Our parents did not see anything because of exhausting labour in kolkhoz, they did not see their children much, did not see how they were growing and they happened to forget how old their child was. This happened with my father, he forgot the year of his daughter birth, that is the year of my birth and sent me to school one year earlier and I was only glad of it.

Sometimes I did not have time to do everything what my parents told me to do and aunt Mariya Paliy, our neighbour, used to help me so that everything would be done by the evening and father did not scold me for shirking work. No wonder that under such awful conditions of life parents were strict with their children, who had no time for idling or walking.

Since the beginning of new kolkhoz regime our village was friendly as everyone suffered the same troubles, all families had the same worries. It often happened that father hid something in the field, prepared something in a shock of straw, he put some earth or dry straw on corn. We went there at night, only at night when all were sleeping and brought what was hidden. In the morning we had something to feed hens on as they were often hungry too and eggs had to be given to cooperative. Animals as well as people seemed to forebore hunger, as if it were somewhere around them

* *badylyya - dry stalks.*

but was not seen yet. Therefore peasants hid everything that could be hidden, that did not go bad soon. They hid salted meat, then they took it from the hiding-place, soaked it and cooked. And nobody gave up people.

HUNGRY GUESTS

About December of 1931 in our village showed up people from other regions or territories. It happened more and more often. They came to our village and begged. They, as we saw, grew weak. They often asked to spend the night, like last year, but now they were coming in groups. They sometimes asked to be registered to kolkhoz. Father and mother took them for a night, gave them some food, never refused poor people, saved them as they could.

We had a room with a vacant bed and bed-clothes, it had a private entrance. Father and mother took three people to our house — a man with two daughters, they were from Poltava, and they came on foot to our village. They spent winter with us, we gave them food so we saved them from hunger death, as the legs of that man began swelling because of starvation. His wife and mother of these two girls died on their way there. Those girls begged my father to allow them to stay with us and not turn them out of the house. My father went to the kolkhoz farmstead and asked the head of the kolkhoz to register those people to the kolkhoz as there was shortage of working hands. Those people were hard-working, they always asked mother what they could do about the house or in the household. Thus they helped us during the whole winter.

That year winter was rather severe, with hard frost, the roads were snow-bound, there was much snow and snow-storm did not subside a long time. And again in spring people found human corpses under thawing snow, again last year tragedy repeated.

People depressed by what was going on around them, oppressed by violence over people, hated the kolkhoz system still more, they were still more irritated when they only heard the name of Stalin.

Our family was keeping on just as earlier, everything was settled. Our family was rather large but somehow we found room for new comers from Poltava. We cooked together and we all together sat at the table to have meals. There was room for everybody. Father planed a long bench and adjusted it to the table. We all lived as if we were one family. Talking at the table and often after supper doing some work, we learnt much from these townspeople. We learnt about the customs of town dwellers which differed greatly from those of villagers' customs.

We had quite enough potatoes, cabbage, carrots and beets. We often cooked some soup of these vegetables adding some groats, mainly millet. Thus we had food at that time, however our supply

could not be replenished so it was being gradually exhausted. We had meals, as I had already said, all together. These two girls, sisters from Poltava, told us at the table or some other time about their life in the town. It turned out that Stalin regime ordered to exile beyond the borders of Ukraina not only peasants-kulaks but all those who were suspected not to be loyal to the soviet power, mainly Ukrainian intelligentsia and experienced Ukrainian workers. People in towns was scared, there was tension, uncertainty of tomorrow. Why did our people suffer this misfortune? Why did those who said, proclaimed social justice, equality of all people, annihilate people and first of all the most valuable ones? Nobody could find answer to this question, the answer is being found just now, in many years after the death of this butcher of our and not only our people. And it is surprising that even now there are people who felt sorry for that time. But we should think, it were they or their ancestors who exterminated people but they themselves did not live badly.

We had "stupa" in our household. For the present generation I should say that it was rough piece of hard wood with a large, hollowed out deepening. Besides we had "tovkach" that is a long piece of wood, rough at the end. We poured some millet in the "stupa" that is millet corn. All, who had already had strength to hold "tovkach", came in turn to "stupa" and pounded millet in it. That was a hard job, that's why we worked in turn. We pounded millet until a hard cover fell off and the rest was broken into parts. As the result of such treatment in stupa we got millet and cooked a good porridge, which we ate either with milk or cracklings. We had another kind of millet when they took off cover on "krupodyorka" but porridge cooked of it was not so tasty, it was not well stewed in the oven, it was always hard and was not boiled soft. This millet helped us greatly to survive.

Soon aunt Fedos'ka, one of grandfather's Shcherbakh daughters, that is mother's sister dragged to us. She lived in a near-by village in some eighteen kilometers from us. The village in which she lived was rather rich some time ago but at that time, that is in early thirties it became very poor. Our aunt Fedos'ka became poor too mainly because her husband was a drunkard, he did not care about the household; as soon as collectivization began he gave everything to kolkhoz in order not to work in his own household that is to avoid hard work. Thus they were almost beggars. Aunt grew weak, she had no strength to work about the house, then they had shortage of food, our aunt was starving, her legs began swelling because of hunger. She only had enough strength to drag to our village. Though we did not have room, we took her, fed, father settled her on hay to sleep on. And then from Orikhiv came our cousin-brother, fathers cousin-brother and our uncle Mikola Khelemendyk. We loved him. He was twenty four but he was married. When there was shortage of food in Orikhiv, when people

began starving, his wife, aunt Nastya left for Moscow to her relatives to save herself from hunger death, and uncle Micola came to us, his legs swelling. We, as I had already said, loved him very much, so we took that uncle to our family, gave him food and saved from hunger death. Our house resembled a hospital. We had to wash our ill aunt Fedos'ka and uncle Mikola, as they were very weak at first.

This happened not only in our family. In the whole village one could hear that some people came from other villages or towns to their relatives to save themselves from shortage of food and really from famine, famine approached Ukrainian villages and Ukrainian towns. People were ill, there was not a single day without funeral, mainly of those who came to our village from the outskirts. Now I may suspect that when they came to their relatives exhausted by starvation, they took much food at once and their stomachs could not stand it and they might have had volvulus. Almost all our villagers had new comers, who were settled on hay in some corner where they had room.

Our stupa worked day and night as there were many people who needed some food and our corn-bin was emptying. The flour which father stored up for the whole year, we used till March, so we had to be content with millet. Some of us pounded crude millet, others sifted it and mother stewed millet well, cooled it, and baked bread of it or baked cookies on the frying-pan. Everything was done quickly without much thinking, and care for delicate taste, as there were many people in our family and they had to have food.

Before spring came we had no potatoes left as that stored up by our father for the whole winter had already been eaten. Thus time came when father began taking potatoes which was stored up for sawing and kept in kagaty*. We also kept there beets and swede, that is beets for cattle. So time came when we also had to share with cattle what was stored up for them, shared with our cow, with our pigs. This was our first really hungry spring. Then came even much worse springs.

COUNTRY LIFE

In spring all peasants were gathering in kolkhoz farmstead to discuss all the things which troubled them. They were thinking what would be further as there was shortage of bread as well as other food. People had eaten what was stored up for sawing, potato as well. Somebody suggested to plant potato peel as, they said, potato would grow of it. Peasants did not know what to do.

Those who had since tsarist time some gold or good clothes sold them or went to far villages to exchange them for some corn.

* *kagaty* - storehouse for keeping vegetables.

Our father was not only a hard-working man but he was also resourceful, brave, full of initiative. That was why peasants who gathered in kolkhoz farmstead decided that the head of the kolkhoz should give him a certificate and the peasants gave him something for exchange and sent him to Donbas. The new comers in our village said that these things could be exchanged for bread, salted fish or dried sardelle or bullhead (small fish caught in Azov sea).

Father certainly agreed with this decision of peasants. He took all that people could give him — things made of gold, some valuable clothes and so on and left for Donbas, with the hope to meet Igor, our young brother who studied there. There appeared to be bakeries in Donechchina which were, as father said, in the hands of Jews, they baked bread for miners. So father left for Donbas and in a day he came back and brought much foodstuff, mainly bread, dried or salted fish and so on. Later father was sent many times to Donechchina, he went there and brought to the peasants what they needed most of all — food. When father came back, people came to us, took what they were brought. It happened so that father went to Donechchina once a week, he had some agreement with bakeries where he exchanged things for bread. Father went to Donechchina by train. In this way our father saved many people from hungry death. And people learnt to cook borshch from sorrel, and other kinds of grass which were not harmful for human organism. There were many acacia trees in our village. We, children, climbed these trees, picked flowers which were sweet but did not do any harm. Thus we ate these flowers eagerly. We dried acacia flowers and mother powdered them and added to various meals, mainly to those which she baked in the oven or on the frying-pan. We were eating all this and it seemed to be tasty for us. We saw that cattle ate vendure and grass, thus it would do no harm to us, so we ate everything — some "kozelky", as they were called here, which had milky liquid, we ate turnip, grychay, we even made up a verse: "Grychay, spurge, come into borshch and from borshch to wine to make it more sweet".

On our way to school we dropped in "posadka" that is lines of trees planted in steppe zone of Ukraine for protection against dry wind and for snow retention. So we dropped in "posadka", there was a lot of grass and flowers during flowering.

There also grew cherry-trees. Still in May we were waiting impatiently for cherries, the so called May cherries, then mulberry ripened. So we climbed trees and were eating fruit growing on them. I recollect we liked mulberry very much, it was sweet and we were hungry.

Children were growing, they needed various meals and they were given one and the same food mainly. And it is so surprising that under such conditions we grew up as quite normal people. However we were subjected to various diseases, scarlet fever was very spread, people even got ill with typhus during starvation. People

did not care much about hygiene, they had no soap, they washed in "lugovi" which they boiled of wood ashes and sun flower ashes. Lice multiply easily and it is very difficult to get rid of them. People oiled heads with kerosene, clothes were washed in "lugovi", mothers searched their children's heads. Quite unexpectedly scab began spreading, this misfortune was followed by another and there were few doctors in villages and no medicines at all. People themselves using age-long experience of popular medicine, saved themselves as they could. But one could not be saved from every misfortune.

We got some black ointment for itch scab and oiled diseased parts of the body, people were afraid to be in contact with each other as this disease was very contagious. So people oiled themselves with that black ointment made of tar and it smelled so strongly that one could sense from a distance that a man oiled with it was going. Thus we adapted ourselves to everything except starvation.

People were thinking over how to organize a common kitchen in kolkhoz as at home they had nothing to cook of but jointly and if kolkhoz helped a bit, they could cook something. The head of the kolkhoz agreed with this proposal, they chose cooks and in the morning they put big cauldrons and cooked borshch in them. It was the time when beets were growing so they could take some and cook borshch. There was quite a lot of sheep in kolkhoz as it was not difficult to feed them, so they killed sheep and put their meat into borshch or some soup.

We, children, when we were hungry, had no reason to be cheerful. The adults almost did not speak with each other either, they were sighing, moaning but it even did not occur to them to express aloud their dissatisfaction, their sorrow, their despair. They were complaining at home only and even then they looked around lest anybody eavesdropped to them and gave them up to the authorities.

At that time they took to the army young men at the age of twenty two, but in our village there were few people of this age, so they took older people. And nobody opposed it as if anybody tried to oppose to the decision of the power, he would be annihilated. People complained, talked scandal among themselves, they said that even under the tsar regime they did not starve in Ukrainian villages as they did at that time. Not knowing the real reason of their disaster, they began to reproach Jews that they, as people said, were to blame as they took the most important posts under the new power, they lived quite well.

That year, 1932, the kitchen was organized in June. We, children, were running to the fields, sometimes we helped the collective farmers, we brought them water as they were weeding in the hot sun, they were merely losing consciousness because of the hot air. As we helped the collective farmers we were also given home soup from common kolkhoz kettle. Besides the cooks knew that our mothers did not have time to cook something at home as every day from early morning till late at night they were busy with

kolkhoz work. Women and young girls could hardly drag their legs after that work. When the first corn was threshed, the head of the kolkhoz allowed to thresh some flour and to bake some bread of it — fresh, real without adding some millet or dried and pounded acacia flowers. When bread was baked he was given at the kolkhoz kitchen to soup, cooked of beets. That bread was soaked with soup or borshch and we regaled on it. At that time there appeared something in the field which they could take as food, women took ripening corn out of ear, it was soft and ate it. When they were feeding sunflowers they also took out seeds and chewed them together with husks on them. All these could be taken as food, it did not do any harm to people and, on the contrary, it was very useful.

Then time came for new potato, but it was very small as people planted peels instead of high quality potato so new potato was meagre. People were worrying that the yield of potato would be meagre and they would be starving again. Children picked up grass for pigs and rabbits and tops of potato to dry it for cows to feed it on in winter. As we were eager to get soup from kolkhoz kitchen, we helped in the field doing some easy job such as putting sheaves. Though we did not do much still it was some help to adults and we took liking to jobs in the fields, we watched older people do this or that, we learnt it in practice.

There was much work to do in the fields, but there were few people. Kolkhoz management borrowed in radgosp, as I recollect it now, and in MTS tractors which pulled two combines during harvest time. They were of great help to collective farmers. It is true that in our village there were about two hundred peasant households, but there were few people there, there were few working hands and all this because of that hateful Stalin regime under which people were exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Thus there were few people able to work so even old women were forced to work in kolkhoz, at least they could peel potato in kolkhoz kitchen. They were also very helpful just as we, children. We, children, were not forced but asked to come and level corn on the carts which came up to combines. This was just the job for children. I remember that at combine harvesting much corn was lost because of careless work: one cart had already gone and the other did not come up to the combine yet, so corn was scattered past the cart on the ground. But this corn was not lost. People put some earth on it to hide from the brigade-leader and late at night they came to the field then others had already gone. They fed hens on this corn, pounded it into groats, cooked soup of it and even hid it for still worse time.

For their work days collective farmers got too little — some dozen grams for a work day. But people kept silence, took what they were given and at dawn they got up, went and took something for themselves. They did it so that nobody could see. All did it as they were forced to do it by Stalin kolkhoz regime. In other words people stole and did not consider it to be theft. And was it really

theft when people for their hard work got only some dozen grams of corn for a work day? Thus they went at night, took what they could and brought it home. The same thing happened when maize was ripening. People went to the fields at night, picked some dozens of corn-cobs and took them home. Kolkhoz guards could not manage to watch everything in the fields though there was quite a number of them but they all were old men with bad sight and hearing and sometimes they were just afraid to show up when they saw or heard that somebody was stealing something.

There were no storage houses in kolkhoz to keep corn so it was piled, when it was brought from combines, on the threshing floor, that is right in the field. There were guards there but they put a hut there to save themselves from wind and rain and often after midnight they went there to take a nap and peasants knew well when to come and get some corn. They knew all habits of the guards, they even knew when they would hear their snoring.

Peasants took advice of Nikita Khrushchev who often visited kolkhoz fields. Peasants asked him what they should do to make their life better and he answered: to make the life of peasants better, they should get up early and go to bed late. Thus the collective farmers followed his advice to get up early so that they could have time before dawn to bring something home, and to go to bed late, so that at dusk they would not miss the opportunity and bring home something from the so called common property. Thus we learnt to get up early and go to bed late as what we were given for week days was not enough indeed.

ON THE EVE OF FAMINE

In 1932 the yield was not bad however by Stalin order and then Molotov and Kaganovich came to Ukraine, first of all threshed corn should be given to the state. It turned out that Stalin signed an agreement with some foreign countries for delivery of large quantity of grain. So they took everything what we had in our village, not only corn but other farm products. It was necessary, as propagandists yelled, to fulfil "p'yatyrichka". Thus the first assignment to kolkhoz was to load threshed corn and bring it to the nearest railway station. There it was loaded into cars and was taken to the Black sea ports and from there our corn poured with our blood and sweat was shipped to Great Britain. Thus the question arises — whether Stalin knew that they took from Ukraina all the grain obtained during the harvest time in summer, or whether he did not know. He could not help knowing it as he had a large party and administrative staff who informed him about the current situation.

At that time, as it turned out, Stalin wished to extend connections with the West, to buy the equipment required for

industrialization of the country. Though Canada was considered to be a part of British empire, it sold wheat at higher price than the Soviet Union. In the West they consider that any material goods should be paid for and Stalin sold them almost for next to nothing. He did not have headache because of the fate of Ukrainian peasants, he did not feel sorrow because Ukrainian peasant would be starving and dying from hunger. So one could not exclude that he was informed about everything.

Thus British ships called at the Black sea ports, loaded their holds with Ukrainian wheat which was kept in large elevators in ports. So our Ukrainian wheat was shipped oversea to feed people and cattle there. And nobody thought about us, and if somebody said something aloud, he was annihilated. British ships called at Odessa, Azov, Mariupol' and other Black Sea ports, they also called at Berdyans'k which was not far from us. People just complained to each other, talked scandal, they said that the government exported grain, not taking in consideration the fact that our people could be starving and in the first turn those, who grew this grain.

We had few food products for winter and father said to the children that this year we should be worse than the previous one and that we should lay in food products to survive winter. How could we survive the forthcoming winter? This question troubled even the children. Autumn came, nearly everything was picked up from fields. They hid for themselves what one could. Pumpkins were covered with crude straw, potato was dug in kagaty, but we had not much potato, so at once we left some buckets of it for planting next year. Father hid all he could get in the cellar which he dug in the place of former well in the thicket of the garden. We hoped that nobody would drop in there, nobody would get interested in the elder thicket, thus we might somehow survive hunger. These hiding places as it turned out later, saved many people from hungry death.

Father told us that part of what we had grown in the kitchen garden had to be given to kolkhoz. Thus we gave haricot, beets but representatives rode about the village, dropped into households looking for what could be taken from peasants to kolkhoz. They took even the last without taking into consideration that peasants might be starving.

We still had a pig and some sucking-pigs and father decided to kill one of them, to tell the truth, to suffocate it unless anybody heard its squeal. Though it was a small sucking-pig, it had to be hidden. And I should say that year father managed not to register all sucking-pigs in sil'rada book. During the whole summer we fed sucking-pigs on grass and sometimes on corn, brought from kolkhoz field which was dropped from combine and we brought home at night; it was mixed with soil. Father killed this "patsyatko"*, as

* "patsyatko" - a sucking-pig.

people called them, and in December of 1932 he took permission from sil'rada to kill the pig as we had nothing to feed it on. Father left the sow for reproduction so it had to be fed by all means. So we had some supply of fat and salted meat. Father managed to hide all this deep in the stack which he brought in autumn from kolkhoz field. He had to keep a large family and to have some food to give passers-by who were going through our village.

We also had a stock of garlic and onion. One should know that they are necessary not only as food products but as medicine as well. Besides they rubbed themselves with garlic and onion when they caught cold and took their juice when coughing. Our mother was also very enterprising, she had, as they said, her own mind. She dressed her children sewing clothes from her own skirts which she bought during tsarist times. At that time they were wearing long and wide skirts, so she sewed skirts for all three girls from one skirt, and it was very important as you could not buy material for skirts in the shop. It happened somehow that when new communist power came, everything disappeared from shops. Well, at first, there was revolution, then civil war but it was in thirties, many years passed since Stalin regime came. And there was nothing in the shops. Sometimes they brought some dozen meters of cotton but it was taken by the authorities and a common peasant could not get it. So we were usually wearing patched up clothes, just to cover ourselves.

Many people from our village, especially those who had small families and did not have small children tried to go somewhere for the whole winter. They went to Donechchina, to Donets'k itself where they had some relatives or acquaintances. Coming there, they got a job in coal mines. Thus people saved themselves.

And to our village came people from the environs. Our villagers often settled them in the earth-houses built by them. They were called mud-hut as they were built from clay, so people did not spare them and settled passers-by there. All seemed to foresee their death of starvation so they sympathized with strangers. They were talking among themselves that starvation death was terrible. If a man got ill and died from it, it was quite natural but to die of a starvation was terrible. Talking about awful things, people cursed new kolkhoz Stalin system, cursed Stalin policy, who ordered to take the last from people, they did not take pity of anybody, either old or young people, or even children.

FAMINE

Somehow we survived 1932, then came 1933. We foresaw it would be more terrible then the previous year as the supply which we had was almost exhausted and we had to survive on what we managed to save from that previous already hungry year. And that was left? Just some peas, haricot, beets and potato. Still at the

beginning of the year our mother gave us small portions of meals. Mainly we had some soup which could not boast its fat.

Father decided to make arrangements with our neighbours to go to Berdyans'k, where he had already known some Jew bakers. And he had to take a pass from kolkhoz management to bring bread without hindrance, otherwise militiamen who were serving Stalin regime, took away bread at the railway stations. They put on red bandages and pretended to fight with profiteering. And what kind of profiteering was it if people did not wish anything but to survive, to give children a loaf of bread lest they would die. Profiteering is supposed to be some kind of activity with the aim to make a profit, to become rich. Who thought of wealth at that time? The only wealth was human life and even it was not taken into consideration, people died and those who left alive seemed not to pity the dead, all thought about themselves, about their closest ones. Even we, children, knew the militiamen hurt people taking away bread, so we hated them as representatives of Stalin regime.

Thus, father was going to Berdyans'k again, to the seaport of the Sea of Azov, he was going to get some bread, salted fish, dried sardelle or bullhead. There in Berdyans'k again its environs fishermen and shop-keepers, mainly Jews, sold it for money, and at the time of starvation exchange it for gold or high quality items. They exchange it for items which people managed to hide since tsar time.

Father took a cart with him to the station which he hid somewhere and on his way back he put on it what he had exchanged. From Berdyans'k father brought besides bread, as I had already said, salted fish, that is dried salted fish, dried sardelle and bullhead and sometimes a barrel or two of salted herring. So, having loaded all these things on the cart, he brought them to the village. He came home late at night or at dawn — he was very tired, dirty, unshaven, in crumpled clothes, sleepy. And we were waiting for him impatiently. Father shared what he brought between the neighbours and then gave us a small piece of something from our share to last it longer. When he brought three sacks of bread, each family got four loaves. And again people did not know when they would get some more bread so they did not know whether to eat it or just look at it. They could go to get some bread but it was not given for nothing, they were to have some items to exchange for bread. Father foreseeing his next coming to Berdyans'k made agreements with some Jews so that they kept some bread and fish for him.

It was awful time for peasants and, on the contrary, shop-keepers, mainly Jews, made a fortune out of our misfortune, they got golden items from those who saved their lives.

Our father, going to Berdyans'k for bread, not once saw large British ships which were loaded with Ukrainian wheat, he saw with his own eyes as they loaded large boxes of canned food. Near these moorings where ships were loaded, people gathered in crowds and

were watching silently as day and night our wealth was carried away when Ukraina was dying of starvation. Militiamen dispersed the crowd, threatened them with their rifles. Sometimes as father was told and he told us on returning home, it came to riots. It was enough if someone cried aloud that Stalin regime was fleecing us, and the crowd became agitated, shouted at British seamen, showed that they took the last. But British seamen did not understand what people were saying and shouting and the ships were at some distance so they did not have any opportunity to understand them. Sometimes Englishmen happened to come in boats to the shore and seeing hungry crowd, throw baked bread and buns. And people were throwing themselves on that like brutal, to catch something. And though Englishmen were surprised, the hungry people had no shame. Catching what was thrown, people tried to pull out bread or a bun from each other, they might take them not for themselves but for a hungry child, who was lying somewhere swelling from hunger. And English seamen or dockers, God knows, those who loaded ships had cameras and took photographs of people exhausted with hunger, they photographed people fighting for a piece of bread. In Berdyans'k people were talking among themselves that everything what was going on was deliberate Stalin policy. Taking away bread from peasants he aimed to reduce them to starvation and so to made them join kolkhozes. Peasants did not wish to join kolkhozes voluntarily, they worked on their land from time immemorial, not counting hours, since the times of "panshchina". So they, peasants, considered kolkhozes to be new "panshchina" under which people were bound to land, worked hard for nothing. And one should say that both the policy of dispossession and artificial hunger gave the result desired by Stalin — people joined kolkhozes. But did that desired result bring luck to the country and people? As the events of the following years showed, kolkhoz system did not bring luck to peasants. It did not give them either well-being or freedom. Peasants as it turned out became new slaves, they were not given passports and without them they could not get registered in towns, thus peasants became serfs again, they could not get a job in a town. But it happened later, when hunger was over. And at that time people left villages if they had any opportunity, if they had some strength left.

Returning from the town, father told us about such things which were hard to believe. At least at school we were said one things and at home we saw other things, so sometimes it was hard for us to believe his stories. How could we believe that a man, as they said, who led honest life, who was never engaged in politics and worked hard, was arrested at night and never returned home. And they even did not want to say to his family — wife, children, brothers, sisters, parents — why was he arrested, where the prisoner was, in which prison, whether there was trial and what sentence was and so on. And only after long years had passed, it became

who died on their way to Siberia, who were killed in the forest of the North, in the coal mines, pits or gold "priisk"*. They were not counted as it was not the time for counting. But we saw all this with our own eyes, we saw swollen corpses, saw as dead people were picked up, as if they were carrion, and dug in common graves without ceremony, without priests, without coffins.

And Stalin stooges saw it too, they saw and maybe noted everything what was necessary for the report. These stooges could not help seeing how a lot of people was dying. Father Stalin was sitting in the Kremlin, he only got the reports, he did not look into the eyes of the dead. But his stooges did and they were not conscience-stricken.

But time came when Stalin began to annihilate not only Ukrainian peasants or peasants of other nationalities, annihilate, because they did not want to join kolkhozes. Stalin began to annihilate party members who held high posts, especially those who collaborated with Lenin. Some of them, like Trots'kiy, were deported by his order, others were imprisoned, exiled and still others, which was more often, were shot.

I remember it very well. I remember that in our text-books there was the description of the life of Trots'kiy and other party leaders. But once all over text-books were taken away from us and then we found the pages with biographies of the "enemies of people" were torn out of the books. Once we were taught that they were Lenin comrades-in-arms, creators of the revolution, and then one day they became enemies of people and they did not find worse words for them as traitors, spies and so on. But this is not our business though it shows what kind of man "father" Stalin was.

In our village many graves were dug during three years, they buried or, in fact, dug some people in one grave. The head of the kolkhoz ordered to go about the fields and pick up corpses, especially in spring when snow was thawing and from it hands or legs of the dead appeared. They, exhausted by hunger, having got not much strength, were going in search of a piece of bread and then during snow-storm, they got frozen and died, as it happened with that woman, who was going with two children, pulling them on the sledges and they all three froze. It was they, whom we, children, found on our way from school. I recollect that there were some rags on these sledges, perhaps to cover children with them and to save them from cold. People fell from hunger like flies. Some people wondered, where they were going, why they did not stay at home. But as for me, it was quite clear. Firstly, dispossessed people or those who were to be dispossessed were leaving their villages, secondly, when hunger was at the door, when no hope was left to survive, people were going to any place. It was better to

* "priisk" - mine, pit

be going somewhere, having the faintest hope to survive, than stay at home and wait for inevitable death.

All that happened before our own eyes, many witnesses of that starvation death are still alive, they are telling about that terror that stroke our Ukraina. They were telling but they were silent for a long time and the world did not know about our tragedy, about total annihilation of people. And even if it knew, it kept silent as one does not suffer other's misfortune. A man who is full up never understands a hungry one. And it was more profitable for those who knew it to close their eyes at people misfortune as they were tempted by cheap shopping of Ukrainian grain from "father" Stalin. I shall say nothing about moral qualities of these people, let them live with their guilty conscience, let them die with it.

And we, who were children at that time, who experienced all this, who were helped by fathers, mothers, grandfathers or grandmothers to survive starvation which was unknown to the world till that time, we should know what was happening on fertile Ukrainian land, in our Zaporizhzhya, on Azov chernozem (black earth), on the lands which fed half of Europe. We must live with the hope that future generations would never experience such disaster and let our parents, grandfathers, grandmothers, all our relatives and not only relatives, who died of starvation, sleep their eternal sleep. They lived hoping to survive starvation, however God's will was different and they reconciled themselves with it. All that God sent to them they took with obedience.

But the memory of what was happening in Ukraina and especially in spring of 1933 could not die. At last when in the West they began speaking and writing about artificial starvation, arranged by Stalin, after the Congress of the USA summoned a commission to investigate starvation in Ukraina, after there was some glasnost under new power, then in Ukraina they began to write about it. Ukrainian writers undertook to do this work and we must be grateful to them for it. Glory to the brave people! We must thank everybody who hold sacred memory of these martyrs! By the way, I am writing my memoirs with the aim to make my own contribution in keeping truth about starvation in Ukraina.

Our father often reminded us, taught us that we, children, should be very careful with strangers, that we should never say to anybody what we were talking about at home. In particular he said that we should say nothing to our school teachers as some of them were party members who considered Stalin to be real sun so they could denounce our father. When somebody asked us questions, we always answered that we knew nothing, that we heard nothing. Seeing how we were brought up at school, our father ordered us not to join any circles which were organized at school. When father allowed us to join "zhovtenyata" (organization of small schoolchildren), he did not know well Stalin regime.

We were zhovtenyata, in future we would become pioneers and when we grew up, we could become Komsomol members, as we were said, and as adults we could become party members.

We saw with our own eyes what Stalin regime led to, which was to be guided by party wisdom but, in fact, it was directed only by one "infallible" Stalin. We also saw what work had to be done by party members, take for example, our teachers, though they saw death reaping but nevertheless they advocated new regime, they praised it. They hardly did it because of their own convictions, I am sure that they were ordered to do so and their crime was only that they did not opposed it, and I do not know whether they could be accused of it as they wanted to survive too and their life was not sweet.

In spring of that hungry year of 1933 father took from the hiding place made by him, either some potato, millet or maize and mother cooked "mamalyga". We were eating that "mamalyga" or pumpkin porridge, it supported us though the portions which mother gave us were small. Nevertheless we had some food not lack of vitamins.

Father was going to Berdyans'k more seldom to exchange some items for bread. We had no items left. What we had before had been exchanged for bread, fish, herrings. From time to time father did go to Berdyans'k though we knew that he did not take anything for exchange. And he brought some bread or fish. Father did not say anything to us then but we guessed that father might help in bakery. He might promise that he would work out in future. Father knew many Jews, they liked him. And father, on returning from Berdyans'k, often told mother and we listened to him, too that there were many good people among Jews, when they were helped, they could help you too. Father said that there were different people, both good and bad. So it was among Jews as well as among our people and even among our villagers. It happened that some of our villagers left for Berdyans'k at night so that nobody saw him or asked something. Sometimes father met them in Berdyans'k, met his neighbours. Some of them got job in coal mines as there were few miners — this job was hard and dangerous so they took peasants without asking their passports or where they came from. One had to work and mine coal for the country. There was industrialization in the country at that time, thus it needed much coal. Industry could not exist without coal just like people without bread. It was necessary for the production of electrical energy, for heating and so on.

Thus we held out till spring taking small portions of potatoes boiled in their jackets and pumpkin porridge or millet porridge. Then acacia was flowering again, we ate its flowers even regaled on them. They were sweet and substituted candies for us which we did not see for some years, we did not have what children liked most of all. We climbed the tree, broke off flowering twigs, threw them on the ground and brought home for our adults to regale on sweet flowers too. Our mother when she had some flour for pan-cakes added

dried ground acacia to batter. Mostly she added it to maize, then sifted it, added some pumpkin and baked pan-cakes, they seemed to be tasty for us as we did not have anything else. Then sorrel and loboda appeared and again we got used to plants which did no harm to people. Thus followed by misfortune we overlived the most difficult period, the times of total starvation in Ukraina.

It was difficult to overlive winter of 1932-1933. We did not have either forage, stored up in autumn, or tops for the cattle, or grass, which we dried for rabbits and the goat. Almost the whole winter the goat was fed on leaves and twigs from apricot tree. We were lucky to have it, in summer we had fruit and its leaves and twigs were forage for the goat and kids. However, kids did not live till summer, father had to kill them to have some meat and save all of us from starvation. We also killed all rabbits, we ate their meat and father took their skins to Berdyans'k and got some foodstuff for them. When all tops were out, our cow began mooing awfully, we had nothing to feed it on, so father and mother decided to kill it, while it was still alive. And we did so, we killed our good cow. We salted its meat, smoked a bit and gave a little to each family in our village for people to fortify themselves and to help them to last till spring. Some neighbours who managed to keep caws did the same. There was understanding between people, they saved each other as they could in order to avoid body swelling from hunger.

We left the goat to ourselves which gave us milk and replaced our cow. The goat did not eat much and as spring came, it was nibbling grass and became more cheerful. It also liked acacia shoots and nibbled spur in our yard. What was enough for the goat would never be enough for the cow.

Mother of my mother's brother-in-law and his three brothers died from starvation, two brothers and their father survived. It was Komyshanov family. They were buried one after another. It was difficult for Komyshanov to bring up two children, however with God's help they somehow survived; perhaps their organisms were stronger. They survived also due to some help from other villagers. Our village was friendly as if it were one family, I think there are no such villages nowadays.

WISE STALIN AND STUPID LIFE

All grown up people as well as children understood what was going on under Stalin regime. Those mentors and various executives, who carried out Stalin's orders, did nothing but appealed to people and shouted at the top of their voices that it was necessary to annihilate all enemies of the people, all "trots'kisty" (persons holding the same views as Trots'kiy). Stalin gave order to annihilate all Lenin group which he left after himself, none of them had the right to stay

alive. Stalin pointed out that they tried to undermine building of socialism in the country, that they sabotaged his orders, that they did everything to weaken Stalin power. But in fact he meant not only the main people, left by Lenin, but his supporters as well and even not so supporters as Stalin political opponents. Thus it happened so that one day some political figure was speaking at the meeting for the Soviet power and in a week he was not heard about, he disappeared, and then appeared somewhere in Solovki or some other place of the Soviet Union. Such people were at once called enemies of the people, party traitors. And again we had to strike with ink out of the text-books what was written about him or tear pages out and again the teachers explained why it was done. They were explaining but we understood that the teachers themselves did not know what to say and about who as one day he was a good man but the next day he was the enemy of the people. And once he was the enemy of the people, so not only he himself but his whole family — wife and children, even if they were small, had to bear responsibility for it. Then time came when these "corrected" text-books could not be used, so we just listened to what teacher was saying and sometimes put it down into the notebooks. Stalin appointed other devoted to him party members to the posts of "Motherland traitors". And again we had to learn their biographies, all their lives and about the posts which they currently held.

At school we were taught about the role of the working class and peasants, about the constitution, which turned out to be based on falsehood, it was mere propaganda. However children had to learn all this, as they said, we should know our rights and obligations. And if someone did not learn it he was under suspicion, why he did not know the decisions of our constitution, why he know nothing about party figures, about the heroes of the revolution. But as it turned out later, these people, who we were taught about, were not heroes of the revolution at all, they were made heroes to please Stalin, to please the leader. Mostly they were people who did not dare to recollect that insignificant role which Stalin played in February and October revolution.

I had good memory, I learnt everything properly so I moved up from one class to another. At school we learnt poems and songs. Even then we, children, paid attention to the fact that many songs were composed by various poets, Ukrainian as well, but among them there were no songs about Ukraine, they were mostly about Stalin wisdom and his heroic past and so on. It came from songs that our leader was very wise, but in real life it was differently, there was no attractiveness, no joy, on the contrary — there was bitter trouble, poverty, shortage of commercial goods and food-stuffs.

People were angry, unfriendly, they were complaining where that disaster came from? At first people were almost illiterate but as time passed they learnt to read and write, began to realize where that regime came to us from, which annihilated more than half of

the peasants. Peasants suffered most of all as in towns people could live anyhow, they were given cards and rations which were not big, of course, some dozens grams of some groats or bread per a capita. People died from starvation in towns as well, there were no reason for joy either, however there was not such mass annihilation.

The only luck of our family was that our father was energetic, he understood much and he quickly realized what kind of power came to our village. Although father was not old, even respectable neighbours came to ask his advice, father was always on friendly terms with the head of the kolkhoz Volosyanoy, he knew how placate him. Father brought him vodka or some bread and the head gave him the pass. The head of the kolkhoz came from our people, he was a peasant too. And this was important. Though he gave orders concerning work, people obeyed him, all worked peacefully, nobody put obstacles in his way. Friendly relations in the village were of great importance, people mutually supported each other. The main thing was that no strange executives were sent to our village. If something concerning our common life had to be settled, then men gathered together, consulted and discussed how to survive at that hard time.

And so time passed, when summer came something grew in the field and something was cooked in our common kitchen. Thus we lived. In summer of 1933, just like in the previous year, we did some job in the kitchen garden, though we did not have rabbits any longer, we had to pick some grass for our sow and care that it to be fed so that it would bring many healthy sucking-pigs. And indeed, it made us happy by bringing a dozen of sucking-pigs. All of us took care of them as if they were members of our family and every evening father coming back from work, dropped in at the pigsty. And the sow seemed to be glad to see father, it looked at him, grunted peacefully and lay down again letting the sucking-pigs to suck it. If father brought it something, it left its place and came up to father and he treated it to some corn which he got in the field or to some tasty grass. In the day time we picked tasty grass, spurge, which the sow and sucking-pigs liked very much, we took sacks and went to the fields to get some grass behind the watered land, we shook soil out, put it into sacks and brought home. We gave a bit of this grass to our goat and the rest was dried in the sun to keep for winter as father was planning to buy a cow.

We, children, also helped in the field, we weeded beetroots or maize. Thus we helped our mother in her work. We gathered beans, haricot, and fruit in the kitchen-garden. And in the large kolkhoz kitchen we were treated to dinner and we were very glad to have it. In the large kolkhoz community we thought the dinner to be tasty though it was far from being dainty. Together with the adults we guipped soup with great appetite. When water-melons ripened, we quickly did the job, giving to us by our parents and hurried to the kolkhoz to be there in time for dinner as water-melons were also

served at it. The head of the kolkhoz even allowed the children to go to the melonfield and choose the best and the most ripened water-melon or sweet-scented melon. We learnt to find which water-melons were ripened, took them and brought to the adults, for the whole community. The grown-ups strove to give children some easy job, to spare them.

And we were glad as we did not work hard but enjoyed work and get dinner. And that was very important for us as we had hardly survived hunger time and still were not quite full.

People led primitive life in the village. I had already recollected that in summer peasants and especially women peasants worked in the field barefooted without any footwear. The legs of women and girls were injured, chapped, when a woman injured her leg, she put plantain to the wound, this is a leaf which stopped bleeding. People got accustomed to the life in poverty and even as it is characteristic of our people, they started joking. When somebody got some trauma, he yelled mockingly: "Long live comrade Stalin!". And then what could we do under that hateful Stalin regime? We could not rebel as we saw how this regime annihilated people. Freedom to speech which was written down in the Constitution and which is currently said about in the whole world, was out of the question. The Constitution was one thing and life was quite another. It was cruel life. Peasants learnt mocking at leaflets and slogans, published by the authorities. I remembered such a facetious saying which was like a verse: "Father Stalin, give us soap as there are lice in our kolkhoz, which had wings". We, children, hearing such sayings ran about the field, looking for lice which had wings.

We did not see lice with wings but they multiplied so as if flew from one man to another. They were everywhere — in hair, in clothes. It was real madness. People could not get rid of that misfortune. They were already scratching themselves without any shame. In the field during the break in the work, women were sitting and killing lice in each other's hair. It was called "s'katy" to look for lice in somebody's hair.

Peasants considered lice to be equal to Stalin regime, which was sucking blood from Ukrainian peasants. Just like lice suck human blood. People began looking for a remedy to get rid of lice, they boiled water and put their clothes there. In a large cauldron with boiling water they put clothes, then added some soda or ash to water. Ash, or as it was called "Yuzhilisya", was said to kill nits i.e. eggs of lice. Nits under the influence of the temperature cracked. We, children, were constantly scratching, tried to pull awful parasites from hair or clothes and kill them, crash. Some lice were so sucked with blood that it was disgusting to look at them, and it turning your stomach.

That poverty resulted in another misfortune — bugs. They were everywhere — in blankets, in mattresses, in rags — just where they could hide, there were a lot of them.

In winter we fought with bugs by putting everything, where they would be found, on the cold and thus they were frozen. To save us, children, from lice, father cut our hair short so that lice could not hide. We also lubricated our heads with kerosene. But it was more difficult to get rid of lice which were in clothes. Lice sucked human blood and hid somewhere. We scratched our body till blood appeared. Though we lubricated our heads with kerosene and washed our clothes with it, but it was very difficult to get rid of that misfortune. Even hens got lice though they differed from those which people had. It was disgusting to look at all this. Pigs got some ticks which pierced deep into the body.

Thus we lived during hunger time and after it as well. Our peasants knew that lice and other parasites were the result of non-observance of hygiene, the result of poverty. And how could we maintain cleanness, when people came from other villages, asked to stay for a night and slept on the straw, just on the floor? There were no conditions to keep cleanness, the stock of soap was next to nothing, we had only water. We had no clothes to change, people even did not have a pair of underwear of their own. And no wonder that the result of all this in addition to hungry life was poverty and hordes of lice.

It is surprising that under such conditions typhus did not spread. When spring 1933 came, corpses which had not been picked, began to decompose thus it was also the source of various bacteria, which could cause diseases. Corpses were powdered with lime and chlorine and were buried quickly. We, children, wondered why so many corpses were buried, children were always children, they ran where they needed or did not need, they were interested in everything, they wished to find out about either good or bad. Some of the children, who were more brave, came up to the head of the kolkhoz and asked why whose people died, why there were so many of them, and the head of the kolkhoz, who had a lot of troubles, answered that there was bad harvest in other villages so people were looking for bread and some of them died.

The head of the kolkhoz, as I had already said, was a kind man, he came from our village, grew between our villagers and associated with them all his life. Thus he often interceded for the people from his village, when there was a chance to, because sometimes it happened so that nobody could intercede, especially when somebody was put into the list of kulaks subjected to dispossession and exile to Siberia. Under such circumstances the peasants respected the head of the kolkhoz, who trusted his fellow-villagers. When the food stuff or something else was being taken away by kolkhoz, when carts were going from one farmstead to another, the peasants put on the carts what they considered necessary to be given. Everybody had already had some experience in such matters and knew what to give away. And we, children, were ordered to hold our tongues not to blab out something. Often at

supper father taught us that if somebody asked about our home or other affairs we should not answer. It was called — not to carry out anything from home.

"In other words, our parents themselves taught us to say lies or to hide the truth. Such bringing up of children by their parents was forced by the circumstances, created by Stalin regime, under which one was afraid of another, under which denunciation was spread as never before. And at school teachers taught us to love that regime, that power which as we saw ourselves, was inhuman power. It even came to that when going to or from school we were even afraid to blab out something to other children so we even just could not have a friend. They say that it is a small flock that has not a black ship, so no wonder that there were such people in the village. It even happened that boys taught and inspired by the teacher at school, pushed a girl into a swamp or into water so that it reached her knees and made her tell them one thing or another so that they could have information against somebody to denounce to the teacher.

Father explained us that if he were sentenced or put to prison, what mother could do then? Those who were sentenced never returned home at all. Father gave us examples from the life of other people. A father was sentenced and then poor mother was unable to take care of children, household and work in kolkhoz as well. Our mother though our father was with us did not have enough sleep, she was always bustling about the house, taking care of us after her work in kolkhoz. She had to wash our clothes, to patch them, to sew something.

Mostly people were moaning, complaining, old people were crying, pleaded to the God, asking in their prayers to save innocent people. Sometimes women were hysteric, as it was they who had to bear the burden of keeping the family, which had to be fed, in order not to die of starvation, they bore the main responsibility in the family. The women happened to come to our father and asked him to bring them something from Berdyans'k but they did not have anything valuable to be exchange. Father tried to help even such people bringing something from the town. His trips to the town to get some food, though Berdyans'k was not far from our village, were rather dangerous. Different people were wandering about the stations, bandits as well, who were ready to cut a man for a piece of bread. Militiamen often searched the travellers too, taking the bread away from them. The passes given to our father by the head of the kolkhoz, often saved him.

Our father, Petro Tarasovych, supported all of us and gave a helping hand to many fellow-villagers as well. Father seemed not to sleep at all, he was always short of time. He knew all fellow-villagers and helped everybody if he could. He was very active, quick and always went straight, both in direct and indirect meaning of the word. In the village he was addressed by his first and second name, he was called Petre Tarasovychu. And he was also a very just man.

When he shared bread among us at home, he did not offend anybody, nobody complained. The same was in the village. When he brought some sacks of bread from Berdyans'k — he gave it to everybody, no one complained.

Bread was valued greatly in the village, when there was bread at home nobody dared to take it whenever he wanted and should wait until the eldest in the family would give it to him. Bread was shared among the members of the family, one loaf of bread had to last for the whole week, even at good times. I had never heard any complaints of unjust sharing of bread either at home or in the neighbourhones.

We had a little brother and he, because there were only girls, his elder sisters, spoke like a girl about himself, that is adding the ending of feminine gender to verbs. Once father came from Berdyans'k and brought some sacks of bread. He brought them, people came, he gave it to them, and there were some loaves left for us. Mother cooked borshch from what she had and father cut bread in pieces and gave them to our household. Our little brother, who was called Myt'ko, Mytya, took and ate his loaf very quickly and said to us: "I didn't eat, no bread." He was a bit more than two years old, maybe two and a half. But he was clever and I recollect that he made us laugh by saying — "I didn't eat, no bread". As he was very small, he did not understand why there was no bread and was looking at everybody, at father so pleading, but did not say anything else, as if asking by his eyes to give him some more. Though his stomach was small, however it required some food, it did not want to be hungry. Then father cut him some more bread, an we had only one piece of it to each, but we did not complain, satisfying with the thin borshch.

Now nobody knows about the fate of small children in Ukraina on the eve of spring in 1933. Children saw that there was misfortune, that their parents were poor, that they would be glad to give their kids everything but what of it, if there was nowhere to take it from. Misfortune could be understood if father and mother were idle people and did not want to work and earn money. But, on the contrary, those who I knew were very hard-working people, they were eager to get up at dawn and go to bed late at night to get something for their children. They worked for ten or twelve hours a day but their work was not paid. On the contrary, what they earned was taken away by the state that is, as we thought, by Stalin. Children were innocent, why they had such fate? A child is without a single sin, then why his mother had to take him God knows where? Mothers were taking their children and sometimes, being on their way and having no possibility to get even a slice of bread, died together with them. So mother buried her child, her own blood, somewhere in a forest, closed his eyes, which did not experience joy and dug him in a shallow hole. There was no way out. Children together with their mothers were defenceless. They did not even have a crust of bread or potato peels to give their children. Soon

mother died as well. And there was nobody to close her eyes. She lied somewhere at the road, forgotten by everyone and needless to no one. Sometimes such a woman was found either in the hay stock, sometimes at the road or just in the field.

During last two years, that is 1932 and 1933 people came through the hell, both old and small. So we cannot forget it, it always returns in our thoughts. The awful scenes are still vivid, they torture even in dreams. Stalin, as we were said at school, was a wise leader, but who knows how our life should be called. It was not wise.

The years of collectivization were the years of total terror. Hunger did not spare either those who were the first to join kolkhoz or those who opposed kolkhoz up to the end. Hunger taught everybody to value bread, it opened our eyes at Stalin regime. It was they who survived. But those who died from starvation, should only be recollected with a good word, the recollections about the victims.

I remember that Stalin party supporters, his propagandists blamed the peasants of hunger because they killed livestock, pigs, everything they had. And that the peasants wasted grain and potato, meant for sawing. And I, being the witness of this starvation, can say with clear conscience that it was lies. I know it as it was in our family, we had to use potato meant for sawing as there was hunger yet. Our neighbours did the same. I have all grounds to think that the same happened all over Ukraina. And livestock in particular was killed when we had nothing to feed it on, when we had to save ourselves from starvation. Father killed the cow as he was afraid that it would die and be completely useless. We also killed rabbits and kids as there was no forage. That who knows a Ukrainian peasant would never believe in such nonsense that he would kill the last cow from the cowshed lest he was forced by the circumstances. Only people without shame, for whom to tell lies was just as for the dog to bark, could say such things.

Ukrainian peasants were also accused of leaving villages without working hands. It should be said that it was invention for the sake of cheap propaganda. It is true, in villages during total collectivization, that is in 1932-33, there were few working hands, in particular, there were few men able to work, but most of manhood did not leave the village voluntarily. First of all kulaks were exiled to Siberia and thus deprived the village of the most active, the most efficient peasants, then many people were arrested alleged for hostile propaganda. At last when hunger was at the doors, many men able to work left for Donbas, for mines of Donets'k, Artyomov'sk and other towns. But they left the village when there had already been famine there. Thus it was not they who were the cause of famine and not their absence in the village caused starvation. On the contrary, hunger drove them out of the village. Is it possible that these propagandists thought the peasants to like mining coal out of earth, working in dust, without light and fresh air? There was not proper housing in the miner's towns and they rented

some place, were squeezed there and paid for it some part of the money they earned. But in this way they saved themselves and their relatives left in the village.

It was also said much about speculations which caused starvation. I had already recollected here that it was not speculation in fact. I know myself that father would have never gone to Berdyans'k to get some bread if the circumstances had not forced him. At least logics itself points at absurdity of the statement that speculation was the cause of starvation. When peasants baked bread in their ovens, when they had it in plenty, who would think of going to Berdyans'k for bread? It would look like going to get water in some versts (versta — 3500 feet) when one has it under his nose. We were lucky to have such head of the kolkhoz who was an honest man. And there was a lot of people who went to towns without certificates or passes. And so militiamen took bread away from them, bread which they had exchanged for gold or other valuable stuff.

IDEOLOGICAL PROFIT AND OUR WEEK — DAYS

Spring came. I was already eight years old. By that time I had already know much, learnt from father and mother. At school we were taught that there was no God. We, all village children, were accustomed to believe in God, were accustomed to religious services, though we did not always go to church, especially if there was no church in the village, so we could not hear the teachers' explanations. We were told not to believe in God, not to pray because, as they said, God did not hear our prayers as he did not exist. However, we, taught by the parents, followed the word of the God, followed as far as we could God's commandments. Our parents taught us to be obedient, not to rebel, to have respect for older people as it was required by God's laws. We were taught to have God in our heart.

And then we had to listen to untruth about God which was said by the teachers at the lessons. We guessed that they, teachers, said that by Stalin order, carried out by his stooges who took away from people not only material wealth but their belief in God as well, took away from a man his hope to be saved.

All this was done by Stalin regime to oppose a child to his father, a brother to brother. So that in towns workers did their job without proper payment, to make peasants to join kolkhozes, to make new salves, new serves of everybody. As Stalin intended to build socialist society in his own way and that new system had nothing in common with socialism. Socialism wishes good to common people, wishes to make people equal before the law, that all, no matter who their parents were, have the opportunity to study, have the right to health

protection, the right to rest and so on. But there was nothing of the kind under Stalin regime, so there was no socialism at all.

Stalin considered that if peasants were pressed by hunger, then they would join kolkhozes quickly. And indeed they joined kolkhozes. And Stalin executives were praised and awarded with orders. They had various privileges, there were special hospitals for them, special resorts, even special shops full of much stuff which a common citizen of the Soviet Union never saw with his eyes.

To be a teacher under Stalin regime, it was necessary to lose moral, to renounce his belief in God, to be cunning, to tell lies each time. Teachers taught the principals of the Constitution, where was written that all people were equal, all had the right to justice, all were to work as they could and got according to his labour. But in practice it was quite the opposite — those who worked hard, were starving, and those who only talked, who dissembled, they had everything in abundance. And Stalin himself taught: "Who does not work, that does not eat!". And his own stooges did not work but ate what they wanted. And those who worked were starving.

And indeed, how that meant to be priest, Iosyp Vissarionovich Stalin, could believe in God if he annihilated millions of people, common working people. He also annihilated his former brothers-in-arms with whom he made the revolution. Let us suppose for a moment that Stalin was a believer, so could he or anybody else to commit such crimes resulted to the death of millions of innocent people? Adolf Hitler was a non-believer too, and he also as if he were Stalin's own brother, annihilated millions of people without any hesitation. But I shall tell about him in the second part of these memoirs.

Our parents knew what Stalin regime was striving for, they valued their policy by their deeds, how the new power destroyed churches, humiliated priests, fought against religion as if believers were threatening somebody. But believers had God's truth in their souls which forbade them to kill, to steal and so on. Church never taught to offend other people, never taught bad things. All evil, everything that was bad came from the new power, from Stalin cruel regime. If the new leaders did not believe in God, it was their own business, but why did they get into believers' sole, why did they turn churches into sheds or warehouses of various materials which caused the damage of the walls. They were mocking, they said that cows should also prey a bit and that not only people should prey to sacred images, and let horses receive the eucharist, let churches become useful at last, if to turn them into warehouses of, for example, building materials — lime, cement and so on.

Our parents were crying and grieving very much for the destroyed church. Almost the whole village. I said "almost" as there were exceptions, it was those who by truth or untruth started to serve Stalin regime, became non-believers and they themselves were involved in destroying God's temple. People built that church at their

own expenses, they themselves decorated it, they paid a large sum of money for decorating its interior, for windows with drawings on multicolored glass. And all this was destroyed, dirty and the church was turned into the shed for livestock. Those, who destroyed the church did not take into account either people's feelings or their belief in God. With that belief in their hearts our ancestors lived for centuries, it helped them to go through various misfortunes from Tatar-Mongol invasion to present time. And in any case after profanation of the church people did not cease to believe in God, but they were hurt, their feelings were wounded. And this is much more worse than physical humiliation.

People did not remain silent when their church was being turned into the shed for livestock. They protested, though they knew that their protests would not be paid attention at. People took away from the church whatever they could and first of all icons to hide them and to keep for better times. I remember that some of the icons were big, others were of medium size and there were small ones. The icons were beautifully painted, one could not look at them without reverence. On many icons there were inscriptions made in some queer letters, most of which could not be read. Some words however could be understood. The language on these icons was different from what we spoke at home. There was also a large book in the church which, as I now guess, was the Gospel. I saw it myself but did not say anybody about it as I was afraid, because Stalin regime punished for spreading the Word of God. People in our village were mainly Orthodox Church believers. They started each work with the word of God, they got up in the morning and either prayed or mentioned God. They appealed to the Most High to help them in their misfortunes, they prayed for themselves and their beloved ones. There was even a saying: "without God not come to the threshold".

However, as I understand it, the Lord punished our people for the sins of their forefathers. As nothing is done without the God's will, God's permission. Thus the times of Stalin regime came, which oppressed our people and tormented them. Perhaps God let Devil punish or try us. And that regime arrested, sent to Siberia or shot anyone who opposed it. Stalin was said to shoot himself those who stood in his way. He took the pseudonym "Stalin" not for nothing but to show that he was so strong that he could not be broken. He was a son of a Georgian tailor and his family name was Dzhugashvili. Lenin discerned Stalin, especially in the last years of his life he made sure that Stalin could not be entrusted the leadership of the party and state. He warned his comrades-in-arms about Stalin. But it was too late. Lenin was seriously ill, paralyzed and could not take an active part in politics. Lenin painted at all bad sides of Stalin nature as if he foresaw that during his governing of the state he would come to absolutism of a mentally diseased person, who he was in fact.

People were talking about it secretly and we, children, did not

know what was the truth and what was lies or somebody's fabrications. The more so as at school we were taught to love Stalin, that the Constitution and all the laws existed owing to Stalin. And then it even seemed to us that we lived owing to Stalin as if he had not lived we would have not lived either. Such strenuous the propaganda among people was, letting alone school, all activities were started and finished with the name of "the leader of proletariat and world revolution". Every day in each paper there were photoes of Stalin — he was making a speech, he was getting flowers from children or he himself was holding a child, or he was speaking with workers and so on and so forth. But, in fact, as it was found out later, he did not show his nose from Kremlin or his summer cottage near Moscow. He never associated either with workers or the more with peasants.

Stalin regime, Stalin propaganda even used the poetry of our prophet Taras Grygorovich Shevchenko to reach their good-for-nothing aim. Taras Shevchenko is known to stigmatize both tsar and bad priests. So they were saying about our genius that he was an atheist, godless, that, as they said, he predicted communist future. Shevchenko's striving for justice, equality, freedom was presented by Stalin propagandists as foretold of the new system. Taras Shevchenko really described in his works the unhappy life of Ukrainian peasants, especially peasant women, and especially miserable peasant girls. He fought against social and national oppression of the Ukrainian people. However when reading Shevchenko's works nobody could find even a trace of striving for such social system, which was set up to our and not only our people by Stalin. When Taras Shevchenko was saying about "free, new family" he was sure not to mean the submission of Ukraina to Moscow, under the guise of the so called "federation". One could assume that perhaps he meant the union of really free people with equal rights, the union, when nobody would force out the Ukrainian language, nobody would stifle the Ukrainian culture. Taras Shevchenko could not dream about such "free, new family", in which the Ukrainian language disappeared from Ukraina and there were not Ukrainian schools in its capital and in Ukrainian universities lectures were delivered in Russian. No, one could not even think about Taras Shevchenko in this way. Though he knew and loved the Russian language, and wrote his prose in Russian.

When summer of 1933 came, we, children, could not get rid of fear of hunger, though, in fact, the threat of hunger was past. Something grew in the field and there was new potatoes, though its yield was poor, wheat was growing and we could get it out of wheat-ears and chew, in the kitchen garden there were some vegetables, hens laid eggs. Thus hunger was over. But all the same, going from the field we looked for the plants which we fed on since spring. And, by the force of habit, we were eating those "kozelky", spurge, wintercress. And later on, already in August, we went to the

plantation where wild fruit trees were growing. We picked up green fruit, which were just growing red or yellow and treated ourselves to them. Everything was tasty for us, useful for us and did no harm to our health. Fruit ripened sooner in the plantation than in our gardens. We also ran to the field to help the grown ups and to get sweet, soft wheat grains or sunflower seeds. And thus we caught this or that and chewed it, just like they are chewing gum now, and were not hungry. And besides we tested various grasses on ourselves which did no harm to people, learnt the names of the plants, when they were flowering and when they bore fruits. Thus we got to know our nature, the nature of a Ukrainian hungry village.

Our father did not have to go to Berdyans'k for bread any longer, but we were often talking about his trips, recalled the loaves, which he brought to save us, our relatives and neighbours. However in summer of 1933 father was also busy with some work. Again he did not have enough sleep, we did not know when he had a rest. When he said that he needed some sleep, he answered that he would take a nap either going to the field or during some break. He said that if he slept, we had nothing to eat. And he was glad that soon there would be new harvest, he was happy like a child who is waiting for a good present to his birthday.

The first mowing of the new harvest was done by combines. People were glad seeing new grain which poured from under the combines. And the first grain was taken to the mill at once and ground into flour.

How delicious was the bread baked for the kolkhoz kitchen. What the smell it had, I did not feel such smell of the freshly baked bread since late summer of 1933 and till present time. The peasants ate that bread with devotion and respect. It was not without reason that there was a custom in Ukraine to cross the loaf before cutting it and when it happened to fall on the floor or on the ground, it was picked up with devotion, kissed as if asking to forgive for the inadvertent disrespect. And it never happened that somebody picked up crumbs of bread from the table and threw them into garbage. No, it would be sacrilege! Crumbs of bread were carefully gathered from the table or from the cloth, or from the towel, when eating out of doors and eaten. Bread for Ukrainian peasant is sacred thing. And it is still just the same for me till today.

They were still going on to cook dinner, that is some soup or borshch out of beets, added some new potatoes, sometimes they cooked "galushki" (Ukrainian dish): thus peasants refreshed themselves after long starvation. Those, who managed to last till late spring or summer of 1933, were saved and could enjoy the life.

But could one enjoy this life? Watching that injustice, oppression of people, death which carried away dozens of peasants, took children from their fathers, took mothers from children, watching that awful Stalin regime I started thinking about God more

often, began appealing to the Creator of the heaven and earth. Religion was persecuted, the church was turned into a shed, godlessness was rammed into people's heads. People were afraid to celebrate Christian orthodox holidays openly. Firstly, the new power looked with suspicion at those who celebrated them openly, secondly, they had nothing to celebrate the holidays with as it was before. Because some time ago a holiday was a holiday, as they said. They baked and cooked various dishes and invited their relatives or acquaintances. After the liturgy in the church, they gathered together and had a good time, celebrated and enjoyed themselves, praising the God.

And then, when a holiday came, people did not know what to do, they could not go to the church as it was destroyed. They did not gather together, even the youth did not go out in the streets, as it was before, did not sing, did not enjoy themselves. Any holiday at that time was usually the day of grief, on festive days people recollected their relatives died of starvation. At that time all holidays were marked with complaints after famine, they were accompanied by sorrow. At that time all holidays in the village were accompanied by the analyses of what had happened during the previous two years. People recollected how they had to kill cows, other livestock, how they hid grain, potato. At that time each family had its own story, though all were united by a common misfortune — famine, artificially caused by Stalin regime. People who were full up yet, recollected how they divided that holy bread into small portions, as a handful of grain was quite a rarity, as there was neither milk, nor oil. People's memory about terrible starvation should last for ever lest it should never come again.

LIFE OF THE SCHOOLCHILDREN

Our favorite summer passed quickly, autumn came. Children were again going to school. I was preparing to the fourth form, that is the last form in our village school. We should study well not to be kept down for another year. Who would like to wade through mud for another year? It bothered us a lot, we came to school with wet legs many times as the boots were full of holes. If you returned home with wet legs, it was not too much trouble, at home you could dry both the boots and onuchi, but at school they had to dry themselves.

Studies at school did not give much joy to me and it was not because I did not want to study, the reason was in the distortion of the studies. They introduced some elements about Stalin even in the lessons of arithmetic. However all of us studied, our organisms were young and we started to realize that the way to maturity passed through a village school, without passing that way, you could not think about further studying. And it was necessary for us to study, our father repeated each time that we should study lest we should be hungry in future. Times are coming, our father said, that without schooling a

person could not get any protection and only school would help a person "to stand on his legs". Father said: "Study, children, otherwise you would have to twirl oxen tails in the village!". We understood what father taught us, we, that is I and my sisters, as our brother was still small. My elder sister had already finished the fourth form and joined the courses of tractor drives. Since her childhood she liked engines, she was fond of them, she liked to watch tractor drivers repairing their tractors. Our eldest sister was going to the sixth form but she had no plans as to what she would do in future. And I, as I had already said, was going to the fourth form of our village school.

I had a friend, comrade Marusya Paliy, who lived next door. We had been friends with her for many long years. Her father, uncle Paliy, acquired a bee-garden, during the whole summer bees carried honey to the hives, so he, uncle Paliy, often gave us that sweet honey. He put fresh honey on the plate and we dipped some pastry into it, which the aunt, Marusya's mother baked off-hand. We had such dainty mainly on Saturdays. And sometimes our neighbours gave us hard honey, in small pieces, which had already become sugared and going to school, we were sucking it.

Our neighbours Paliy were kind to me, they remembered my own mother who died young, they knew that I was an orphan without mother. And when their elder daughter died and they buried her near my mother's grave, they were taking pity of me still more. And for a long time, for about fifty years they cleaned and kept the mother's grave in order, cleaning their daughter's grave. I am very grateful to them for it. They did it instead of me, when I was, against my will, beyond Ukraina. At that time in autumn of 1933 we were also preparing for winter. We gathered a lot of leaves from apricot tree for the goat, dried them for winter. From that time on the goat replaced the cow for us and gave us milk. We also had sucking-pigs, during summer we fed them on different kinds of grass, which we picked up wherever we could, and then in autumn father was giving them maize to fodder them and to kill at least one of them, as there was nothing left since the previous year and we had to live on something in winter.

We were very glad to have such a thoughtful father! He could find a way out of any trouble, he was working hard. He knew and understood a lot. He was literate, he studied at school being a boy, so he could read and write. He knew where and in which way matters should be settled, he could get all necessary we needed at home.

For winter father stored much hay, corn, wheat, maize, we grounded flour and filled our abatis. We had wheat groats, barley groats and we also had millet. We brought pumpkins from the field, and also melons and even water-melons. All these were got for work days earned by father and mother during summer, we brought it all from kolkhoz field or kolkhoz yard. Peasants cherished hope for the better. That year the quotas were less, as everything was taken away during the previous years, "the plan was exceeded". That year the

kolkhoz left for itself something to be shared for work days among collective farmers and for sawing next year and made stores for winter, as people were afraid of the previous year famine. People who starved once were afraid of everything.

Peasants recollecting famine told the children that at tsar's times there was not a year of famine though the life was hard. However all the holidays, such as Christmas, were spent merrily, they were not so poor, so they had what to bake and cook of for the holiday. Neighbours exchanged dishes, "kolyadnyky" were going about the village and "kolyadovaly"*, they were welcomed in every house, they were all celebrating together as the Son of God was born in Viflieme. The elder people told us how horses were harnessed on Christmas and they went to some other village to visit their relatives, grandmother or grandfather or brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law. There were frosts at the end of the year, the horses ran radily as they were not worn out as kolkhoz jades were. Youth also gathered together, had fun together, "kolyadovaly" and sang and were going with "vertep", though life was not very rich then but people were not hungry and celebrated all the holidays.

But under Stalin regime all was different. There was no joy. People did not sing together. Poverty was common among Ukrainian peasants for a long time, there was no prosperity, on the contrary, there was famine and need so they had no reason to be cheerful even on holidays. People mostly hid their thoughts, did not share with the neighbours either joy, which they hardly had, or troubles. Denunciating, as I had already said, was spreading, so people were afraid to say something.

And at school our heads were stuffed with father Stalin deeds, we were said about the happy life under the new system. We had to do homework, to learn some verses praising the leader. Light at home was dull because of the shortage of oil, so we had to learn poems under the moonlight in the yard at a haystack when it was warm. At school the teacher did not want to understand that we had difficulties with our homework at home, they did not want to listen to our excuses, put a bad mark if someone did not know the lesson without any talking. It sometimes happened that a teacher made a pupil stay after the classes and the child was sitting and cramming his lessons. And he had to get home sometimes in snowstorm and frost. And he had to return home to help father and mother to work about the house and look after the cattle. On coming home the child was scolded by his father for coming late from school. So we, schoolchildren, had to bear a lot both from teachers and parents. And the main cause of it was our primitive poor life. There were more capable pupils so they had some better prospects for future and less capable, who having finished the fourth form

* "kolyadovaly", "vertep" - rituals on Christmas eve.

stayed in kolkhoz, stayed for the whole life not to get ever out of misfortune. Such was our kolkhoz childhood.

Propagandists of Stalin regime who were already rather experienced were sent to our village more and more often. They had already gone through all schools of Stalin regime, they knew all the methods to make people join kolkhozes, as Iosyp Vissarionovich ordered to exile to Siberia those who did not want to join kolkhozes. So we lived in fear of those propagandists.

In kolkhoz people worked just like in "panshechina". They got up early in the morning, worked about their household, went to kolkhoz, that is to kolkhoz farmstead, where they were told what they had to do that day. The quotas were large, it sometimes happened that people did not manage to fulfil it during the day so if there was a moonlight they worked after the sunset until the head of the kolkhoz or the kolkhoz brigade leader came and allowed to cease the work. And meanwhile mothers were thinking what their children were doing being alone at home. Did they eat something? Did they work about the house? Were they healthy? Didn't they hurt themselves somewhere?

Often on coming home they found their children asleep, they could not even ask them what they were doing for the whole day, how they spent it. And in the morning they again had to go to the field, to the kolkhoz fields. Thus it happened that parents did not have enough sleep or rest. In the morning they woke the children up, told them to do this and that about the house, had a bite themselves and give something to us, worked about the household and left for the whole day.

And it lasted for the whole summer. A year after a year passed. We, children, got used to such life, got used to the fact that we, small children, had the duty to look after cattle, pigs and also younger children. Though parents did not have much education, they knew how to approach their children. They taught their children to be obedient sometimes by kindness, sometimes by a strict word, almost without physical punishment they reminded us of famine, taught to work. And we were scared by that terrible word "famine", we were afraid and did what we were told, we did not want to experience the horror of famine again. So we did as much as we could, we did what was not beyond our power — picked up fruits, weeded in the kitchen garden, threshed and hulled peas. Such work was not difficult for children. We also worked about the household and made the life of our parents easier.

Our parents as we knew quite well were exhausted by starvation, they were not well after it, but they had to work in kolkhoz fields to earn on work days some wheat, maize and so on. They had to see that we had a cow or at least a goat in our household to have milk, to have a pig in the pigsty as meat under hard labour was necessary for a human organism. They, parents, had to work for the kolkhoz not to be accused of sabotage, not to be recalled

that sometimes somebody had a kulak in their family, that is an enemy of Stalin regime.

Thus, early in the morning parents having worked about the household, looking at themselves and not saying anything to themselves, went to the kolkhoz. Meanwhile Stalin propagandists were sitting in the office, often taking a drink the morning after drinking-bout the previous night. They could afford it as they were authorities. They were representatives of Stalin regime in the village and as if in mockery, often fell on a peasant, saying "This is not panshechina, we have everything in common, there are no landlords now, you should fulfill the quotas". And they did not care for a peasant, let him turn up his toes in the field, it did not touch those propagandists. People, having listened to that twaddle, went to the field silently and did what they were told. They worked although some of them did not feel well. There were incidents when a person was taken ill in the field, then the only good thing was that he was taken by the ambulance to the hospital. It also happened that a person taken to the hospital did not return home but died in the hospital. And the cause of it was inhuman overload, both physical and mental.

I saw everything, remembered, thought over and made my own conclusions. And it seemed to me that there was no life for me in kolkhoz, I would not be able to bear it. I would not bear such hard labour, such strain. Village misfortune seemed to me to be a bottom, from which one could not rise. As I saw how people lived, I was among them. I saw how the collective farmers had to harness their cows to plough their personal plot as horses were given away to the kolkhoz. I felt sorry not only for the people but the caws as well which pulling the cart had no strength to pull it, lay under the collar. Cows were also used to carry something for the kolkhoz. They were exhausted, they had no strength. Cows, harnessed to do hard work, ceased milking. And so it turned out around. It was a circle without beginning and end.

I remembered the elder people's talks and knew that all this evil which fell on our Ukrainian village came with Stalin power, together with introducing kolkhoz system in our once poor Ukrainian village. I remembered elder people's talks who were speaking what Lenin and all his group was, about those who made first February and then October revolution. I remembered that at that time the Jews were mostly accused of our misfortunes, because they were at power and they devised the new system. People said that it was they who first started building the new system, then Russian people did it and some Ukrainians joined them. I know from my own experience that Stalin's supporters, Ukrainian by nationality, were worse than strangers.

It is necessary to say some words about Ukrainians who began serving Stalin regime. They, traitors, wanted to prove that they were really ardent executives of Stalin orders, they were more ardent than all other strangers. To have a larger loaf they were ready to treat with cruelty their own brother, take away from him what was left,

in spite of the threat of hunger. There were some people among us, Ukrainians, who changed their names, they went to other villages, to other places, and there they did their dirty work. They, without hesitation, killed with their own hands those who were called kulaks and in fact those who during many years since tsar's times were working hard with the whole family from dawn till late at night and just for this they were punished, often by our turncoats renegades. They were mostly idlers, which were not eager to earn something by earnest labour, but instead still under tsar's times what they earned off-hand or what they stole from their father drank up, and had a good time. And then they became "bidnyak" (a poor man). I think that a true bidnyak is a person who came across some misfortune or those who did not inherit anything from their parents, even a patch of land. They really were not able to acquire their own field, their own house, being a hired hand. They were true bidnyaki and they were not few, however almost all of them under any power were honest people and under Stalin regime as well they did not stain their conscience, did not stretch their hand to other people's property. And it were they, who at first welcoming the new system, when they got a plot of land, working honestly during some years became rather well-to-do and it were they who under Stalin regime were reckoned to be kulaks. Those, who only some years ago were hired men and if it were not for the Soviet power, they would remain hired hands for the whole life. And then, having become rather well-to-do, they at once became "enemies", class enemy element, who had to be annihilated as class. And thus our such hard working Ukrainians were dispossessed by our idlers, mercenary creatures. But their time came too, when they, those Stalin servants, were shot, imprisoned in order not to leave witnesses of Stalin crimes.

They, Ukrainians themselves, did the most brutal work in villages before and during famine. It were they, who spied on a peasant, who without the sil'rada's permission killed a pig and smoked it instead of stripping the skin and gave it to cooperative to make footwear or other leather items. It was mainly they who went about the peasants' households with "shchup" that is an iron rod with a deepening at the end and pierced in the kitchen gardens and in haystacks searching whether a peasant hid some wheat.

I remember that they were searching in our yard too, looking for a smoked pork. They, like hounds, worked mostly with their nose. They were searching, smelling out, but did not find anything as father knew well how to hide meat or corn. Those mercenary creatures did not manage to find anything in our household. And I, though I was still small, thought: — whether those stooges had no conscience at all, if they could without any thought deprive children and old people of bread? Didn't they have children of their own? And if they did have, whether they wished their own children the same misfortune which they did to their villagers? They did see that people were dying of starvation, they saw that they were taking the

last. They also had to know, had to realize that the grain, taken away from peasants by Stalin order, was loaded on English ships and carried away from the country. They couldn't help knowing about it, as people were talking about it and Berdyans'k was not far from our villages, people went there, saw it by their own eyes and spoke about it. Our father saw it too and did not hide it. When an offence is done by a stranger, it hurts, but when it is done by somebody close — it hurts much more.

Time passed quickly, it flew like a swift-winged bird. And I did not notice when my studies in the village school came to end, when I finished the fourth form. One could go to the fifth form to the village Verkhnya Tyrsa, near Gulyaypole. It was a higher, more organized school in comparison to our village one. But it was the matter of the next autumn and then when I finished the fourth form, it was the spring of 1934. I myself and my parents were glad to see my good marks in my school certificate.

We had the whole summer ahead before going to the fifth form to Verkhnya Tyrsa, which was about four kilometers from our village. Just like last year we did some work either in the kitchen garden or about the house. We also helped our mother to fulfil the quota given to her. As soon as beets grew so as the space between the rows could be seen, we were going to the field with the choppers to chop. We were not the only ones who helped mother but other children helped their mothers as well. So we weeded, picked out weeds and other grass, so that the roots were not left in the ground. Such work was not exhausting for us, on the contrary, after long school year, when we were sitting at the desk during whole day, it was good for us to be in the open air, get warmed by the sun, to be alone with nature.

Our brother Mytya was five years old and sister Shura was eight. Even they began to help about the household in summer. So, when summer vacations came, all the children, both those who went to school and those who were small for it yet, all had something to do. Somebody picked grass for pigs, or rabbits, others looked after the goat, still others stored forage for the cow, rabbits or goat to be fed in winter. Thus we had to pick grass, gather leaves, dry all this and lay together in the yard so that it would not get wet. Children in villages worked under kolkhoz system. And we were told at school that children labour was used only at tsar's time. That is not true, children in villages always got used to work from early age, none was idle. Even if such work was to look after younger brother or sister.

To write memoirs — it's as if to confess, so one must say both good and bad. And thus I must not conceal the fact, that we, children, got used to steal since childhood. There hardly was such a thing before the kolkhoz system was established. But under the conditions of the kolkhoz life even children learnt to steal. Our parents knew about it, it was not considered to be a moral crime, though it deformed our young souls. Thus we went to the field before reaping,

picked wheat-ears, when nobody saw it, got grain out of them, put them in our bosom, tied our waists with some lace and thus brought the grain home. Mainly we fed hens on it, which laid eggs every day. The hens picked it without understanding that it was stoled, that it were we, children, who stole it. And we were glad, looking at the hens and listening to their cackle. As it was our own household — hens, chickens and rabbits. And during reaping every day we brought quite a lot of grain. Grain was lying in heaps on the threshing-floor, it was spilled near combines. We used to run sometimes to the field to bring more grain home. And it was just because we remembered famine all the time, we were witnesses and participants in the largest misfortune of Ukraina in this century, during which, as they said, it came to the cannibalism. And thus we were stealing. And could we be accused of it? Whether we or our parents? Maybe not. New system in the village, Stalin regime, Stalin himself were to blame, as Stalin reduced Ukrainian peasants and their children to that state. As the ghost of recent hunger rose before our eyes.

DOCTOR'S ASSISTANT AND OBSTETRICS SCHOOL IN ORIKHOV

Years passed, from autumn till spring I went to school that was in Verkhnya Tyrsa, in summer I helped in the field, each time more and more or I worked about the house as I was not small. And thus I finished my studies in the primary school. I was already fourteen, it was 1939. There were mainly good marks in my school certificate for the seventh form and it meant that I studied rather well. I thought to myself that it was not a bad idea to continue my studies so that I would not pick weeds for the rest of my life or weed beets till the old age and so on. I did not want to stay in kolkhoz, working hard, living in poverty and even stealing.

I was thinking and thinking and at last decided to enter the medical school or, to be more exact, Doctor's Assistant and Obstetrics school. Such schools were just started to be organized, so the applicants were not required to be Komsomol or Party members. I decided to study further. I was the only one who decided so, as my friends, having finished the primary school, that is seven forms, went to work in the kolkhoz. I took my papers and alone, just like a blade of grass in the field, went to join that school. It seemed to me that the God himself wished so, it dawned upon me and I decided to study further. I wished to become somebody, who would be useful for people, to help them. And to reach it one had to study. I recollected our Taras Shevchenko, his orphan and serf childhood, his inenviable youth. The thoughts about him made my wish to study stronger, he gave me strength. And what I had decided

had to become a reality. Nobody could prevent me, my decision, only me as I was the only one from the whole village, who decided to study further. I faced large difficulties and a long road. I was determined to overcome them and to become useful for people.

Having got ready for the way to the town, I went to say good-bye to our nearest neighbours Paliy, and in particular, to say good-bye to my friend. When uncle Paliy and aunt Mariya heard where I was going, the aunt cried out: "Tonya, Tonya, you are going to study to the town where your own sister lives!". I was taken aback, frightened, got pale. Then I turned red when blood came again to my face. At first I was not able to say anything, it took my breath away.

Coming to myself I asked what sister were they talking about, I was already fourteen years old and I knew nothing about any sister, why did they say about my sister so late? Besides my sisters, that is my, stepmother's daughters — my step-sisters and a sister and a brother, born by the marriage of my father and the step-mother, I did not know any other sister, never heard of her.

Our neighbours the Paliy explained me: "Yes, you have your maternal sister". She is alive and lives in the town there you are going. And aunt Paliy told me once again in detail how my mother died and was buried. I remembered the first news about my mother, where her grave was, how I ran to her grave and cried there, asking my mother to come to me.

I was very glad of the news about my sister. Having said good-buy to the Paliy, I went to sil'rada to take the certificate as I did not have my passport yet, I was not fifteen years old yet and passports were given some after fifteen years. And to be registered in the town a certificate was necessary, in which it should be written that I was a resident of the village of Kopani, Ukrainian by nationality, Petro Khlemendyk's daughter.

On coming home, I said good-buy to my father, mother, sisters and brother. I was leaving my house where I had lived for many years, the house which was built for my own mother and where came my father who in some time after mother's death married a widow. I said good-buy and felt that I could not say a single word. I felt great sorrow because the fact that I had my maternal sister somewhere had been concealed from me for so many years by my father and stepmother. How could they not say anything to me about my sister? Why did they keep silence? As it meant a lot to me, as this was my mother's own child living somewhere. And does she know anything about me? Indeed village life is cruel, it is very complicated and cruel.

From aunt Paliy I got the address of my sister and was intending to find her. I was going to the new place where I would live, the new epoch in my life began. It was 1939. I was looking for new friends, for a place to live in. I considered my future occupation to be devoted to people, to be useful to them. I was going to the town without knowing, where I would live — in the hostel or at some

private flat. But I was very optimistic, I was sure that I could make it.

Reality was not cruel to me at that time. Fate was favourable to me in the new place. Though I did not get a room in the hostel but I found lodging rather easy. It was a four-bed room, thus I quickly found three more girls to be my room-mates to live together and to make it cheaper, as we all came from a village so we were not well-to-do. We would pay for the room from our scholarship which was promised to us when admitting us to the school. We took beds, which we found near our college, as our school was named, where they just lay in a heap. It took us two days to settle. It was because there were many bugs in the beds which we took. The beds were covered with rust so they should be cleaned and poured with boiling water. Though we had not seen bugs till then, we knew that the beds should be poured with boiling water as our parents did it in the village. They must have done it for profilaxis from bugs. Bugs are parasites of great vitality, they suck human blood and can transfer various diseases. Our hostess, at whose house we rented a room, helped us to clean up. She gave us "okrop" that is boiling water and we poured it on our beds. Besides we lubricated them with petroleum which was given to us by this very woman to whose house we were to settle.

We put beds at the walls and in the middle of the room we put a table to write on it and have meals at it. The room was not large but we, new friends, reconciled with it.

Our studies began. Pupils came to school. There were small desks in the classrooms just for two persons each. One should find a friend at school too to sit at one desk. Since the very first days everything was settled, I got acquainted to new surroundings quickly.

We were given text-books on medicine and general education as well, as at that school we studied not only medical subjects, but the curricula for 8-9-10 forms. We had a lot of things to study, each subject being taught by another teacher. During some months I adapted myself to new requirements, to studying, to new order at school, where one had to be on duty and so on. At the lessons I listened carefully and wrote down into exercise books what teachers told us and after classes I reread, revised — I studied for short.

My room-mates were girls who came from village, but their villages were situated nearer than mine. And my village was as far as twenty-eight kilometers. One girl was called Lesya, the other — Tanya. I did not remember the name of the third. Studies took much time, so we could go home only once in two weeks. We agreed that we would go home in turn to bring some food. We had to take some food stuff from home, as in the town even if you had money in order to buy a bread you had to stand in a queue for a long time. Queues were formed since the morning and to buy bread, you had to queue up till dinner and they first sold bread to workers from the factory. Bread-line had to be, as it was said, "zastoyaty", that is

to queue up, stand there for some time, and leave it, asking to keep it in order to return soon. It was not once when after queuing up for a long time, we came back empty handed as there was not enough bread for all. Half-starving pupils went to school and quickly got tired. I was happy to have my room-mates, whose parents lived not far from the town and they gave their daughters enough bread to be shared with me.



Tonya and her friend Lyusya at the time of studying in medical school in Orikhiv, Zaporizhzhie region, 1939

But to tell the truth I went to school half-starving. But I had to study. Classes lasted for six and more hours, and after then we had practice either in the hospital or in the drug-store. Though Saturday and Sunday were days off, I did not have a rest as I was the poorest one among the girls, I had to nurse the children of our hostess, to take care of the yard as she often left with her husband on the days off. I did it instead of paying rent. I had to milk the cow, to cook something for the children and due to it was not hungry on these days. Sometimes the hosts gave me some presents — either a dress or a skirt and it even happened that they gave me some footwear, which was absolutely

necessary in town, as nobody went barefooted there especially to school.

Life in the town was more cultural than in the village. Though in towns Stalin regime ruled as well but people lived much better. Some of them were qualified workers, others were clerks or handicraftsmen. It was not like in kolkhoz where there was no need for any school "to twirl oxen tails", to go to the field to weed, to chop or look after the cattle.

In summer we had holidays, that is summer vacations just like in other schools. Village girls did not waste time. I know it by myself that during holidays I stayed in my native village and helped parents in the field to earn some work days. Thus I, future medical worker, was going to the field to weed, to chop, shortly, I helped to grow agricultural products. In late summer we picked fruits, water-melons, melons, pumpkins. We brought it all to the definite place. The collective farmers treated us, pupils of secondary schools, with respect, they were proud of our helping to them. And we meanwhile helped our parents to increase the quantity of work days which were necessary for all of us.

I liked to recite poems so I, on the occasion of holidays, was invited to recite poems from the stage. It happened on May holidays, on October holidays or Shevchenko holidays when I came to the village. I never refused and, on the contrary, I was proud of being respected, so that the whole village saw me at the stage. I recollected that I recited loudly, distinctly and got applause. Mainly I recited very good poems but they praised the regime which I did not like as all the time, I remembered what misfortune we experienced under it, collectivization and famine included.

It came to even my mind, to the mind of a very young person, that our life was composed of lies. We were poor, we even died of starvation and only some years passed and people arranged magnificent celebrations in honour of the new regime, during which they, as a rule, glorified "father of all peoples" Iosip Stalin. All this was non-moral, false, hateful to me. I saw and even heard how Stalin was glorified by those, who cursed him when talking with neighbours. People led double life — they were saying one things among themselves, and quite the opposite in public.

I recollect as there was some holiday and it was necessary to make up the programme of art performance and the organizers had a lot of troubles as they did not know poems of what poet could be read. It was the time when some poet or writer was stigmatized as the betrayer of Motherland, spy, trots'kist, bukharinets' or otherwise. A writer was not only stigmatized, but shot, sent to the prison or exile. Thus the trouble was if a poem was recited at the celebration and its author was shot the previous day or some days ago. Who was to blame and what the blame was? And Stalin regime did not investigate for a long time, it acted according to the rule: it is better to shoot a hundred of innocent people than to leave free just one guilty. Such were the troubles of the organizers of state holidays. And we, pupils, knew from

those who were exiled to Siberia, that there found himself this or that writer or a former party official. Our relatives, who were taken away with our grandfather and grandmother did not even reach Siberia but died on the way there in the Urals.

FOREBODING OF WAR

In 1938-1939 the Soviet power sold a lot of grain and other agricultural products as well as industrial raw materials. It was done in the fulfillment of the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany. However among people there were rumours about Hitler's getting ready to the aggression, and at the same time the Soviet leaders did not wish to believe in these rumours, even punished for their spreading.

Once the village was celebrating something, I do not know what exactly they were celebrating. Each time there was some kind of meeting near the sil'rada. A week before that celebration the head of the kolhkoz came to us with a press-cutting, in which there was a verse about Hitler. The head asked me to learn this verse by heart and recite it at the celebration. A guest speaker from the region was to come, who was to give people information about the political situation in the world. I read that verse some times and memorized it. It was a rather clumsy verse. We knew that the meeting was to take place on Saturday, so people were waiting for that day, worried by various rumours about the possibility of the war.

The guest speaker explained at the meeting this and that, the international situation as well, he said that there were rumours all over the country, but we, that is the Soviet Union, was so strong that it was not afraid of any aggression, that it could destroy any enemy at the enemy's own territory. From the distance of many years I can only say that such explanation of the international situation to the peasants did not give credit to the Soviet leaders and Stalin in particular. And here is that verse:

HITTLER IS SADDLING HORSES

*Hittler is saddling horses and putting guns out
He is looking all round him,
He is waiting for breakfast in the East and for dinner
in the West
But watch out, you damned Hitler, that you would run
naked away.*

*We know: you will not go far,
We know that you are called the bandit.
So watch out not to reach the rope,
On which you will hang.*

It was a small primitive verse which I recited for the last time in our village. After that meeting I again went to our medical school.

The year of 1940 came. We were mainly taught the first medical aid, leaving studying biology or other theoretical sciences on the background. Our military instructor, in Russian "voenruk" taught us military training each time more persistently, paying attention to the necessity to have practice in medical aid to the wounded under battle conditions. We, girls, understood, that when war started, we would be the first to be taken to the front. We began thinking whether it was worth studying in the medical school. However they were just thoughts, we had to study.

In practice all our studying seemed to come to the hands of military instructor, that is the instructor on military training. We guessed that his task was to train as many medical nurses as possible for the war needs. We understood that in the senior forms medical nurses were being trained, who were to be sent to the forefront, and we, junior pupils, were being trained as medical nurses for the rear with the aim to work in the field hospitals. Such atmosphere could not but influence psychic state of girls, some of them fell into hysterics, nervous disease. There were many talks around about preparation for the war, it was necessary, as they said, to defend "Motherland", to get ready for the great battle. And who wanted to fight? We, girls, had no wish to do it.

In 1940 there were no summer vacations in our school. All pupils were allowed to go for two days and see their relatives and after it we were to return to school unless somebody wanted to cease his studies.

The head of the school was a strict woman, she was Jew as well as most of the teachers. There were also Ukrainians among the teachers, but "voenruk", that is military instructor, was Russian. We had no grounds for complaining about our teachers regardless their nationality. The pupils of our school were mainly Ukrainians except some Jews. We were all friendly, there were absolutely none racial or national prejudice.

At that time the problems connected with L.Kaganovich being a secretary in Ukraina, were unknown to us. We only knew that the main, the most important culprit of all our misfortunes, especially collectivization of village and famine, was Stalin, and his inhuman regime under which during some years many millions of people died. Meanwhile talks about the war became more frequent. It was at that time when the Red Army marched into West Ukraina, it happened in the middle of September of 1939, when Polish state stopped its existence. Since that time the Soviet Union bordered directly upon Germany. Though there was the signed pact about non-aggression between the USSR and Hitler Germany, the talks about Hitler war against the USSR did not cease. Perhaps, various clerks, commissars, NKVD, party stuff, were afraid of the war as they had various privileges, they had not a bad life, they did not

experience hunger. Their power was more cruel than tsar satraps' as under the tsar there were different parties, one could write to their press. But Stalin oprichniks felt themselves unpunished.

Common people, just like all people, did not want war, as each war brought much losses to common people. Though common people had no reason to be fond of Stalin regime, they did not want war. Everybody worked hard, there was uncertainty, nobody protested when he was ordered to work at the factory for ten or more hours a day. People were aware that the country suffered shortage of many things from food stuff to horses or various kinds of equipment, that there was hardly any supply of bread, as during the previous years a lot of it was sold to the Great Britain and to Germany as well. And delivery of different products to Germany did not stop neither in 1940 nor later up to the war. So food stuff was sold to Germany and in our country there were queues to buy bread, everybody was waiting for the new harvest in order that people could live on it.

The winter of 1940-1941 was very severe, there were hard frosts, roads were blocked with snow, snowstorms never stopped. We were studying hard, first of all mastering the knowledge of giving first aid to the wounded. And all the time I kept looking for my sister. I was not successful in it yet. And again I wrote a letter to Artemiv'sk but never got the answer. But almost a year had passed since I started looking for her. She, like a bird, flew somewhere without leaving a trace. I was looking for my sister thoroughly, I asked everybody about her without even being sure I would find out something. I wanted to see her greatly as I had never seen her before, I even did not know about her existence.

Being at home, I did not tell my father that I was looking for Mariyka, my maternal sister. I kept silent and was sorry that he concealed from me the existence of my sister for so many years. Father did not know that I was told about that family secret by the neighbours, they asked me not to tell anybody as mother and father would be angry with them.

I had relatives on my mother's side — mother's sister and my aunt Nadiya Antonenko. She lived in the village of Novodanilivka and had four children — three girls and a boy, my cousins. I also found them as I was not told about them at home. In summer I went to see them and visits to my aunt gave joy to me. They had a large garden where I regaled on fruits, helped them to work about the household as my aunt did not manage to do everything alone. Her husband was sent to Siberia for 25 years though, as I was told, he did not do anything wrong to the soviet power. But, as people said, Stalin regime followed such policy to sentence to many years for everything, even for picking up cars in the field. They said that Stalin needed free working hands, so they were used, with the hands of those, sentenced and sent, towns were built, coal and gold were mined, great forests were cut down. I knew already about these free working hands as such were

grandfather's and grandmother's Shcherbakh relatives.

When I was at my aunt's Nadya in Novodanilivka, we often talked also about grandfather Shcherbakh's family. I told my aunt everything that I knew about it. That Shcherbakh's two younger daughters managed to survive somehow, they were aunt Nadya and aunt Katya. They both had three children there, who were born already in Siberia, those children knew their genealogy, knew that they were Ukrainians, that their grandfather and grandmother were also exiled but did not manage to get to the place, died on the way there. Our aunts sent letters from Siberia, so I read them to aunt Nadya, my mother's sister. In their letters the aunts complained that they had to work hard, that they had no possibility to return home, they were still called either kulaks or kulak's offsprings. They wrote in their letters that it was difficult for them to reconcile with such state, as they knew that grandfather Shcherbakh's prosperity was not a result of some kind of other people's exploitation, it was a result of his and his family's hard, unceasing work. So they considered their exile to Siberia to be an unjustful act and they could not forget it. They even wrote about grandfather's Shcherbakh error. His error, as my aunts saw it, and they were literate, laid in the fact, that the grandfather did not foresee that the worse could be expected from Stalin regime. They thought that the grandfather should have divided the land between his sons and daughters, should have given the cattle and other livestock to them and so there would be some small households. And the grandfather would have a small household too. But as everything was in common, so it really seemed that it was a kulak's household. But the fact that there lived many people, including married sons, was ignored by the power. So such were our talks with my aunt. And the aunt told me that a lot of people among those who were to be exiled to Siberia, ran away, leaving all their property, and then they wandered in different villages, went to the town to look for some job. They were turned to paupers by the new power.

Even judging from my father's and mother's talks in 1940, I was able to understand, that people with the forthcoming war associated the failure of Stalin's inhuman power. The people's life out of doors was like a cheap decoration, people outdoors said one thing, as if praised the new power, and in reality complained of the regime, could not reconcile with it. And it was only but natural for those who were aware of the fact that in towns and especially in the village, people worked hard and did not get any payment for their job. It even seemed to me that people, praising the time that passed exaggerated the well-being of both peasants and petty bourgeois. The worse they lived under the new regime, the better became the tsar regime in their memories. The tsar regime had already passed, it did not hurt any longer, and the new regime bothered and hurt every day, you cannot close your eyes on it. And indeed, under the tsar the common people were not taken into account but especially after the revolution of

1905 the life was easier than at Stalin times. Thus they regretted the tsar though he was not worth regretting. Today from the distance of time and space much seemed to be incomprehensible to me. In particular, I can't understand that the years following 1930 and later people in the village did not talk about the period of Ukrainian people republic, about Hetmanship and Directory. Perhaps the above mentioned periods did not last long or because all that took place under the conditions of war? And the peasants mainly thought about the end of the war. Besides the national awareness of Ukrainian peasants of Priazov'ye was not high at that time. Thus how I explain myself praising of the tsar period.

By 1940 I had already known that there were children who encouraged by the authorities, gave up their parents. In fact, there was not any reason to give them up as they, parents, did not commit any crime, and complaints of the existing system are not considered to be a crime in any cultural state, state power could not be liked by everybody. And even for that as a result of children's denunciation, their parents were shot as they were considered to be the enemies of the people, they spread enemy propaganda, they did not teach their children to love socialism. Though one may strongly doubt whether it was socialism indeed. I recollect as it was written in some newspapers that children denounced their parents, they even often changed their family names as, they said, they were ashamed of bearing the same family name as their parents-betrayers. Such upbringing of children, as I began to realize in some years, was the greatest evil of Stalin regime. To oppose a child to his father it's a crime against mankind, against the elementary laws of humanity, leaving alone the violation of all principles of pedagogy.

And there was another category of people who traced, eavesdropped other adults, often their friends' parents. Having eavesdropped, such children denounced to the authorities and then there was the usual procedure — arrest, sometimes trial and more often only the decision of "tryky" or the so called "OCCO" (Special Sitting), and prison or exile or shooting and confiscation of property. Thus, the friend of the informer was turned out of the house, and informer perhaps did not realize that he made a disgusting act, on the contrary, he seemed to be proud of his "dead" as he served the new power, served the revolution. And the children of those who were sentenced, exiled, shot became homeless, were taken to children's homes, they learnt to steal, were deprived of their nationality, they led immoral life. It seems that the colony headed by Anton Makarenko consisted of such children, who described it in such works as "Flags on the Towers", "Pedagogic Poem", "March of 30s" and others.

In 1930, when I was about fifteen, I made friends at school with the girls of my age and with elder girls as well, who were sixteen, seventeen years old. We had to take care about ourselves, to build our future, to choose our way.

In the town the loudspeakers were broadcasting patriotic, cheerful music or some speeches, which as a rule ended by a lot of slogans: "Long live the Communist party of bil'shovysk", "Long live comrade Stalin!", "Long live the leader of world proletariat Iocip Vissarionovich Stalin", "Long live the invincible Red Army" and so on and so force. But the sun of Stalin did not shine equally to everybody. It shone to some people and to the others, to the majority of people, it darkened the light. Working hard, people did not have any joy, they did not have enough food, they did not have either clothes or footwear. Nobody even mentioned items of luxury.

I sometimes thought then and even now I think whether the world knew what was happening in our country? Whether people in the world knew about our misfortune, about our recent famine, that we were wearing rags, that we even did not know about the items without which the poorest man in the free world could not do? Whether the world knew about the queues, which became the everyday part of our scenery, that people were queuing not for extravagant items, but for bread, salt or some meters of cotton. That in soviet shops there were not and never were wool suits, that for girls, who had a new poor blouse and a skirt it was all they could dream of? Whether the world knew about tarpaulin boots, which were deficit as well? There is a lot of these questions, which could be asked, they are endless. Just like there was no end to our misfortune.

Yes, the world did know about the inhumanity of Stalin regime, knew about the conditions of life in the Soviet Union, knew about arrests, exiles and shooting. Knew, as it was written in the newspapers of some European countries and America as well. The West knew, that under the regime, established by Stalin, people became worse than cattle, that even cattle lived badly. And indeed, cows were used for ploughing, for carrying loads and horses did not look like horses, their sides sank deeply, they were shaggy. There was no host, nobody to look after the livestock. Instead there were a lot of authorities, two chiefs for one groom, who could give him orders. There was a lot of milk in the country, especially on the paper, in the reports and then on the pages of newspapers. But there was shortage of it in towns as well as in villages, as we had to give to the kolkhoz even the milk got from the cows which were fed on personal plots. Thus the collective farmers did not always have it.

Maybe it would never come to my mind that it was possible to grow up more grain and livestock. Our priasov land is chernozem of Zaporizhshya. I still remember our soil after ploughing, it glittered under the sun as if it was lubricated with the best oil. Such soil could give really record yields. Meanwhile peasants grew twice or thrice more on much worse soil of West Europe than we on our fertile arable land. And even what was grown grew worse under our conditions, it was spoilt while transporting, sprouted on the threshing-floors, as there were no silo or storehouses for grain. Who

is to blame? Is it a peasant, who is known to be hard working, resourceful, economical? No, he was not to blame. There was only one culprit — Stalin and his stooges, the regime, established by them.

Thus people thought whether the demand of the power to defend that regime in case of war was justified? Was the desire to fight for that regime justified for the people, who experienced so much humiliation? Whether a young man, who recently experienced starvation, who ate grass, acacia flowers, roots felt sense of duty to defend the power, which was to blame of his misfortune? Such questions, no doubt, were put to themselves by young men, peasants or who were peasants not long ago. At that time it was necessary indeed to think about it. They were broadcasting, writing in the newspapers and mostly at the meetings they were saying that Hitler attacked Austria, joined it to Germany, attacked Czechoslovakia and Poland. So he could not but have his eye on the Soviet Union and our fertile Ukraine first of all.

Today I think whether Hitler took into account general feeling of the population of the Soviet Union, getting ready for the war with it? Evidently he did. He knew perfectly well that the population of our country was not satisfied with the existing regime, he knew that not long ago, only some years before, people were dying of starvation, fathers and mothers with their children. Those people who were deprived of all their property, everything that was acquired during many years, taken to Siberia, could not be content with that regime. So could not be content the children of those, who were sentenced to imprisonment for many years without any fault or to shooting. It was not without reason that people said that the Soviet society was divided not according to classes but according to three categories — those who had sat, those who were sitting and those who would be sitting. It meant "sitting" in prisons. "Sitting" under Stalin's regime is a conventional word as none of the convicts or those exiled was really "sitting", i. e. was serving his term in jail without work. True, being deprived the right to work is also a good deal of a penalty, though in Stalin's concentration camps people used to work like cattle — without sufficient food, without medical care, they lived under antisaniatary conditions in barracks, with no right to correspondence, no right to read, etc. Concentration camps were invented by Stalin's regime, they had existed when Hitler did not yet come to power. Hitler took Stalin's concentration camps as an example, arranging them in his country, first in Germany, and later in occupied lands. It is enough to read books by Alexander Solzhenitsyn to imagine horrors of Stalin's camps. They were actually death camps. Arbitrariness of the ward, deprivation of elementary rights and medical care, miserable food, slavish labour, antisaniatary conditions resulted in the fact that people died by the hundred, by the thousand, by the million taking into account the number of camps. There were lots of them. It is not in vain that Alexander Solzhenitsyn named the main book of his life "GULAG ARCHIPELAGO". The word "archipelago" means that there were

as many camps as there are islands in an archipelago. The word "GULAG" means "Central Board of Camps". GULAG is an abbreviation for the terrible institution of the Stalinist times, besides Cheka ("Extraordinary Commission").

Hitler was aware of all this and he hoped that the Soviet people would not fight with great enthusiasm when he attacked the U.S.S.R.

Meanwhile Stalin behaved as if Hitler were his friend. It is true, Hitler and Stalin are of the same origin. They are like twin-brothers. It often happens that one of the twins is fair-haired, and the other one is dark-haired. The same is with Hitler and Stalin — one of them destroying his people with hunger and terror, rested upon the theory of communism, and the other one, also exterminating his political opponents and conquering peoples, rested upon fascism. Looking back at the past, we can say the following: it made no difference for a person that was being exterminated in a concentration camp whether it was being done for the sake of socialism or fascism. Stalin believed Hitler until the latest moment. Believed like a brother would believe his brother. And made a terrible mistake as it later turned out. But it was not he himself who paid for the mistake, nor his companions, like Kliment Voroshilov, or Vyatcheslav Molotov, or Lazar Kaganovitch, or Andrey Zhdanov, or Lavrenty Beriya, or others. His mistake fell upon the shoulders of ordinary people, soldiers, peaceful people of conquered by Hitler lands, the Ukraine, first of all. Both of them — Hitler and Stalin — are murderers, none of them cared for even their own people. It is known that when Hitler was told that the German nation was dying, he answered that the nation deserved it — let them die if he, the Führer, was dying. Would not Stalin think the same if he ended in this way?

They say that Hitler's mother and Stalin's father were Jews. Whether it is true or not, I don't know, but it occurs to me that two thousand years ago Jews sent their best son, Jesus Christ, to death, torturous death, through crucifixion.

These sad thoughts come to my mind when I realize how Hitler and Stalin were exterminating their own and other peoples.

Our people, after the intelligentsia had been exterminated, was drained of strength as a result of continuous terror. Who could at that time, under Stalinist regime, unite the Ukrainians like Cossacks once had coordinated their effort? There was no freedom, no civil rights, no opportunity not only for self-organization, but not a single chance to think about it. It was enough to suspect that such-and-such a person COULD only think of something bad, he was immediately put to jail or a concentration camp. It was an unprecedented preventive system for the preservation of Stalin's power. It is hardly worth speaking about sporadic organizers of resistance, when at Stalin's order his former companions were shot, later those who performed it were also shot, and the next day the

latter would also be shot, in their turn.

Terror, poverty and oppression ruled the country. But in spring 1933 Stalin pronounced his famous words: "Life has become better, life has become merrier!". There was no town in which you wouldn't find a monument to Stalin, or a street named in his honour. Did anybody ever count how many collective farms or plants were named after him? And what about cities? There were Stalingrad, Stalino (our Donetsk, former Usovka), Stalinabad, Stalinsk, etc. The highest mountain in the U.S.S.R. was called Stalin Peak. He himself was depicted in numerous photos and painted by numerous artists as a giant, though in fact he was smaller than middle size, being only 160 cm tall.

Such was our sun, our hope, our joy, our future. Everything was Stalin. As though no one could think that he was mortal, that some day his time would be up. When you think about it, had sclerosis developed in Stalin a few years longer, he would declare himself a saint, like Julius Caesar, would order to build altars and pray to him.

Meanwhile the whole people had to dance to Stalin's music. They really did because nobody dared to refuse, as everybody was being spied on, no one was out of sight. Reading Orwell's "1984", I saw our Soviet society of Stalin's style. Thoughts were really controlled. It often happened that hardly had anybody thought bad about Stalin, when he was arrested there and then, taken away by "chyorony voron" (a truck painted black) to NKVD. They well knew what to do with such people there. There was a saying: "Give us a man, and we shall find an article to incriminate him".

We, students of a medical school, were taught not only to give aid to the wounded, they did their best to make us feel at that time, in 1940, nurses at the front. And we did feel like that. Everything was subordinated to war needs. There was mass psychosis all around us, among people. You could constantly hear songs from the loud-speakers all over the city:

*If war breaks tomorrow,
If enemy assaults,
If dark forces come,
The whole Soviet people as one
Will stand for the free Motherland.*

And further on:

*Stalin dear together with us,
The hero Timoshenko,
Voroshilov will lead us towards victory.*

It is under these conditions that we, students of a medical school, had to take an oath, something like Hippocrates oath in medicine.

One day, during anatomy lesson when we were attentively listening to the teacher, somebody knocked on the door. The teacher answered and was told to attend the teachers' meeting after classes.

We pricked up our ears as there had never been such an urgent meeting, lessons had never been interrupted. And there it came. What's the reason, what could have happened? We got nervous as the time was somewhat uncertain and alarming.

Later we learnt that there had not been any meeting, our headmistress had a talk with each teacher separately. Well, we thought, everybody cares after his own problems in this or that way, that's why the headmistress talked to everybody, perhaps giving or asking some advice.

I must say that some teachers were addressed "Professor" at school, others only by their name and patronymic. The former had higher education, but they were few, as it was difficult to graduate from a university or an institute, people were often arrested without being allowed to finish studies. But those who had been educated years ago, were either arrested or prohibited to work in their speciality. They were constantly suspected of being enemies of the Party and Government. Many prominent scientists were executed lest they should arouse resistance to that inhumane power.

In the end of ends we learnt the reason for anxiety among our teachers. There came rumour from Poland that worried our teachers. According to those rumours, Hitlerites began exterminating Jews on mass scale in occupied Poland. In big groups, according to nationality — if you are a Jew, you should live in a ghetto, a place isolated from the rest of people, you should die, you should be exterminated. This is what worried our teachers, they began thinking what to do.

Later we knew that our headmistress talked to our teachers as to what should be done if Germany attacked the U.S.S.R., perhaps, they pondered where they could hide — the Crimea, or some other place. One way or another we learnt that trouble was stirring among Jews, and with good reason. Once you are a Jew, you should fear Hitlerites, because of their racial theory according to which they considered themselves the superior race; Slavs were considered inferior; and Jews were the nation to be extinguished physically. This was their hateful theory.

After classes our mistress told us that our school would be transferred to Berdyansk. She also mentioned the town of Ossipenko, but now I can hardly say in what context. She told us that we did not have to move together with the school by all means, those who cared could do this, those who did not, would not finish the school. The headmistress ordered us to hand in everything that belonged to school, gave the new school address in Berdyansk and advised us to go and see our parents and decide what to do.

My friends and I decided to go to Berdyansk. We handed in school belongings quickly, such as iron beds, mattresses and books that we had been given at the beginning of the academic year. Books were expensive at that time, taking into account our poor income, that's why school bought them and gave it to pupils. We used them, and when a subject had been studied, we handed in our books to the office.

Taking our things we, girls, went home to our villages. I went by train, carrying many things with me. I went by train though there was a distance of 18 kilometers from the railway station Gulyaypolyc to our village, still it was a shorter way compared to Orikhov. I did not find my father at home, he turned out to have been mobilized. At that time many men were enlisted. Father was summoned to the military registration and enlistment office and became a Red Army man, though not much of it, they were fitted out and kept in reserve. This showed that the authorities were preparing for defence before German assault. As father was out, I told my step-mother about my problems, that our school was transferred to Berdyansk, what should I do, I asked. The step-mother didn't tell me anything, she neither forbade me to go, nor told me to stay; do what you like to, she told me. I pondered whether I should go to continue my studies at the medical school or stay in the village to work in the collective farm. There was no other alternative if I stayed in the village, as I hadn't finished school, hadn't been qualified. Well, the prospect was like this: field work in the collective farm, or in the cow-shed or in a pigsty. There was no one to hear advice from, the step-mother kept silence — neither pro, nor contra.

MEDICAL SCHOOL IN BERDYANSK

Feeling angry with my step-mother, I took my suit-case, propped in my belongings, not many of them as it was still warm, and made my way to Gulyaypolyc station. I met my girl-friends that lived in Gulyaypolyc and that also made up their minds to go to Berdyansk to study. They said they also had nothing to do at home as they had not got their qualification.

We made our way to the station to buy tickets to Pologoy as it was a railway junction from which trains went in different directions. But we found crowds of people at the station, there could hardly be tickets for everybody. Passengers were anxious expecting their trains. At last we saw a locomotive pulling a few passenger cars, moving so slow as if neither the driver, nor the engine got their fuel for 3 days running. But it was not our train, it went in the opposite direction, we had to move to Berdyansk. Having no experience at all, we asked a railwayman how we could get to Berdyansk. Having scrutinized us and having asked our reasons, he advised us to take a goods train that carried coal to Berdyansk; on arriving in Berdyansk he advised to hire "izvozchick" (a cab driven by a horse) to take us to the place we needed. We certainly did so. We found some tarpaulin and settled in an open coal van. It turned out however, that the tarpaulin was not of much use to us as strong wind blew coal dust severely in our faces, inside our collars, etc. In a few minutes we looked like coal-miners, or like Negroes from Central Africa. The

train rushed on and on, non-stop, and brought us to Berdyansk.

At the station in Berdyansk we found water to wash ourselves, then hired a cab, gave the driver the address and asked him to take us to the medical school hostel. In a few minutes we found ourselves in the place. We were welcomed by a nice woman who was the hostel manager. We produced our documents we had brought from Orikhov medical school. In a few minutes we were settled in a room that housed six beds, three of them vacant as if waiting for us. Having arranged our things we went to the canteen at once which was right there, at the hostel. We were paid state scholarship, and school administration withdrew some part of it for our food. The rest of the money was spent on footwear, consumer goods, etc.

We faced new problems in the new place. In Orikhiv everybody spoke Ukrainian, and over here we were addressed in Russian, not only by our administration, but by our new friends, too. We wondered as we saw there were many girls from the neighbouring villages, so they were Ukrainian. But what did we have to do? We had to assimilate.

The night passed, and in the morning we were woken up. It was a hostel, not a private apartment, there was a sort of discipline. Soon we had a modest breakfast — a roll and something like tea, hot water each time. It was good just the same.

In class, we were given new text-books in different subjects. Speciality books, i.e. medical textbooks, were in Russian. We had some difficulty to get accustomed to the new language, we did not quite understand it. Though teachers, that taught us in Russian quite understood our predicament, they first and foremost demanded the knowledge of the subject and our answers given in mixed Russian and Ukrainian were taken easily by them. We were happy that our studies continued, so we studied well, we put down in our note-books all those things we could not find in the textbooks, listened to our teachers attentively, and revised the material for a few hours in the hostel.

We were primarily trained as nurses to aid the wounded or burnt. But there were not enough teachers to fulfil the whole programme. That's why we had classes on Saturdays. Something menacing could be sensed in the atmosphere, some uncertainty.

I never forgot about my Mother's daughter Mariyka. I could not forget that I had never seen her, had known nothing about her. I had been looking for her 2 years already, with no result. I was sorry I had no money, otherwise I could go to Artemivsk where Mariyka was to abide. It was not far from Berdyansk, a bit closer than from Orikhiv. Later I learnt that the sister had received my letter and sent the answer to Orikhiv, but the letter came too late, when I had left, the letter was returned. I had to forget about my sister, about finding her. I kept believing in Godly Insight, I hoped I should find Mariyka. If I am safe and sound, we shall see each other, we shall be assisted by the force in which I believed. I thought some unknown force led me this not that way. Whatever I did,

wherever I went, I thought some unknown force was helping me, was leading me. Whatever I did, wherever I went, it seemed to me, and I was quite sure I was right, something prompted me, something whispered to me — don't do bad, go along the honest way, don't do evil. So I believed I would find my sister some day.

The winter of our studies in Berdyansk passed, a warmer season came. Berdyansk is a nice city, situated on the Azov Sea. On Sundays we often went along the Sea shore, enjoyed the splendid landscape, watched the ships passing by, saw sailors signalling in their secret language (giving their conventional signs to each other). Fishermen pulled out fish, dried their nets in the sun. Caught fish was dried in the sun, smoked and sold at once. Berdyansk is the city of fishermen, its population used to eat different kinds of fish which saved many from famine. I remember my Father brought dried and salt fish from Berdyansk, herring.

A piece of herring was enough, and if you had a potato with it, you had no other dreams at that time.

By that time, i.e. the spring of 1941, there grew fewer and fewer teachers at our school, some were enlisted, others moved somewhere. Now that I can analyse those events, I think that Jews used to leave the place as they knew how Hitlerites treated them, those who could foresee that the war would be held not upon the enemy's territory. So they moved away, some to Siberia, some to Central Asia. As though led by their people's instinct of self-preservation, they did their best to keep as far away from the threat of mass extermination, from those who killed people on national grounds, as possible.

Hitler as though out of hatred from his childhood hated Jews and persecuted them. And they, Jews, had some contacts with their fellows who stayed in Poland. It is from them that they drew information about the extermination of Jews. That is why those of them who lived in the Soviet Union, first smelt the threat. But our leaders in Moscow did not believe war might break out, they still continued sending to Germany echelons with wheat and other goods. Stalin continued to supply those who would soon exterminate our people.

In spring work in the city continued, even grew more intensive like among bees that wake up when the sun warms up the earth. They sowed in the villages hoping to have a good harvest. Not far from Berdyansk there was a village inhabited by Germans; both they and people around called it "German colony". There Germans were well-off people, they grew vine, kept close together, were cultured people, their farmsteads were clean and well-kept, they were quite opposite to our Ukrainian village, chiefly untidy, especially after the famine.

We, students of the medical school, were reading up for our final exams. There was still a year of studies before we would become qualified medical nurses. It was even meant that this might come earlier if summer vacations were reduced and we mastered the

complete programme quicker. We were eager to do so, as our homes were far, far away.

This was the situation in the middle of June, 1941.

THE WAR!

Everything would've been fine, if one morning on June 22, 1941 a terrifying siren had not roared. We did not know what was going on. It happened when we were at school. Our teachers went out of class and returned quickly, telling us to go to our hostel as Germany had attacked the Soviet Union. We did not know that German aircraft were already bombing Kiev and other cities, that the border had been broken and the German army was already moving to the east.

Though war and the probability of German assault had been much spoken of, the news took us unawares as though something utterly impossible had happened.

We went to the hostel, waited till evening, had supper and started to think hard what would become of us, how war would develop. Having spent a sleepless night we went to school in the morning. A teacher who was not going to leave the place began his explanations in some medical subject. Again the siren roared long and alarming, taking our breath. Something whistled, it seemed quite near by. It was a bomb, something was set on fire not far from school. We were anxious, growing pale with horror. What will become of us? Shall I also be killed by a bomb?

The teacher told us to go to the hostel, another day passed. Though there were no lessons, we were cooked food at the canteen as there was some food in store. Again endless talks after supper. None of us knew what to do, as all of us had families in the villages, our relatives were to know that the Germans were bombing our cities, they also worried about us.

Late at night we fell asleep, our sleep was sound and youthful, though troublesome. We were woken up by sirens which were activated too late, before we could react, bombs were falling upon the city, destroying houses and trenches that had already been dug in the city. The hostel manager who almost constantly stayed with us like a mother ordered to go outside as quickly as possible. We ran out in our night gowns darting to and fro, our manager sending us into trenches dug out in the yard. A German aircraft returned and threw another bomb. It whistled over our heads, I nearly grew deaf. Frightened, we ran into the field towards vine-yard where the grape was almost ripe and had big bunches and wide leaves, so we hoped to hide in it. Though we were terrified and did not sleep a wink, our youth took the upper hand — we ate much grapes and learnt who grew it.

In the morning we left vine-yard and went to the hostel. In the canteen, where all the girls came together, our headmistress told

us there would be no classes as the enemy had attacked our Motherland, many people had perished, as the German air force were bombing civil objects, many factories, plants and communications had been destroyed.

Under such conditions, the headmistress said, there would be no classes, many teachers had not appeared and nobody knew why.

Returning to our rooms we thought again — what will become of us, shall we continue studies or shall we go home? We were ordered not to leave the hostel. So we either talked or wrote letters or slept as we had not slept at night. So we stayed at the hostel having free time though knew well of the danger associated with the war. We did not know that while we were sitting or lying, the Germans had already made a landing not far from our place.

Some following days were full of fuss, people were running along the streets as if looking for something, hurrying. We were staying at the hostel as we had been ordered by the headmistress, we were not to loaf around lest we should get into trouble. She looked after us like a mother. They cooked food for us, we stayed in without getting out. Suddenly someone ran in, called the headmistress and whispered to her that Germans were likely to loaf round the city looking for something. We did not want to believe, that it could happen so quickly. We grew quiet, there was some food supply in the canteen, we collected water in wooden barrels, just in case. We sat quiet in the hostel, our headmistress with us.

She drew us closer, like a hen draws her chicks, consoling us.

A few days after Vyatcheslav Molotov's speech on the radio, Stalin spoke at last.

First we could not understand why he had kept silence, why he didn't speak to his people. Propaganda had been showing him as Father not only to the peoples of the Soviet Union, but to the whole world. But why was he silent at this terrible time? Well, at last he spoke. I remember his trembling voice on the radio. How much we wondered when he addressed the people as "Brothers and sisters!". He appealed, as I later, years later realized, to people, their national feelings and patriotism. However, dozens of years he didn't know, didn't wish to know his citizens, did not wish to see them as persons, he treated his people as a commodity, as instruments, with the help of which he, Stalin, would climb the peak of power. I remember, after his speech, people used to say in a whisper: "A goat came to the cart", which could mean: "at last he needs people whom he was exterminating for years and years".

We were still staying at the hostel. We would keep to one room, our manager with us. There was water in the barrel, a mat and a mug near by. This was meant for emergency to extinguish fire. Our headmistress encouraged us. She was a kind woman, I thank her for her kind heart.

GERMANS IN BERDYANSK

One day someone ran across our hostel yard, someone began knocking our door, shouting in Russian: "Open the door! Are there Russian soldiers?". Our mistress understood it was a German and answered, no, there were no Soviet soldiers, there were only pupils of the medical school. She opened the door, he saw us, frightened, dressed in school uniform. He believed the headmistress and asked for water, though when she gave him a mugful, he ordered that she drank first. He was afraid to be poisoned. The headmistress drank water, he drew a mugful himself and drank it.

Having drunk water, the German soldier tore all red banners that were in the hostel and told us we could go out into the city, that everything was quiet, that they had imprisoned the Red Army soldiers.

However, there was no quiet in the city. The city was destroyed by bombs, some storehouses and shops were destroyed, so people took away everything they could find. We also went to a storehouse, which had already been robbed of almost everything. People used to find something, then threw it away a moment later, carrying something more expensive, others picked what remained. Noise, fuss, shouts and running. Some people who lived not far from the storehouse were pulling a piano, overstaining themselves. We also took some pieces of cloth, brought it to the hostel and shared it between us. I also took an underslip, a silk one, very dainty. I also took a guitar which I had wanted long but had not had money to buy. In my childhood I was eager to learn playing the guitar, but there was no money to buy it, the time did not allow to think of it, everybody was longing to have enough food. So I came to possess a guitar, but I couldn't play it. I held it in my hands, fiddled with it, and put it aside. Nobody touched it since, as the time came when I was in no mood for playing.

There was no quiet, no order in the city. Germans picked the corpses, ordered to pick the corpses of our Soldiers, that had been young men full of life not long before. They were lying in the field and their mothers expected them back home. There were those who had gone through famine, who had not yet seen happy life. They had just grown up into their fellowship, and there came the army, the war. Only misfortunes fell upon our people.

Though it was far from life under Stalin's regime, people started to feel better as the worst, famine, was over. Nobody wanted war. None of us was glad to see Germans come, vice versa, we were all afraid of them.

We, pupils, were also warned by the Germans that they would put everything in order, they would register all of us and later would let us go wherever we wanted. There were Russian, two Jewish, three Uzbek girls among us. The majority among us were Ukrainians, but among the teachers the Ukrainians were few, they had some difficulty in speaking Ukrainian.

I remember, my step-sister who had also studied at the medical

school in Berdyansk before me, knew Russian well after one year of studies. It is no wonder, as all of them spoke Russian, and the majority of pupils in her class were Russian. When she came for summer vacations, she started to "tchokat" (to pronounce Russian "tcho?" instead of the usual Ukrainian "shtcho?" meaning "what?"), we called her "katsap" (a humiliating name for Russians used by Ukrainians).

The Germans began to put everything in order in Berdyansk. They summoned people who knew German and taught them German office work and laws. All the posts in the civil administration in the city were taken primarily by people of German origin. They were mainly people from the German Colony, they knew both German and Russian. These German people were neat and cultured, but they were unsociable, too. They considered themselves superior and called everybody else "dirty swine". We felt it at once and understood.

At the Germans' permission we went to the nearest vine-yard which we enjoyed much. There was no other fruit, so we compensated for it with grapes to store vitamins in our bodies. Expecting the permission to leave, we squeezed juice from grapes, storing it for the way home.

All of us thought how to get home, by what transport. I had a friend of mine, Olya. She was an orphan, she had nowhere to go. I suggested to go to my place, to our village. She willingly agreed. My friends who lived in Gulyaypolye were preparing for their way home. We decided to go there on foot as there was no other way out. There were no means of transport at that time, railways were mined. We didn't know when the trains would go. Nobody knew it, we could not wait. We were tired of sitting in the hostel.

We were still given food in the hostel, besides we could buy bread in the bakery on cards given by Germans according to their lists. They also gave us special cards for food. Those who had been working in the bakery before war remained in their places and were also paid. But in general people did not go to work in the city, factories did not function, people were expecting some events and orders. Only fishermen continued catching fish in the Azov Sea as fish was the main source of food for the population of the city. Hospitals were overcrowded with diseased and wounded. There were some doctors among Germans and the rest of the personnel were our people, hospital attendants and nurses were our people, too.

Medical personnel of our local hospital had not been evacuated, hospital attendants looked after the diseased, true to their Hippocratic oath, they did not leave their patients. We well understood it as future medical nurses, we were taught by our teachers that neither a doctor, nor a nurse could leave their patients under any conditions, whatever happened. Even when Germans came, our medical personnel stayed where they were.

Four weeks passed since German authorities registered us. At last we were summoned and allowed to leave the city.

EXTERMINATION OF JEWS

We went round the city and heard and saw everything. In particular, Germans spoke much about the Jewish problem. They treated them differently from us, Slavs. They were not allowed to walk freely, they had to draw up in a column and jog, watched by Germans. They were ordered to wear yellow bandages. Jews were ready for the worst, Germans even did not keep secret that they would be exterminated. Jews had no place to hide in Berdyansk, there was no chance to escape from the city as all around there were German and Romanian troops. Romanians often treated Jews even worse than Germans did.

There were three Jewish girls in our class, they were very attractive, with their long plaits. One of them was a brunette, the other two were nice-looking blondes. They did not look Jewish, but they did not want to hide their origin. We were sorry for them, they were not only good-looking girls, they were good friends.

When they began teasing Jews we, the friends of those Jewish girls, trying to defend them, went to the city commandant's office. However, nothing came out of it; nobody will defend them as they had Hitler's personal order to exterminate all the representatives of the Jewish nation, each and every man, as they deserved it. We embraced them and said farewell to them.

In due time all the Jews were summoned and taken out of the city. We stood and saw how all of them, old and young, stood in line. They were ordered to strip of everything, pile up their clothes, put their gold things — earrings, bracelets, chains — separately. They took a part of the group, drew them aside, and the rest were ordered to line along the ditch that had been dug before the war. That ditch was of no use against German tanks, it served the Jews as their common grave. These Jews were shot from a machine-gun. Germans ordered those selected Jews to bury those shot. So our friends, our nice Jewish girls died before our eyes. They did no harm, their only fault was the fact that their mothers were Jewish.

This is how those "cultured" Germans avenged on innocent people. We could not comprehend the feelings of people who executed other people by the thousand in a wink of an eye. We were unaware of mass extermination of people performed by NKVD at Stalin's order. The day the Jews were executed remained in my memory till the present day. I remember it was a cloudy and misty day in September.

We felt pity for each person. We were young, we did not interesting in the past, we did not know what harm they had done. We cried over our friends and other people shot. But our elderly people thought different, remembered old tsarist times and blamed Jews of serving every regime, when Jews oppressed our poor people, rated high taxes, took high posts under tsarism. Whether it was true or not, I did not know, though they said so. Under tsarism our

people could not attend school for the most part, could not get education, could not even sign their names, drawing a cross instead. They were taken in, their illiteracy was taken advantage of. But when the people witnessed mass executions of Jews, those elderly people did not approve of it, and got angry. But there was no chance to protest. The Red Army retreated, Germans ruled in our parts, and we saw the example of their behaviour in the case with Jews.

But it was only the beginning.

.BACK TO THE VILLAGE

My friends from Gulyaypolyc and Tyrsa, Olya and I decided to start out on Monday as we hoped somebody would give us a lift. We said good-bye to our "mother" — the hostel manager, and left at dawn. Being young and healthy, we covered 25 kilometers before dinner, and 15 kilometers after, stopping for the night at a railwayman's house.

It was a small house; there were five of us — girls; he had daughters; we, all of us, slept on the floor. These people who welcomed us were kind and friendly, we told them that we studied in Berdyansk and were traveling home. We also told them what we had seen in Berdyansk, how Germans executed Jews, told them of the horrors that we had witnessed. I had never seen a mass execution before, and after the execution night I could not sleep.

During this talk, our railwayman told us that Stalinist functionaries also executed thousands of people. The difference was that NKVD acted secretly, and Hitlerites did it openly in front of people as if being proud of their crime against humanity. They said they were Übermenschen, and we were Untermenschen, a worse grade of people, a lower race.

Leaving Berdyansk, we had nobody to hand in our textbooks to, so we took them with us. I had luggage plus a guitar, I remember its neck was decorated with a pink ribbon-bow. We were very tired and slept well in the hospitable railwayman's house. Early in the morning we got up, the hostess gave us bread, and I, feeling generous, gave my guitar to their 8-years old daughter. Though frankly speaking I did not like the idea of carrying it. It was difficult as I had a suitcase full of books.

During our travel the weather changed many times, now sunny, now rainy. It was already autumn, one day snow covered the fields. The days were short, we felt tired, the travel was tiresome. We covered about 40 kilometers daily, traveling from village to village. It often happened, people did not welcome us for the night, sending us to German Commandant's office, but they gave order to accept us and gave the host special food cards for us. After our experience in Berdyansk, we were surprised at the behaviour of Germans, we even thought life might get better in our lands if Germans were so

kind. But it only seemed so. Reality was quite different.

One rainy evening we asked a woman who had several children of her own to stop for the night. She sent us to commandant's office to be directed to some other place. We went and they really sent us to a kind hostess. At the office we asked to be driven to Gulyaypolyc next day as it was our destination. Germans told us to be ready by 6 o'clock in the morning as they had to go to Gulyaypolyc to bring food there.

At home we undressed and started to dry our clothes. The woman gave us hot milk and we went to sleep on straw spread on the floor. However, even hosts never slept in beds, but on the floor or on broad sleeping place designed by the side of the oven; nobody even thought about beds at that time.

We were happy to warm ourselves, to have hot milk, we were glad to have been prompted to ask Germans for a lift as we were too tired to go on foot. We slept soundly, the woman hardly managed to wake us at 5 in the morning; it was still dark. She gave us more milk and bread. We ate it and thanked her, for her hospitality, for her kind heart. In general, I must say that in our parts poor people treated others kindly, helping them in every way. People were poor but kind.

At 6 o'clock we came to the office, the driver was ready to go, he was neatly dressed in clean uniform, everything tidy and pressed, he wore a cap with a long peak, good polished boots and a new green greatcoat. The driver himself was shining as though there was no trouble, no war. Germans, it seemed, were composed, I never saw them nervous, they were at war and it looked as if they were doing routine work. Our people, on the contrary, were nervous, suffering of even minor misfortunes, their own or somebody's else. People could not understand how to take occupants, they did not know how Germans would behave. People did not know how to react to a German's smile.

We climbed the German truck, taking our things with us. We were five girls, the soldier spoke to us some strange, not quite clear language, either Slavonic, or Czech, or Serbian. But we understood him and arriving at Gulyaypolyc thanked him very much as he had driven us as far as 50 kilometers.

There remained 25 kilometers more from Gulyaypolyc for Olya and me to go, so we stayed at my friend's in the city. We didn't worry, our friend cared after us. My friend's parents were at home, they welcomed their daughter, glad at her arrival, they also welcomed us like their own children. The meeting looked like this: the German soldier drove us to Tonya's house, we could see through the window that her parents were preparing to dine. Tonya knocked at the door. Her mother came and asked who that was. Tonya answered, the mother opened quickly, embraced her and cried. The mother said: "Christ! Where did you come from? We thought you had died or had been killed." Tonya broke her off and said that she was all right,

that she had brought 2 girl-friends from the village Kopany and one girl from Tyrsa with her, they would stay overnight.

The aunt (we called all women "aunts" though they were not our relatives, and elderly women were called "grannies") let us in, gave us water to wash and invited us to table. Before taking her seat, Tonya's mother crossed herself and all of us, and thanked Christ that he had preserved her child at that hard war time, that He did not let her die. Tonya's father cried, tears dripping down his cheeks. He thought, as he confessed later, about his son Volodya, who had gone to the Army, nothing was heard from him. Nobody knows whether he is alive or not, perhaps lying in the field, ravens pecking his eyes. He went to fight nobody knew what for, but there was no other way out, if you were called up to the Army, you could not refuse.

The mother began comforting him, saying it was no use crying, and the girls were hungry, it was time to have dinner. We were hungry indeed, the day had gone since we had a piece of bread. We heartily ate genuine Ukrainian borshch, which we had not had long, about a month, since Germans occupied our land.

After meals we went to sleep to real beds (not on the floor) covered with a warm blanket. The night seemed too short to us, it was time to get up and start out. After breakfast Tonya's mother gave each of us a piece of bread with lard. It was to last us (after hot porridge) on our way home.

We said good-bye to Tonya and her parents; Olya, another girl from Verkhnyaya Tyrsa and I went along the road. Coming to Verkhnyaya Tyrsa, we left our friend there and headed for our village, it was about 4 kilometers away.

The last kilometers of our travel were difficult, wet snow was falling, suitcases seemed heavier than they really were. However, we did not leave our textbooks as we hoped to finish our studies in future.

We found my father at home. He had been taken prisoner by Germans but escaped and managed to get home somehow or other. It had happened some 40 kilometers from our village. Father had been home only two days when I arrived. My step-sister Maria worked in the lab at the granary; after Germans came, they dismissed everybody until civil administration arrived and put everything in order.

BEING REMOVED TO GERMANY

My people did not expect me to come back home, they did not even know whether I had reached Berdyansk as I had not even sent them a letter after my leave. It was an alarming time at our school, and in the city, too, so I had no time for letters.

When we arrived, I knocked at the door, my step-mother opened. Father welcomed me but said he was angry with me because I had gone so far away and had not sent a note. I tried to justify

myself trying to explain everything because of the war, occupation, registration regime, there was no time for letters.

This way or that, Olya and I washed ourselves, changed our clothes and had supper. After supper we talked much about the situation in our parts, in the village, we thought what to do.



My father Petro Tarasovich Khelemendyk, step-mother, brother Mytya and sister Olexandra. The photo was taken near our house in 1942.

In 2 days, expecting to get some job, Olya and I went to the commandant's office to get a document certifying our whereabouts. Germans registered us and gave certificates. We lived in the village and did not dare to go anywhere to look for job. Winter was coming to an end, when we were summoned to the office in March 1942 and ordered to get prepared to move to Germany for work. What did we, young girls, have to do? Germans were our masters. Like our previous life depended on Stalinist regime, our present situation depended upon Hitlerites. We couldn't even think of resistance. Germans were occupants of our country and we could not disobey

their orders. We certainly remembered execution of Jews in Berdyansk but we as well remembered that Germans treated us in a more or less humane way during our trip from Berdyansk to our village. We spoke between ourselves that, probably, it wouldn't be so bad in Germany, that Germans seemed cultured people, and why should they torment us. And we decided to obey the order of new authorities. By "we" I mean Olya, my step-sister Maria, Mariyka Kunets, Anyuta Shapoval (who came from a German family) and me. All of us lived in the same village but Olya. And Anyuta's aunt lived in Germany, our friend told us about it herself. So willingly or not, we had to prepare for a long travel, we packed our things, putting them into suitcases and came to the commandant's office on the appointed day, where we were expected by military men sent for this purpose to take us, young girls, to the station.

Going to Germany meant almost the same to us as exile to Siberia, the only difference being that we hoped to earn something in Germany, to buy some better clothes. We saw that Germans wore high quality clothes which were well-tailored of good stuff. Perhaps, we thought, we should be able to dress well there.

We were brought in a truck to the railway station Polog, we saw a lot of people there. Polog is a railway junction, and it was crowded with people. Some are bidding farewell, some are crying and sobbing. We had no one to say good-bye to because we had done it in our village, our farewells had already become past for us.

Girls brought from each village had their own wardmen who, on coming to the station entrusted them to other Germans who formed the echelon. Germans read out the girl's names and ordered to get into carriages.

We were taken to Germany to work but saw that they had no passenger cars, but only goods wagons, like those in which people were taken to Siberia under Stalin's regime. These wagons were called "tyeplushky" or "telyachy" vans (this means they were intended to carry cattle mainly). About 60 or more girls were crammed into each small van. Thus, we were transported not like working hands but rather like goods or cattle.

Only those seeing off their relatives remained at the station. Cars were overcrowded with young people. They did not take old people at that time, only the young, those who having no experience thought, with no reason at all, that they would buy nice dresses, blouses, fashionable shoes in Germany. They hoped, in vain, to get well-dressed, to have a good time after work, to listen to music or to dance. Our hopes fell in ruins, our young age was to be wasted.

We went westward, picking groups of young girls at each station, more and more cars being joined to our echelon. It is true, we were well-fed with bread, butter, sausage, sometimes ready-made sandwiches. We had never tasted the sausage the Germans gave us. Though our sausage spiced with pepper, garlic

and mustard was tasty, German sausage seemed much better. Germans were good at making nice sausage. But it was only the beginning of 1942. Germans sausage was like that made at home. The same was bread, mainly natural brown bread, sometimes dyed, with full-size grains inside, which was good for stomach.

Besides the cars in which we, girls, traveled, there were vans full of our Ukrainian wheat. It meant there was not enough food in Germany, if they had to bring grain. At some station we saw an amazing load: Germanys carried our Ukrainian soil, our black earth. How strange! They carried even our soil to their Reich! Don't they have enough land? We were explained that the soil was being carried for their green-houses, it was fine soil, it contained much humus. It was not in vain that Germans bought wheat from Stalin, it turned out their land was not so fertile as ours. True, having traveled half the world, I have never seen such black earths as in the Ukraine.

At last we crossed the former Polish border across the river Zbrutch. After Volotchysk and Pidvolotchysk we entered quite a different country. Though it was Galytchyna, the Ukraine, everything looked neater, more up-to-date as compared to our outskirts. At some station our train stopped as they were loading some goods. We asked our interpreter to leave the car to have a walk along people, to hear their language. We were allowed to. I don't know how we reached a near-by cemetery. We saw different monuments with inscriptions on them, and statues. We had never seen anything like that, they used to put ordinary wooden crosses in our cemeteries, no inscriptions. Only the closest relatives remembered where their people had been buried, they visited their graves on the Easter Day, bringing ornamented dyed eggs with them. A white cloth was spread, food laid, people treated each other with eggs and Easter cake. Children rolled eggs, it was a game. We remembered all this in Peremyshl cemetery.

Again we are in the cars, moving across the Polish territory. In the city of Catovitsye we were washed and disinfected. We had been traveling without washing ourselves or our hair. It was easy to imagine the result: we had lice, the skin of our heads was itchy, parasites started crawling out of our collars. That is why we were given oil which we spread over the hair and washed it 15 minutes later.

Though we sometimes found lice at home, our step-mother often washed our linen and hair. It was mother's duty and now Germans are washing us. I think, they were not at all astonished at our lousiness as they saw we had no linen change, no hot water to wash ourselves or our hair.

After washing, when our parasites were done away with, we took our bundles and returned to our cars. Catovitsye is a large industrial city, with coal mines and coal plants in it. Heading for the car I thought — where will Germans bring us, where shall we work, where shall we stay? We were young: from 15 to 17 years old. We

strove to study, flourish, enjoy our youth, but we were destined to work hard. It was spring, we were watching the nature and people, but we did not know what awaited us. We knew there was no joy for us in store. We shall not use the fruit of our youth which comes only once in your life.

We had been traveling more than 10 days, asking our interpreter (with no result, though) where they were taking us, what work was supposed for us, in what lands. The woman-interpreter that went in our car was indifferent to our interests. It was none of her business. She did her job, getting money for it. She would go to her family after work, would live like people lived. Meanwhile she talked a lot with a German as if she had known him all her life. Although we had studied German at school we could not make head or tail of their talk. She was constantly smiling to the German, when he joked. The study of German grammar was of no use to us, we could not talk and did not understand their language.

Though there was no fun and we more and more often recollected our relatives to whom we had said good-bye, we began singing our songs in the car, trying to remember those ones we had heard in our villages, but sometimes we put verses to some well-known melody, expressing our anxiety and sorrow for our relatives.

The train is running further westward, farther from the Ukraine, from our relatives. There are thousands of Ukrainian girls who saw no happiness in their Fatherland, who might not see it in a foreign country, in the unknown Germany.

PART TWO

2

GERMAN SLAVERY



On this map, in the northern-western corner of it the cities are marked: Hamburg that we were conveyed through, Lyubeck where I was punished in camps and Shverin where I was arrested after escape. Nowadays between Lyubeck and Shverin lies the borderline between GDR and FRG. In the centre is Berlin.

GERMANY

Finally, we were brought to Germany, to Berlin, to change trains. The first impression is very unfavourable; we were placed in poor wooden barracks fenced with barbed wire. We were ordered to get accustomed to it. A piece of bread and some thin soup made our meal. This was our ration. What shall we do, young and helpless girls? We embraced, bitter tears flowing down our cheeks. Such was Germany! A wonderful, promised land!

There were not only Ukrainians in the barracks, but also Russian and Jewish girls who had kept secret their nationality during registration. And they did well, there is no sign of your nationality on your forehead. They never confessed of being Jewish. The other girls did not betray them, we had seen what fate awaited Jews when Germans had come, we saw how Hitlerites treated Jews.

Our barracks housed people of different nations, so we used to sing not only Ukrainian but Russian songs, too. We sang as even in the hardest time, a song kept our spirit high.

Staying in those barracks, we were constantly under strain as we found ourselves in the heart of Germany. Though we lived in Hitler's capital, we had no chance to see the city. We were disinfected again, treated our hair with oil to kill lice. Our clothes were passed through a special machine that killed lice, through a very hot oven. We really felt we could be eaten up by the insects, there were so many of them that scratching our bodies we made bleeding wounds. Two weeks had passed, since we were traveling in overcrowded cars under antisaniatary conditions. We left our native parts, the Ukraine, which did not give us sweet life, but still it was our Motherland. And what expected us here?

After washing and disinfection, our wardmen ordered to draw up in a column and march to the canteen. Listening to their talk, we began catching separate words. Besides, we used our interpreter's help who explained many things to us. We did not know whether she interpreted everything to Germans. We were like creatures from the Moon, knowing no German, like kids that had not yet learnt to talk.

Coming to the canteen, our ward changed, these new Germans had bandages on the sleeves with the word "Wahmann", i.e. some local police. The man that brought us, washed his hands and went to have a rest.

The cooks gave us some food in the canteen, something dense, but it was not soup, it was rather soup mixed with meet, sauce, potatoes and some bread. We came up, one by one, took our portions and took vacant seats at tables. There were some Germans seating among us, eating the same food we had. They were looking at us in astonishment the way they watched animals in the Zoo. Scrutinizing us, they whispered something between them. We reddened and got pale, in turn, as though at an execution. Here

we started to smell that depressing atmosphere that was to surround us during the years to come.

Having assimilated a bit, we also began looking around, first timidly, getting more certain with time. We also exchanged our observations about Germans. German women were mostly tall and thin like sticks. It was a common fashion, it seemed. They were well-dressed, their dresses underlying their belted waists, well-pressed. They wore nice shoes, some wearing berets, their hair parted or combed back. We thought we would have our hair done in the same way as soon as we earned enough money to look as fine as those German women.

I was at a loss — what will they do with us? At first, it looked as if we would stay in Berlin, but one day our interpreter ordered us to get together, we had to climb the cars again. These cars were fitted with wooden benches, we could sit on them stretching out our feet, had there been room enough. But there was no room, the cars were overcrowded. It turned out it was the train by which local people went to work or some other place on their business.

We, girls that had known each other long, kept close together, so we hurried up and took seats in the first car. The locomotive blew a whistle, the car conductor entered and took his seat looking master of the place over all of us, girls from the Ukraine.

The ward watched us with his bulging eyes as though we were his property, in fact we looked like prisoners or slaves. Some Germans asked him something, he replied. I think it concerned us. We began understanding words, like *Ausländer*, *Russ*. We understood, our ward told them where we were coming from and where we were going to. But these were our suppositions, as they spoke too fast, we did not understand their language.

We did not sing in the train, we found ourselves among strange people, and singing is supposed among native people, even in a desparate situation. There was no wish to sing, we were overtired by the long way, we did not sleep well, there was no chance to have a good sleep in such a crowd of people, we never stopped recollecting our people and our land. Our legs ached after long sitting, our bodies ached of hard boards on which we lay. We were poorly dressed, almost shabby, we quite understood we were not coming from a rich country, aware that Stalinist regime oppressed us. Still we also knew we had left our native land. And we were really poor compared to Germans.

In our car and at the stations we were passing by, we saw that Germans were well-dressed, even beautifully dressed, their uniforms trimmed to fit the figure. We watched columns of Germans that marched and sang something about their *Führer*, sang German military marches. Sometimes we heard German folk songs sung chiefly by German girls like in any other country. In each country people are taught patriotic songs at home or at school, we knew it, we had sung many songs about our Father Stalin before. So we did not wonder that

Germans also sang their patriotic songs. Who knows what Germans thought singing about Hitler? We knew that Stalin was not our Father, nor even our step-father, he was a butcher, an executor of our people, the oppressor of the Ukrainian peasants, workers and intelligentsia. We sang all those songs, soaked with terror, afraid to express our thoughts. The same with other people who sang songs about Stalin. Everyone was afraid, everyone was cautious, there were plenty of informers who were overhearing and overlooking and reported: Mikita said such and such things; Gavriilo said another, so they are against the Soviet power! At night they were arrested, and children never saw their fathers again, nor wives saw their husbands.

We traveled, deep in thought — we had seen hard time, then brutal invaders came, Hitlerite Germany, we should not expect anything better. We behaved quietly not to attract attention, watching their ways and means, and everything around us.

We left our fertile Ukrainian black earths for the strange lands. We did not know where our fate would bring us, but the ward did not care to tell us anything about it, smiling mysteriously and that smile did not promise any good. Neither did our interpreter tell us anything useful about our destination, she only said: Soon you will see everything by yourselves.

When our train stopped at the stations, several girls were ordered to descend; a man used to approach them and take them away. These girls must have been taken to work in villages, to German farmsteads. We did not know those girls as they traveled in different cars and came from other parts of the Ukraine. Seeing that, we were quite uncertain about our future, we did not know who would be taken away next. So we, girls from Zaporizhzhya region, made a list of our names and home addresses, just in case, to be able to find one another. We preferred to get ready for the worst, we did not hope for the better.

In the end of ends, we were brought to Hamburg where girls from the West Ukraine descended, but we were again waiting to face our fate. Our ward told us we would not stay in Hamburg, but would go northward to the industrial city of Lyubeck.

LYUBECK

Here we are at last in Lyubeck. According to the 1964 encyclopedia, it is a city in the Federative German Republic, Shlezvig-Holshtein region, a port on the Trave river, not far from the place where it falls into the Baltic Sea. The population is 236 thousand people, shipyards function here, there are chemical, machine-building and metallurgy industries, plenty of architectural monuments dating back to 13 — 15 centuries. But we did not know it then. We only knew we were in Germany. We, however, made a

list of cities we were passing by, but it was not of great use to us, we did not know Germany, having only the slightest geographical knowledge as to its position.

Arriving in Lyubeck, we were met by two wardmen with dogs, German sheep-dogs. This made us alert, we understood we would be well-guarded. We were assembled in a column and brought to a camp. There were about 200 girls among us. We found 2 wooden barracks in the camp fenced with barbed wire. We looked at one another, understanding at once that it was our place, our home, but said nothing. The interpreter was getting some instructions from the new local ward to tell us new orders and prohibitions. We looked around, studying our future home. There was no joy in it, we did not expect to see anything wonderful in those barracks. We expected instructions from our interpreter.

We were met by another woman, a ward, who knew a few words in Russian. At last our interpreter said we should live there and go to work. We were allowed to divide into groups of 50 persons according to our wish to live in barracks. Life is life. We took our suitcases and headed towards barracks, making an occasional joke: Look! What palaces were prepared for us by our liberators!

These barracks were supposed for "Ostarbeiter" as Germans put it, i.e. for workers from the East, for Russians. We entered the building which housed 25 two-storey beds with straw-stuffed mattresses and pillows, sheets and blankets. There was a long wooden table and 25 wooden chairs round it, in the middle, some more chairs were stacked aside.

We were depressed, trying to protest. At home we used to have a bit of our private space (a corner, perhaps), though not much of it.

I took an upper berth, the lower one was taken by my step-sister Maria Shcherbakha. My cousin Marusya Kunets neighboured Anyuta Shapovalova. Though Anyuta was of German origin and had an aunt in Germany, she had to assimilate under new conditions. We were caught like mice, put in the cage and had to accommodate, had to overcome that damned war.

Our relatives had no news from us; our new home did not seem nice to us as we had imagined seeing neat houses in the villages and towns on the way. Reality was more cruel than we had hoped. On the way to Germany, we saw slim German women go out of their nice houses to shake their colorful carpets, or to say a word to their neighbours. But we were housed in barracks.

Could we hope to find anything better? Did Hitlerite Germany invade our Ukraine to build nice houses and to provide high standard for us, Ukrainians? No, Germany wanted our hands and our land. We are new slaves. That's all.

We had no joy, but what could we do? We unpacked our suitcases and hurried to wash as there was a bath-house where we could take a shower. It relaxed us to some extent, but we were

hungry, as the last time we had something to eat was in Berlin, they gave us only some juice in the train, that was all.

We washed with hot water, refreshing ourselves, dressed and were summoned by the interpreter to go to the canteen for supper. She explained that we should also receive some dry food for tomorrow breakfast. We should work at a factory where they would give us sandwiches.

Entering the canteen, we stood in a queue (we were used to queues, they were no wonder to us), approaching a small window. We got two unpeeled potatoes and some finely cut meat with sauce. We also got spoons and forks and a piece of bread. We did not know what to do — to eat everything at once or to leave it for tomorrow as there would be only water for breakfast, we thought. But we were hungry, our stomachs demanded food. Now that nobody starves, it is difficult to imagine this sort of hesitation, but at that time these were problems, so don't be astomished that I write in so much detail.

We were brought to Lyubeck on the 23rd of April 1942, it was my birthday on the 24th. I remembered this date well, this was the day I started my slavish labour for the benefit of the Great Reich!

However I ate up every little bit in the canteen, like the rest of the girls, as it was a torture to look at food when you were hungry. Coming to our barrack, we washed our basins and spoons and put them into metallic drawers that stood by the beds, one drawer for two girls to share. I shared a drawer with my step-sister Maria; Olya whom I had brought from the medical school with me, shared a drawer with my cousin Marusya Kunets.

So after supper we undressed and went to bed. We were lying and not a word was spoken. In a while you could hear girls sobbing. They (and I, too) began recalling their relatives, their villages and the floor upon which they slept at home. And now we found ourselves in primitive barracks as though we were prisoners. We were supervised by the ward, accompanied by dogs. Police ward had their own room, their sheep-dogs lying on the floor and waiting for orders.

We were lying, sleepless. Someone started a quiet and timid song to her own words: "The train is shaking, the mist is falling down, menacing time is coming. Thin soup in a basin — this is what you have! Barracks are cool, mats are stuffed with straw, full of lice". This sort of poetry was continued in singing, when tired we at last fell asleep.

We slept soundly that night as we were overtired by travel, and slept at last not in the train but on solid ground, though strange and allien. Early in the morning we heard the whistle blow. It was our interpreter waking us. She had to supervise two barracks and she hurried us up. Getting up, we ran to the toilet room, and washed quickly, and hurried to the yard to line up — this was the order. Though it was an April morning, it was cold, the weather was wet,

we were trembling with cold, our teeth chattered feebly. And I was 17 on that day.

I never wish a single person in the world, 17 years old, to go through things that I have gone through. I did not see a single ray of hope ahead, everything was painted black. It is no wonder if you think what 17-years old girls should be interested in, what they should live for, where they should find fun and what they should grieve at. They should dream about love and studies, preparing for life.

Those short spells of thought were broken by a ward whistle. I distinguished the image of wardman, dogs beside him, I heard the voice: "Schnell! Schnell! Los!". I understood he was urging us to line up.

So we were going to our first factory shift. That is, we were not going alone, but were being taken there, wardmen with dogs were walking along. We were making for a small railway station at which we had arrived the day before. Again we climbed the train, and it started out. It took us about 20 minutes. The train stopped and the wardman cried: "Aufstehen!". He shouted in full voice as though we were deaf. But we only guessed we had to come out though we had heard this word even at home, in the first days of occupation.

Wardmen behaved as though we really were, according to their inhumane theory, defective people. They never treated us as people, they shouted at us, looked at us with malice as if we made a good deal of trouble to them. They would constantly blow their whistles, urging us with their usual "schnell, schnell, los!". Their language sounded guttural to us. I quite understood each people liked its language, however, German sounded unattractive to us. How could we like the language, hearing constantly "schwein, schwein". Our interpreter explained the meaning of this word. Though we were Ukrainians, for Germans we were "Russisch Schwein" just the same.

At last we were brought to the factory, registered and given special passes which were marked "Russ". Look, we, Ukrainians, were called Russian!

AT THE GERMAN PLANT

How horrid the reality turned out soon! Foremen showed us the lathes where we had to make ammunition. We at once realized the horror of our situation. We were to produce ammunition against our brothers and fathers who served in the Red Army. Think of a paradox: they were fighting against Germany not at their own will, and we not at our own will, either, made ammunition against them. Physically hard work was accompanied by moral torture. It was inhumane!

Most of us were young country girls, some having studied at school, but none of us had ever known anything about lathes or other machine-tools, it was the first time we saw them. It will take Germans a lot of time to teach us to work on these lathes.

Different projectives, cartridges and powder were produced at the plant. We were shocked and frightened. Shall we bring death to our brothers? Why did such a misfortune find us? We were also afraid to work there; there was powder everywhere, one chance spark was enough to blow everything upside down. Lest this should happen, we were supervised by German women and foremen, true to their Hitler's party, judging by the work they had been entrusted with.

We were closely watched, especially our hands. But they could not but miss something. On the way to the station or from the station to the factory we often managed to pick some sand into our pockets or bundles. Stuffing cartridges or other ammunition with powder, we sometimes managed to pour some sand inside. We hoped such ammunition would never burst, would never cripple our brothers and fathers.

I worked on the machine which made inscriptions on details — date of production and the number of the shop where they were produced. It was not too difficult but knowing that I worked at the ammunition plant, I felt uneasy, I could not work quietly, my mind protested against it.

We disliked the idea that Germans considered us Russian which was proved by the mark "Russisch" in our passes. So one day we revolted, collected our passes and threw them to our interpreter. We told her we were not Russian, why should it be written in our documents? Why were we constantly called "Russisch Schwein"? It insulted us.

The interpreter took our passes and went to the foreman. There was a quarrel there, we heard loud voices. We began to understand German a bit and heard that they threatened us saying that it was no place for revolts. We got frightened of our actions, being afraid of punishment. But no one told us anything until evening.

After supper we went to bed, but no one slept after that first revolt. In the morning we woke up earlier than ever.

At last a wardman ran into the barrack, blew his whistle for us to go out. He was as cruel as other wardmen, he shouted, his dog barked. They all ran from barrack to barrack, from one building to another. They not simply shouted, they rather screamed. We were afraid of them and their dogs.

We lined up in the yard, and the wardman began his reprimands: What do you think you are? Are you going to revolt? It's not a game, there shall be strict order! It is war-time. Take your passes and let me never see anything of the sort again!

After that he slapped a few girls on the faces and ordered us to go to the station. Here we are again, at the plant, but we did not proceed to work. We went down to the cellar and waited. The foreman ran in shouting at us. We told him we were treated like cattle, called "swine", "Russisch Schwein", but we were neither swine, nor Russian, we were Ukrainians, we demanded not to be called names and to be given new passes.

The foreman took our passes and promised to solve the

problem with the plant police but told us to go to work. After the shift when we went past the check-post we were given new passes, there was no mark as to our nationality in them. It turned out, our plant police did not know how to define us for they thought Ukrainians were those who lived in Galytchyna, the rest of us were "Russ" for them. Making our former passes, they used the documents brought by the previous ward in which we were marked as Russian.

Our wardmen in the barracks were angry, shouting at us, but later we learnt that someone more humane told them that they should not shout at us, that in fact we were poor girls, we should be treated a bit softer.

After work at the plant we used to come together and complain about our sorrowful fate. Germans came to the Ukraine uninvited; it was not we who started the war, we did not want it or Stalinist regime either. We lived in peace; though we suffered of famine, we were far from well-off people, we were arrested, sentenced, executed, but it was not done in public, we were even told that all of it was done for the benefit of the people. And Hitler made up his mind to exterminate all of us, first Jews, later Slaves, too. But so far he needed us as working hands, as slaves. We lived on scanty food, but it was not the end of the story, they began beating us, some girls were beaten with whips. Our protest will not end in anything positive, we were not free, we were enslaved. We saw it clearly.

More girls were brought to the camp, they came from Kamyanets-Podilsk and Poltava. They were ordered to sew on the sign "OST" on their clothes. We saw it and told those girls that they came from the Ukraine, though East Ukraine, that they were Ukrainians, and the fact that we lived under Stalin's regime could not cancel out our nationality. But soon both they and we received new passes in plastic cover with our photos and personal signatures. We could do nothing about it, such was our fate.

First we were not allowed to go out anywhere, but later we could leave barracks on Sundays and be back by 8 o'clock in the evening. We used this opportunity and walked to the centre of Lyubeck. But it was wartime, the war did not stop. One day when we were coming from the city, an aircraft came, the Soviet or some other, I am not sure, it threw bombs, hitting our barracks. We came back and saw everything broken and burnt. We saw our interpreter, cooks and hateful wardmen in the gateway. They were waiting for us, they began to urge us "schnell, schnell", they told us the trucks would be coming to carry us to another camp.

The trucks arrived, we climbed into them. We went to Brandenbaum camp. We remained with what we wore at the moment, these were miserable dresses. The new camp was 2 kilometers away. When we arrived, we were told to go to the canteen, where we received new basins, spoons and forks. We had supper and were sent to barracks.

Now there were rooms for 12 people each. Though nobody asked our wishes, it turned out that my step-sister Maria, Olya, Marusya Kunets and Anyuta found ourselves in one room. We took similar beds like those in the previous place. Mattresses were stuffed with straw, and pillows, too. We innocently thought that all the Germans slept on straw mattresses. Much time will pass before we learn that they slept under down blankets and on spring mattresses.

In the Brandenbaum camp we found many girls from West Ukraine who had letter "U" marked in their passes; there were also Polish girls who wore letter "P" on their clothes. Polish girls abided in a separate barrack. But the entrance-gate was common for everybody. Ukrainian girls from West Ukraine had also a separate barrack, they were allowed to walk freely outside the camp, so they often went to the city.

Fellows from West Ukraine worked in Lyubeck too, they lived in some other camps. They worked at a sugar-producing factory, some at the bakery or at the mill. West Ukrainian girls met their fellows in the city who were also allowed to walk in the city. Those fellows gave their girls anything they could get from work — groats or sugar, etc. The girls added it to their scanty ration and kept themselves alive.

West Ukrainian girls were kind, they helped us in every way. We had almost nothing, our things burnt after the air raid, so those girls even shared their clothes with us.

Soon we were handed some colourful dresses and shoes with wooden soles that wouldn't bend. When you walked you were heard at a mile's distance. Our feet ached because of those shoes, but there was nothing better, so we were glad we had anything at all. These shoes were called Holzschuhe.

We, "OST-girls", were forbidden to go to the city, except on Sundays till 8 o'clock in the evening, but later we were also allowed to go out on Saturdays. The rest of the girls (Polish and West Ukrainian) went out every evening. So when we were allowed to go out on Saturdays we often visited a neighbouring "Bauer", a farmer, to suggest help with any field work (harvesting potatoes or onion, etc.). Farmers hired us for a day, giving us food, so we had something to eat besides our canteen. But sometimes a day passed but we could not find any job. When we left the barracks, the girls that stayed in, took our supper from the canteen so that we had something to eat.

To understand how scanty our raion was, you must know the fact some of our girls fell ill in tuberculosis and died. There were few calories and vitamins in our food.

I had a bit of good luck. In the camp they built a hospital for "Ausländer", i.e. for foreigners brought to work. Germans worked in the hospital, but they were not enough, besides they did not know our language. That is why we were told that Germans were looking for medical nurses among us. I told them I had been studying two years and a half at a medical school.

Medical aid post for foreign workers was at some distance

from our barracks. Leaving the camp, I headed towards it, rang an electric bell; a senior nurse (Oberschwester) answered. I told her I could work at the post which served also as a hospital, or rather a place for the diseased. She put down my surname and ordered to come two weeks later. On that same day, after a shower, when we had to stand still in the yard, I caught a cold and had fever, as soon as the Appell was over, I went to bed.

I FELL ILL

On Tuesday morning I got up, washed and went to work as usual. Before we came to the station, I felt some pimple spring up on the forehead, but paid no attention. In the train, on the way to the factory, I did not feel anything special. Much in the same way, I went to my working place, took the seat and began working with my electric pen. The foreman came, he was kind to me, sometimes sharing his sandwich with me. His wife (Frau) started giving him two sandwiches after he had told her that he had a hungry girl working with him. So she sent food for me. Well, he came up, put his sandwich and gazed at me. He saw something unusual, as my face started swelling round the eyes. He asked what the matter was. I said I did not know, maybe it was because of the powder from the parts with which I worked. I used to take them with my hands, perhaps this was the cause of the inflammation.

About 15 minutes later my face was burning, it swelled, I could hardly see anything. The foreman called the medical aid. They came and took me away on the stretcher. The hospital attendant told my girls I was being carried to our camp medical post, i.e. the place where I was going to work.

I was brought there at dinner time, everybody was busy, but the headmistress came to see me. She knew they would bring somebody, she had been warned on the telephone, but she did not know exactly who that would be. She looked at me and gasped (so awfully I looked) and cried out: "Look! What has happened to my Antonia!". She recognized me at once, she had registered my data, I had to come to work a fortnight later; and instead, I had to keep to bed, diseased myself.

The senior nurse (she was also headmistress — all in one person) sent me for examination. The doctor examined me, ordered to light an electric lamp with green light, and the senior nurse began extracting something from my body and my face which ached very much. I could hardly stand it. I don't know what it was, I nearly cried like a kid. For about ten minutes she had been extracting something from my body. At last the lamp was turned off, my face was all wet as though I came out of water. The doctor ordered to cover my face with zink powder.

It turned out that there was some poisonous substance on my

face. My eyes were bandaged for a few days, and my hands were tied to the bed, as the face was terribly itching. So they knew I could scratch the face. The doctor said if I had scratched it, some spots could stay there for ever.

The whole month I struggled with the disease. At first a German nurse fed me, a few days later my eyes were unbandaged and I could eat by myself. I knew there were few people at the medical post, but plenty of patients, even kids among them.

I spent three months in the hospital. When I felt a bit better, I began helping the nurses — either feeding kids, or tidying up their beds. I was allowed to walk and could contact with patients. The headmistress liked me, I told her I was half-orphan, that I had a sister on Mother's side, whom I had never seen, hadn't managed to find her before the war burst out and I was taken to Germany. I even didn't have my sister's address, everything was burnt when the barrack was bombed. My mother's photo was also burnt, which I had got from my Aunt in Orikhiv. I liked those pictures as one of them showed my sister Maria. And now I had neither the address, nor the photo. They turned into ashes. I was so sorry about it, sorry never to see Mariyka, never to hear a word about her.

So I told her about my misfortunes, about my sister, the mistress even cried with me. She sympathized with me as everybody had lost a relative at that time of the war; some people were missing, they were looked for, sometimes with no result, but there were also those who would never be found. I also told her about my girl-friend Olya, who was also an orphan; she had no one in the world.

I lost any contacts with Olya. Being constantly underfed, she decided to escape from the plant to get some job at a farmer's. That's why she changed her surname and stopped writing to our camp not to be traced.

Having recovered, I began looking after kids at the hospital for foreigners. There were different children, they were picked from trains which carried their mothers to work. They came from different European countries, they were of different nationalities. We used to address those children in Ukrainian, in Russian, in Polish, or Czech. There were also children from France, Belgium, Holland. They came from all those countries where German foot was set, where human life was exterminated, where mothers were separated from their children, men from their wives. Many mothers could not find their children after the war, many children grew up German not knowing their parents, forgetting their native language.

LIFE CONDITIONS IN THE CAMP

We were taken from our parts by force. We were not paid for our work. We only got some miserable clothes and wooden-soled

shoes. The girls had no change of the clothes, they were poor. I was given a white coat, an apron, a white cap and a striped dress at the hospital. I gave that dress to my step-sister Maria, she also was having hard time, almost always hungry and exhausted. She looked so bad that I was not sure she would survive. Whenever I could, I tried to help her with food, but it was not enough.

I thought much of my sister's fate, and at last I decided she had to run away from the camp. I advised her to escape and work at a farmer's. It would be hard work but she would not starve in the village, as farmers always had potatoes, bread, and meat. This was my sincere advice to my step-sister Maria.

I had many friends from West Ukraine by that time, we made friends, they helped me every possible way. Their life was a bit easier, they received food cards, they could go out into the city and buy food in the shops. They had enough clothes, they even gave me some dresses and shoes which they called "a dream".

At the hospital I felt much better, than my sister at the plant, I could often buy something or eat something. I did my best looking after children at the hospital, as they had no mothers with them, they had been separated somewhere when their mothers were being carried to forced labour to the neighbouring camps. Mothers could attend them only once a week, those who worked not far from Lyubeck; but the majority of children had been separated from their mothers for ever, they did not know their parents who could have been arrested or had been taken prisoners, or had gone to partisans. When they came to see their children, the mothers could not take their eyes off them.

We also kept children who had been picked by Hitlerites in different cities and brought to Germany. These children were forlorn and hungry. At our hospital, some of those brought by the police died of illnesses acquired on the way. My friend Zina also worked at the hospital, so we both cried a lot watching those orphans who could not be looked after by their mothers. We were sorry for their fate as we also had brothers or sisters at home, we remembered and missed them. We gave our love to these children, substituting for their mothers, we did everything we could and as well as we could.

It was terrible to see how Germans threw dead children into a truck as if they were corpses of animals, not people. Germans did not bother with corpses, they carried them somewhere and burnt in ovens as they had no time to dig them into the earth, to say nothing of burying them properly. Hitler did not care about those alive, to say nothing of the dead.

Our senior nurse and mistress Liza was German. Her husband was a doctor. But both of them were humane, they often helped us with clothes, or food, but strictly ordered to tell nobody about it as it could end badly. Hitlerites had informers everywhere, and spies, like we had them under Stalin's regime, that's why our doctor was afraid to help us openly. Hitler ordered Germans to have no private

contacts with foreigners, just use them as working hands, without pity or sympathy. Our doctor even made our snapshots, he had a camera, he made them in the cellar to avoid informers. He used to say that those pictures would remain as token for us, when the war was over. The headmistress Liza had some fine food from French prisoners, it was beautifully packed, it came from overseas, I think. So nurse Liza often called Zina and me to regale on what was left. Nurse Liza liked me very much, she had no children of her own. She often gave me stockings, or a dress, as she saw I had nothing, and I was young, she well understood I was eager to get better dressed.

A year passed since we had come to Germany. At that time, in 1943, we had a chance to correspond with our people at home. I wrote letters describing our life. Father also sent me letters, and very seldom a parcel — a piece of lard or dry bread. This was our mode of life in the camp.

LETTERS FROM HOME

I received a letter from my sister Shura, i. e. my Father's and my step-mother's daughter. She wrote that a bomb had fallen in our yard and killed her Mother, i. e. my step-mother. I was so sorry that my brother Mitya and sister Shura remained orphans, like me, and that they would never have a mother. However, I thought that if Father married again, they were not little kids, it would be easier for them to reconcile with a step-mother.

When I lost my Mother, I was a little kid, so I easily got accustomed to my stepmother. I even called her Mother. I was grateful that she brought me up, though she did not pet me like her own children, but still she washed, and sewed, and mended my clothes and dressed me. So God helped me to grow up under my step-mother's wing. My step-mother was religious, she believed in God. I still remember icons in our house, framed with embroidered towels made by my step-mother. Fine flowers and birds were embroidered on them. Mother did it with love, in no haste. She could do all sorts of handwork: embroider, weave, knit with a hook and knitting-pins, and fagot. People often came to our place as Mother sewed for them, even overcoats, or weaved on her loom which was her dowry from parents, the Shcherbakhas.

I still remember her constant and painstaking work; being very small, I often watched her weave; much later I understood she slept very little, keeping late hours to do as much as possible about the house. My memories of her are good, she was kind, though she never petted me like her own children, never caressed me. And I, in turn, used to stand in the corner, pulling my dress, as if afraid of something, as though something averted me from her. This is why she never took me to her lap. I was mostly looked after by her elder

daughter Galina, she was 7 when my Father married her mother. My step-mother's full name was Pasha Ivanivna Shherbakha.

So I told our headmistress about it, and also about the misfortunes that fell on our home, the Ukraine. Sympathizing with me, she gave me a day off and it was she, I think, who told Helen, a German, to entertain me on that day. In fact, Helen took me to a restaurant for supper, paid for me, and took me to the cinema to cheer me up, to make me forget my grieves. On the way back she soothed me, saying it was war-time and hundreds or even millions of people used to die at the front.

FATE OF CHILDREN

Three German nurses worked at our hospital, and only two Ukrainians, Zina and I. They took us because they could not manage their work with patients, and they could not speak Ukrainian or Russian, they could hardly understand children that were mostly Slaves. Both Zina and I spent almost all our time at the hospital, the headmistress often went to sleep, and we helped her in her work. Appreciating that, she gave us extra cards for food at the canteen.

Zina and I brought food for our patients from the canteen, there were many of them, 50 people on the average. There were only 6 nurses. We brought soup in buckets, and salad — in big basins. There were 100 children at the hospital, like in an asylum, half of them had been born there, the rest had been brought from our parts mainly, they were either lost by their mothers, or were taken away by force.

It was far from easy to work at the hospital, but it was easier than at the plant. We asked nurse Liza to take two more women from the camp to wash linen for children as one woman who was doing it was not enough. Nurse Liza wrote a note that 2 more girls were wanted and pinned it on the door. Two girls from West Ukraine came at once, they were very nice girls, Mariyka Shutka was one of them, the other one was Katerina. They were also orphans like Zina and I, they agreed to do any work. They often came to the children's ward after washing the linen; we gave them sterile masks, they fed children or changed their diapers. They knew that we wanted them hired at the hospital, so they did their best to thank us. It was real help to us as we were head over ears in work.

Feeding time was crucial at the hospital. Babies cried, but we could not attend to everybody at once. We made experiments — gave a bottle to the baby, propped it with pillow and ran to another kid. Feeding children was a problem as smaller ones had only milk, some had porridge with milk, the rest had carrot juice, or boiled grated carrots with oil, etc.

Vegetables were kept in the cellar. Sometimes we had to go

there, and it was dark down there. Vegetables for the hospital and for the camp canteen were stored there. Zina and I found out from which cellar they took vegetables for our canteen and took some, hiding them in our aprons. We learnt to make salad of cabbages and carrots, we liked it, it added vitamins to our bodies. We stole vegetables in turn — one of us went down to the cellar, the other one looked around to avoid wardmen. We knew we would have been tried for stealing if they had caught us at night. But we had to take the risk and steal vegetables.

The Lagerführer did not understand that we, "OST-girls" used to be hungry, especially those who worked at the factory, food from the canteen was not enough. We had big bellies like eight-months pregnant women. His family and he treated us like cattle, their usual name for us was "Schwein". We remembered it very well. We were afraid of our headmaster. We were afraid, but continued to steal vegetables.

If you were on duty, you did not have to sleep, but while one of us was doing something, the other one crawled into an armchair and napped, with an ear towards children — is any of them crying? Children had fits of cough because of colds, but there was another thing — lice. Kids were little and could not fight those stinky parasites. Lice easily attacked babies, sensing their young and sweet blood, biting their necks and heads, sometimes ears. The kid would begin crying bitterly, and we did not know what to do. But later we learnt to extract lice with the help of a cotton-wool wad. Sometimes kids swallowed lice which caused nausea, they warmed out dead insects. Lice were a factor which was difficult to fight with. They were everywhere and at the same time they were invisible. Our kids' beds were made of wood and lice made their nests in bed splits. Their eggs were much harder than nits, some lice were even transparent and it was difficult to smash them. We spilled beds with hot water, oiled them, but it was of little use as mattresses were stuffed with straw which was a good medium for parasites. I still cannot remember lice without shivering, they were everywhere, they crawled on the ceiling and fell upon sleeping children, bit them, sucking their blood. After a louse bite, there used to remain a spot for quite a long time, which was itching unbearably. It was painful for us, to say nothing of babies that could not protect themselves.

Children often died, most often at night. We carried the corpse to the cellar and in the morning reported the case to the senior nurse. Nurse Liza always felt pity for dead children, saying: "Goodness! Where are children's parents? Where are their relatives? They know nothing of their children".

Many children, brought to our hospital, were homeless — nobody knew their names or surnames. The nurse gave them names she could think of, as children had to have names. She often asked us what name she should give to a girl or a boy. We prompted names like Ganya, Maria, Andriy, the names we used. We suggested surnames likewise. We never defined the nationality as children were

too little; they had to learn to speak from us who spoke mainly Ukrainian, some nurses spoke German. This is how children learnt to speak; when they reached the age of 5, they were sent to school where they were taught exclusively in German. They were sent to German asylums and stayed there till the end of the war, we never saw them again. We often cried over those children that were sent away, often remembering them and feeling pity.

When some of the children had to be sent away, Zina and I used to recall our childhood and relatives. Do they know under what conditions we live? Has Germany given us happiness? Did we think that Germans would bring us from Ukraine to Germany for forced labour, unpaid, almost naked, with no footwear in goods cars like cattle? Bringing us to Germany, they reduced us to the most essential things without which we would've died. So they gave us miserable dresses and shoes with wooden soles, gave us as much food as to last us at work, nothing more. They marked us "Russ" or "Polen", etc.; everybody had a mark on the clothes for Germans to see who was who — their people, Germans, or foreigners. We were named "swine" even by their children when we had a chance to leave our camp for awhile which was fenced with barbed wire. As soon as we left the camp, we heard: "Du bist Schwein" from passers-by. "You are swine". What could we do? We were strangers there, imprisoned; and they were our masters, a superior race. So we had to stand it. We could not spit them in the face, nor object that we were not swine; it was they who invaded our land, robbed us, brought us to work by force, exhausted us. They took our grain, cattle, even our fertile soil from the Ukraine, and now they call us swine. We guessed why they did it. They saw our poverty, they saw we had no baths, and lived the primitive life, we had no fine chambers, no good clothes. But have they, cultured Germans, ever asked themselves a question: Were our people to blame, especially peasants, for our poverty and our misfortunes? Our people are not lazy, they could arrange their life even under tsarism when ordinary people were oppressed. But what could be done when Stalin's regime came to power, when peasants were compelled to join collective farms, when artificial famine was caused, what could our life be but primitive? If we had a chance to work freely and to toil honestly, to have our own bit of land together with our families, we would never be primitive. They would've seen we would never call other people swine because of their nationality. Our people, as far as I know, have never had any prejudice against other peoples and nations.

The atrocities our fathers saw under Stalin's regime, under cruel prosecution and terror when you had to keep silence for dozens of years can hardly be understood by strangers. Let them, Übermenschen, imagine the situation when the whole families and villages and regions were deprived of everything their grandfathers and fathers accumulated through hard work, but not in exchange speculations, through their own hard labour, sweat-squeezing and

corn-making. German Übermenschen could not imagine that you could be deprived of your house, that leaving all their things, people escaped from their villages, not to be thrown into prison or a concentration camp, or sent to Siberia, or even get shot. No, they did not care to imagine this, though they used Stalin-like methods, too. Stalinist regime deprived kulaks (wealthy peasants), and Hitlerite regime exterminated people on national grounds. We, young Ukrainian girls and fellows brought to Germany for forced labour, saw how invaders robbed the Ukraine, we witnessed another inhumane regime under which nobody had the right to his own opinion like before. Under Hitlerite invasion of the Ukraine, German authorities used to shoot people not only for disobedience but even for a suspicion of disobedience. When Germany occupied the Ukraine, our people understood that for a Hitlerite a person meant nothing. They did not have a morsel of humanity, they easily killed, robbed and separated people. And they ordered people to keep silence.

We, youngsters during the first period of invasion, witnessed mass executions of Jews and those who helped them to hide away. Policemen caught people, stood them by the fence or along the ditch and shot them out of machine-guns. They took dozens and hundreds of people as hostages and hanged them in public. Under German occupation, gallows become a usual sight for our cities and villages.

And here, in Germany, we are called swine. German people should be ashamed of Hitler and his companions. Everything that was taking place under Hitlerite regime in Germany and in occupied lands, was taking place in the end of the first half of the twentieth century, at the time when the Sciences and the Humanities were in their prime. There was no humanism under Hitlerite regime. Nor under Stalinism.

After the war many Germans left their Fatherland, searching rescue overseas. Just like we are searching it here. It would be fair if their descendants did not forget evil done by their grandfathers to European peoples. However innocent they are, they should remember it. Like we remember our grief, our blood, our sweat. It was awful time, it was real horror!

"...YOUTH WILL NEVER COME BACK..."

Most of our girls grew thin and dark like twigs, their eyes grew dim. We still hoped to see the end of that awful war, our years flew by, I was going to be 19! We thought — will all of us see freedom, will many of us die here, in the strange land like many others had? Many girls that came with us to Germany will never see their Ukraine or their relatives. We buried them. It was not useless to exchange our addresses — we let their people in the Ukraine know about the death of their daughter or sister. It was a sad duty but we did it. The winter of 1942-1943 was very sad for us, there seemed

no way out, we lost the hope to come back home. We considered many propositions — one of them was to cut wire and escape from the camp to work for "bauern".

The spring of 1943 came. We remembered how the girls who had been doing some job in the village, used to bring some food the previous summer, especially vegetables with many vitamins in them. Girls used to say that there were many humane Germans among peasants, both young and old. They did not call our girls swine, just on the contrary, they even made friends among our girls, and used to invite them to come again to work on free days. By that time we had already learnt German, we learnt to speak it, it was not very difficult as I, for example, knew German grammar from school. Our girls liked to work for German farmers. It sometimes happened that German farmers asked permission from our camp administration to hire some girls for field work. On Sundays, Germans arrived in their trucks and took girls to their villages to work. There was a lot to do — harvesting haricot beans, or pears, or weeding. But they gave us decent food.

It often happened that girls hired by farmers did not return to the camp, they usually hid in the rye field, spent the night there, then leaving their hiding-place, they wandered from village, changed their names and asked people to hire them for some permanent work. However difficult village labour was (they had to clear up manure, to milk cows, to clean the stables, etc.), the food was sufficient, they could eat amply and have enough milk.

Could our girls dream of anything better than country work? No, they could not. There were eggs and butter; and there was no plant stink.

My step-sister Maria escaped from the camp, and so did my cousin Marusya Kunets. But Marusya did not go to work to a farmer, she moved eastward, some 50 kilometers from Lyubeck, near the city of Shverin, in Brandenburg, in the present German Democratic Republic. She worked as a waitress at a restaurant. Anyuta Shapoval, my neighbour back at home, was well-established at a kind farmer's whose farmstead was not far from our camp, about 3 kilometers away. We often went to see her on Sundays. She helped many of us; but not to overuse her kindness, we agreed to visit her in turn. Anyuta gave us something to eat, besides she gave us some sausage or boiled meat to the camp. She used to hide everything she had prepared for us deep in the straw on Saturdays. In our turn being grateful to Anyuta and her host, we often helped them in the field or about the farmstead. Seeing our helpfulness, Anyuta's farmer did not object to her receiving guests on Sundays.

We carried bundles full of food, coming back from Anyuta's place. To escape our ward, we approached the camp on the opposite side, passed our bundles to the other girls and went through the check-post with empty hands. Being asked where we were, we usually answered:

went for a walk to breathe fresh air in the pine-wood.

My step-sister Maria, as I had already mentioned, followed my advice and escaped from the camp. She was hesitating long, she was afraid of being caught and punished, and terror paralyzed her will. But one day there was an occasion: girls from the camp were hired to harvest green peas. It was my day off. They took about 50 girls in trucks, my sister Maria and me including. I stayed with girls at night, and Zina was on duty. At night Maria, knowing that they were going to the farm, told me she had made up her mind to run away. She decided to do it by all means, she said, she would never change her mind. She said she would change her surname, but would leave her name Maria unchanged. If she found a good place, she would let me know at once.

So we went to the village to pick peas and I was constantly thinking about Maria's escape. She was nervous, I believe. When we had a chance, we took some peas for our girls in the camp. At last the work was finished, the farmer collected us, tried to count us, but not very thoroughly. Is everyone here? — Yes, was the answer. So we left.

He brought us to the camp, we left the trucks, he put us in charge of a policeman and thanked him for good workers. The policeman told him he could hire girls again. We run to our barracks, washed and made a sort of "tea". Some girls sang awhile and then fell asleep. Our faces were weather-beaten with fresh warm air, the sun and the wind. We slept well as we were tired.

It is clear, Maria did not come back to the camp with us; it could be done only due to the fact that they did not count workers thoroughly. So morning came, we woke up and were escorted to work. I also got up as I was to come to the hospital at 7. I dressed quickly, put on my white apron and went to work. Wardmen knew me well, so they did not even ask for my pass.

Coming to the hospital, I went to greet my little patients, my pets, as there are such people in each community, I embraced the girl whom I called "daughter" as I loved her like my own child. She was small, obedient and much cleaner than the rest. You should not wonder that we had pets among children, there was the whole cluster of them, children were different, you cannot love everybody. This does not mean we neglected other children, by no means. This was just like a family: fathers or mothers might love one of their children better, than the rest of them.

Zina also had a girl whom she liked best, she took her to her lap more often, petted her; the girl enjoyed it, feeling somebody's love.

As I have already told you, among children (our patients), there were some whose mothers worked at the plant; these mothers besought us to look after their children as best as we could. I even promised one of the mothers that I should pay more attention to her baby, I should change his diapers more often for him not to lie

wet. So the mother of the baby, though I could not do too much for him, gave me nice shoes and a dress.

We well knew those mothers who came to see their children on Sundays. They were generally nice, kind women from West Ukraine. They often invited one of us, nurses, to walk in the wood, we made photos there. I liked those girls. They enjoyed more freedom, they were not "OST-girls", their passes were marked "U". They also invited me to their barrack, I used to tell them about my fate, about famine we had gone through, about collective farms and dekulakization (deprivation of wealthy peasants, "kulaks", of their property). They listened attentively, sympathizing with me, as there were many orphans among them, whose fathers went to the front or became partisans. I also told them about my sister Maria whom I had lost as well as the idea to find her sometime, because all my documents including Maria's address which I had received from Aunt Nadya, my mother's sister, had been burnt to ashes when our previous barrack was bombed.

Girls from Galytchyna told me their life-stories, I learnt from them there were many mixed Ukrainian-Polish families, that those girls never ceased hoping to find their families. They promised to invite me to Lviv after the war, the capital of Galytchyna. They also told me they had lived under Polish rule before the war of 1939. Many things they told me about were new and interesting to me.

They tried to console me, but my heart ached. I recalled my Father, his usual question — Where are you going again? — each time I was going to leave home. I answered that he should not worry, I should be able to settle my problems. In fact, I was; but I could never forget constant terror, famine, exile of the elderly Shcherbakhas with their families, the death of our relatives. And now I was in Germany, my life was far from sweet. I prayed to God to give me strength enough to go through torture, to stand it.

I often cried in my life, both at home and over here. Nobody has ever asked me — why are you crying, are you hungry, do you feel pain? I had to keep everything to myself, to soothe my pains and to cope with my problems. It seems I was constantly assisted by God Almighty, He was always with me, flying over me. I met lots of kind people through out my life, they helped me like kind angels, giving me something like to a birdie. Such was my life. Here, too, in a strange country I met many kind people, among Germans, too: it is due to them that I managed to go through captivity and separation from my relatives.

After some time I got letter from a certain Maria Vyshnya. I understood at once that it was my step-sister Maria. I tore the envelope quickly and began reading as I was eager to know where she was. After she had escaped, I worried about her lest she should get into trouble. However, it turned out that she got on well, she lived not far from our camp, about 3 kilometers away. Maria wrote she worked for a kind baucer (a farmer in Canada). Maria gave me a detailed plan of her village, inviting me to see her on Saturday

and to have dinner with her, so I had to come before dinner-time.

When Saturday came, I took a girl-friend with me and we went to the village where Maria lived. The summer was quite warm, I entered the village wearing my white apron, but later I took it off, remaining in a dress. We went fast as we were full of strength in the morning, not tired. When we came to the farm they were just going to sit down to dinner. Maria warned the farmer about our possible arrival, he did not object. Maria introduced us to the host and his workers.

So we sat down to dinner, about ten people all in all. Until now I remember the smell of boiled potatoes. How sweet it was! Meat with gravy were tasty too, which were served with potato by the hostess. I had never eaten anything of the sort in Germany! I appreciated Maria's hostess as a very good cook. They did not make any distinction at dinner — whether you were a member of the family or a worker. Everybody was equal. There were Ukrainian and Polish workers — fellows and girls.

After dinner we washed up and cleaned the table together with the hostess. I felt very easy wondering how much I could eat, how I could find space for all that food. In due time we went to look at the farmstead. It was very large, with fine barns, stables, cowsheds and pigsties. Everything was clean and neat. When we had a chance, Maria showed me a heap of straw where she had hidden food for me to take it to the camp. There were sausage, lard, and home-made bread.

Maria told me she lived well with those farmers. At first though, she said, her hands were aching as she had to milk 16 cows, her hands were swelling. But she got used to the job, and everything was all right.

Maria told me, Anyuta Shapovalova lived not far from her, in the neighbouring village, they knew everything about each other. I told her we also knew about Anyuta and visited her in turn, she helped us giving us some food. On Sundays Anyuta even gave us milk poured into bottles. We shared whatever Anyuta or Maria could give us between ourselves in the camp.

My friend and I went to see Maria on Saturday, but we felt so at ease and the hosts were so kind that we even stayed overnight. They gave us down blankets to cover, they proved too hot to sleep under, we slept uncovered, the blankets lying aside.

We came back to the camp in the morning, carrying whatever Maria had given us in the bundles. They were passed across the fence to our girls and we went through the check-post as usual. Our passes were not even checked as we were allowed to leave the camp from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. freely. By that time our ward had grown milder, they stopped shouting at us. We thought, perhaps something was wrong at the front, they were retreating not "tactically" (as they put it).

We shared everything honestly. The girls even managed to boil soup with fried onions. The smell welled all over the camp, everybody felt happy. In general, we loved and respected those girls

who, putting their lives at stake, escaped from the camp and helped us with food. We were also grateful to those girls who went to work for farmers and brought us some vegetables. All this helped us to overcome the lack of food as we got very little from the canteen, with few calories.

At that time I began to think of visiting my cousin Marusya Kunets. She was a daughter of my Father's sister and my closest relative here. I knew where she lived and that she worked as a waitress in Shverin.

AMONG PEOPLE

As I have already mentioned I had girl-friends among Ukrainian girls from West Ukraine. I loved them, and they loved me, too. We felt easy talking together. One of them, Maria by name, too (how many of them Marias and Mariykas in the Ukraine!) had a several months-old son Mikola. I did not know the district she came from, neither did I know about the child's father, I was not curious. So she brought her Mikola to our hospital. You could not live with your children or husband in the camp. Family life was banned in the camps. The barracks were unsuitable for families to live in, they were like primitive military barracks.

We made friend with Maria from Galytchyna, spoke much about our lives. We spoke mainly in private, for Germans not to overhear our complaints. It was horrible time, even worse than at the beginning of the war, even the Germans were afraid of Hitler service-men, like gestapo, SS, Kripo, etc.

We kept alert not to be caught by Hitlerite companions, as working at the factory, our girls tried to spoil something, to inflict damage to Hitlerites, they used to pour sand into cartridges or something else. Maria and I were also afraid of being arrested like some other girls who were suspected of inflicting damages, they were tortured.

Generally speaking, suffering losses at the front and sensing underground activities everywhere, Germans grew more and more suspicious.

It was to Mariyka that I confessed of going to see Marusya in Shverin, but was afraid to be caught up, when I took off the OST-mark. We "OST-girls" were not allowed to buy tickets for the train or to go far away. Maria from Galytchyna suggested that I took her pass which was marked "U". She somehow broke the plastic cover of her pass, pulled out her photo and inserted mine. It looked fine, you could not spot that it was not my pass at first sight. And you needed your document, i.e. the pass, in Germany each moment! Wherever you go, Germans asked you: "Ausweis". They never asked the names, as they could hardly pronounced them, only "Ausweis" as there was the owner's photo on it. Mariyka gave me her pass

with my photo, and I promised to look after her Mikola the best I could. She only warned me to say that, I had found it and put my photo inside, if I had been caught with that pass.

Mariyka's fears were justifiable. If Gestapo had caught a girl with false documents, she could be sent to a concentration camp or even executed.

Hitlerites did not make fun of it. And getting into Gestapo you could not even dream of an escape or to be forgiven.

I was happy in my hope to see my cousine Marusya Kunets in Shverin. I did not tell anybody about it, I didn't boast. A short time before my visit I got a letter from my syster on Father's side, Shura. She wrote that not only my step-mother but my father, too, had died when the village was bombed. It was not true, in the end of ends, I am not sure, perhaps Shura wrote not in exactly such words or may be she confused the facts, at least Father did not died, he was alive. But I did not know it at that time, I cried bitterly and sobbed, I did not want to live. At the hospital they sympathized with me and asked me questions. When I told them about my misfortune, they started soothing me, but I could not pull myself together. Shura asked me to come back home to look after Mitya and herself, but how could I go, I was not free to do it, I could not even leave the camp or go to the city, when I wished to. What could I do? Shura was only 11, Mitya only 9, they were little and dependent.

Again the senior nurse Liza and nurse Helen took pity of me. Helen took me out to the city to divert me from my sad thoughts. So we wandered looking here and there and returned to the camp at midnight. Hellen told at the check-post that I had been with her, that she was responsible for me. The talk at the check-post was short, Germans had nothing against it, they exchanged "Gute nacht" with Hellen and I went to my barrack thanking Hellen for her kindness.

I went to bed, but there was no sleep, I imagined my brother and sister whom I had not seen for two years. I could not sleep a wink till morning.

In the morning I asked senior nurse Liza to give me 2 days off to have a rest. Knowing about my grief, she did not object. I took my false pass and went to the railway station. I produced the pass, paid money, and bought a ticket to Shverin. I had no difficulty with my pass with a "U" Mark on it. It is not a long way from Lybeck to Shverin, so 2 hours later I came to my destination and at noon I found the restaurant where Marusya worked.

She introduced me to the restaurant master and he gave a day off to Maria till evening. So we had a fine dinner at the same restaurant and went out to the city with Marusya. Shverin is an ancient German city, the capital of Brandenburg, it is very beautiful, its houses are as if painted in the picture, the streets are narrow, it is very clean and orderly, there was no haste, no laughter heard. Walking along the city, I told Marusya the news, especially about

the tragedy in our village and in my family.

I spent the night in a small room rented by Marusya. Lying in bed, we spoke long, thinking what would happen to us. It was known that Germans were retreating at all fronts, though it was not pronounced out loud in Germany. At last we fell asleep, tired.

In the morning we had breakfast in Marusya's room and she saw me off to the railway station. I did not worry about the ticket, as I had bought a there-and-back ticket. I said Good-bye to Marusya who invited me to come again, and I promised I would if I had a chance. Nobody asked my pass, I quietly entered the car and soon the train started.

Returning to the camp, I went to the hospital at once, talked to my girl-friends, but I did not confess of having been to Shverin. It was the time, during the whole war, when you did not have to trust even your closest friends as someone could overhear you. We had to remember that though some of our supervisors behaved in a humane way with us, we were not sure this would continue long, as German women were not sure of their future either, they could be sacked from work even for associating with "OST-girls" outside their work. And we, new slaves, had to remember all the time about our position, that we had not finished our education, had no diplomas, that we were forced to work, though we, Zina and I, worked at the hospital. Now we work here, and tomorrow we might be ordered to go to the factory to do hard and dirty or even dangerous work.

I had a day off, as yesterday I went to Shverin; and came back today. I went to the canteen, had dinner together with my friends, we felt sad. Our sadness led nowhere, the reality was hard and unshaken, and depended on Germans completely, on Hitlerites to be more exact.

In the morning I went to the hospital, I had a good rest, let Zina have it now, as she was on duty while I was away.

Senior nurse gave Zina 2 days off too, provided I worked instead of her, i.e. stood my duty and hers, like she worked for me. Zina was happy, she told me she would go to see the Polish fellow, an acquaintance of hers whom she tenderly called "Reddy". He cared for her, she often visited him, having a rest there as he did not live in the camp but at a private apartment. Zina's Pole worked at the butcher's, so Zina was happy that she was not hungry like her girl-friends who worked at the factory and had to live on food they received at the canteen or get some vegetables when they went to the village for field work.

Before she was brought to Germany Zina Nikishina lived in the town of Polog, not far from our village, so she was a sort of neighbour to me. We worked in harmony together, never letting each other down.

So Zina went to see her Reddy and I substituted for her, working day and night. It was an exhausting piece of work, there were very many children, I hardly managed my duties, and I was

dying to sleep. The worst period was before morning, the brain nearly stopped functioning as though turning into stone. I had to overcome it not to fall asleep as if you fell asleep, it would be hopeless. But if you overcame that worst period, everything went well. However sometimes I took a nap feeding a child, but the child used to wake me up, fidgeting or crying.

This kind of work was not difficult for me but exhausting. Perhaps not the work itself but life and consciousness that there was no perspective ahead, no future. We were completely within the will of the invaders of the Ukraine. That is why often excited by our situation with no way out, we used to invent a bit of hope, composing songs about our "liberators". These songs were not highly artistic, we only expressed our feelings in them. I remember a song "You, liberator", should remember that your time will arrive. Red heroes will come to Berlin, they will take revenge for us".

We did not know at the time that Stalinist regime declared us "traitors of the Motherland". We imagined that when the Red Army arrived, it would liberate us from Hitlerite slavery. In my Foreword to the present memoirs I told you that we, those who were brought to forced labour to Germany, never felt guilty of anything. It was not our fault that Stalinist politics and government caused the situation when instead of beating the invader on his territory, our Army retreated, giving in the whole of the Ukraine within a few months. Historians should correctly appreciate the situation in which 5 hundred thousand young Ukrainians — girls chiefly — found themselves in German slavery. Was I, a school-girl of 16 who had gone through famine, guilty that Zaporizhzhya region was invaded by the German army and later German administration? I think I was not guilty of that, but Stalin first and foremost. I shall not discuss the reasons for the misfortunes of the Red Army in the first war year, it is not my business but I know that ordinary soldiers, though they could hardly admire the system introduced by Stalin, though they could hardly forget their hungry years, though they lived poor lives under constant terror of being arrested or exiled or executed, they still fought honestly and were no cowards, as far as I know. In fact, they fought neither for Stalin's regime, nor for Stalin himself, they fought for their native land, for their relatives — wives, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. It was not their fault that the Soviet leaders proved untalented, that the Army was disorganized, that there was chaos everywhere. Stalin himself grew numb after German assault, regaining his speech in about 10 days. Meanwhile German hordes moved forward, occupying the Ukrainian territory; many of our soldiers were imprisoned or encircled. How many of them died of cold or hunger? Again soldiers were guilty if, after imprisonment, they saved their lives by some miracle and were tried as traitors of their Motherland. It was Stalin who was to be tried for those prisoners and for us, brought to Germany by force, for our crippled lives, for our wasted youth. But no, Stalin has not been

tried, it was we who were called traitors and were swarmed at by Stalinist political agitators. But I shall take up this problem further on.

MY "COUNTRY-GIRL"

Time went on, I was still working at the hospital, visiting my step-sister Maria and Anyuta, too. I received a letter from my cousin Marusya Kunets saying that she was going to move closer to the Ukraine, to her home. I did not know any of her acquaintances or how she could leave Shverin to move to the Polish territory, or how I should understand her words "closer to her home". In about 6 months, after I had first visited Marusya in Shverin, I asked senior nurse Liza to give me two days off. She did not refuse me. So I could go.

I well knew the way to Shverin, so I easily bought the ticket having a pass marked "U". I arrived in Shverin, went to the familiar restaurant but its owner told me that Marusya did not live there, she had left Shverin. I felt pity that I hadn't written a letter before coming there to make sure that Marusya was in. The more so, I had to do it as Marusya hinted she was going to leave for the East, closer to her home. So she left without warning me about it. I had nothing to do but to return to Lyubeck, to my camp.

The way there and back brought no trouble, though sometimes heavy bombing of German territory was heard, some bombs falling not far away, but the train went safe.

Next day when I came to work, I went up to the second floor where there was a room in which we kept our white coats. I had put on my coat when one of our hospital cleaners came in. She glanced at the wardrobe and noticed my false pass. Amazed, she asked me where I had taken a pass with "U"-letter and my own photo. I told her it was none of her business.

I could not imagine that the moment our Ukrainian girl who had also been brought to Germany for forced labour, a cleaner, saw my false pass would be of such great importance in my life, would cause such pain to me. Instead of keeping silence, she went to the Lagerführer and denounced me. She simply told him that I, an "OST-girl", had a pass marked "U", which was not mine.

Though I could not foresee that my "country-girl" would denounce me, a sort of presentiment prompted me to pull my photo out of the pass. Hardly had I done it, when the Lagerführer burst in and asking me no questions began beating me with his rubber stick, calling me swine. He beat me hard, then he left and I remained there horrified that they would send me to a concentration camp.

Beaten heavily, I went down and told Zina everything, she advised me to run away as they could send me to jail for life. She told me she would take up my work for no one to learn that I was out.

I put on my jacket and apron and went to another hospital

building pretending I was going to see a patient. I crossed the road, took off my apron and ran towards the station where I easily bought a ticket to Shverin. The cashier did not ask my pass, so everything was all right. I had no false pass on me, the Lagerführer had taken it. In haste I took the wrong train and went in the opposite direction. We arrived at some station, the guard crying out — change the train. I did not understand what to do. Two Frenchmen were passing by, they wore uniforms and I asked them which train went to Shverin. They showed me and went in the same direction.

As soon as we entered the train, Gestapo-men came in. It was an unexpected ticket control. I was asked: "Ausweis". They stared at me, I was nearly paralyzed with terror. I told them I was going to Shverin to see my cousin, Maria Kunets by name. They asked my name. I said I was Maria Sinishina. They turned out to be no fools, they had already learnt about my escape from the camp, they were just looking for me. I did not manage to fool them.

Those Germans led me to another car while the train was going to Shverin. I heard bombs falling not far away, either Shverin or some other city was being bombarded. I was arrested and taken to the police that was situated not far from the railway station.

They led me in and started writing the record, asking my name and whereabouts. I lied that I had lagged behind my group, that I had been taken from my home, etc. But Germans had already known everything about me, they had been warned about my escape. Each case of escape from a camp was reported to SS and police, so they were looking for me. Many girls and fellows tried to escape from camps at that time to avoid hunger, though they never tried to run home but rather to a farm. Hearing my lies, Germans did not even care to prove that I was lying. One of them rose and ordered me to follow him. He took me to the tenth floor where they temporarily kept arrested those who were in fault. He opened the door and pushed me in. I found myself in the ward lit with a small electric lamp.

The ward was not vacant, there were four girls inside, I was the fifth. The girls had black wooden blankets which they spread on the floor and lay down to keep warm. It was stuffy in the ward, no fresh air coming in. There was a small window high above. The smell of human perspiration and stink — this is what I remembered best. It was no wonder, it was a jail; who knows how many people had gone through it before I arrived.

I thought — how long shall I have to sit in this stinky ward? Before long, the girls got up and spoke to me in Ukrainian, asking my name. I sat down beside them and said I came from Lyubeck — Brandenbaum camp. They told me about themselves and so we were sitting there, having lost hope for freedom.

Soon another girl was pushed into our ward. By that time the four girls had received their food for supper, I was given nothing as I was not on the list yet. I was arrested on Friday in the afternoon, so

I was afraid they would give me nothing to eat for the next three days, as Germans had "Ordnung" everywhere (i. e. order), so they did not work on Saturdays. A sixth girl arrived. My stomach demanded food, but the new girl did not look hungry or tired, she looked quite fresh.

The girl said her name was Olya, we told her our names. We could not imagine that Olya worked as an interpreter for Germans. But I shall speak about it later on. We tried to sleep, covering ourselves with dirty blankets.

I was hungry and could not sleep. Not only hunger bored me, my body was aching of blows inflicted by the Lagerführer's rubber stick. I was afraid of my future. It was a troublesome night. In the morning a policeman came, unlocked the door and took us to the lavatory that was near by, in the corridor. We washed and were again locked in the ward. In a few minutes the door was opened again and we received breakfast — a piece of bread with cheese and a mug of hot water for each of us. The bread was brown, baked out of flour mixed with ground chestnuts and sawdust, ordinary wooden sawdust. Cheese reminded of chalk rather than a milk product. But what could be done: I ate my breakfast, and soon my stomach was swelling, I felt gastric burning. My stomach could not digest this sort of food. The girls sympathized with me, they even gave me their hot water to reduce burning.

ANOTHER "COUNTRY-GIRL"

Olya was staying with us, also giving me her portion of hot water. She talked about herself, her past, telling us that she worked with a doctor. We also told her our surnames and where we came from. I even confessed of having given the wrong name for the record and I also told her that my real name was Antonina Khelemendyk. Could I think that she worked for Germans, as an interpreter in the police, and as it turned out later not only as an interpreter but as a spy?

So Saturday passed. For dinner we had something awful instead of soup and some porridge, a piece of bread and a mug of black coffee, as black as soot. After dinner (though not tasty but warm) we were allowed to go to the lavatory, and once again in the evening. It was a chance to refresh ourselves a bit.

In the evening we lay down to sleep, though no sleep came to us, the girls began telling tales, even trying to joke to distract our sad thoughts. We got accustomed to each other, knowing a lot about our neighbours — where we came from, our names and what kind of work we did on arriving in Germany. We even promised to meet one day if we got out of jail, as there is no chance for two mountains to meet, while people might do so.

On Monday morning, after we attended the lavatory we were

given breakfast that did not differ much from previous meals — brown bread, cheese and hot water. We were on alert — which of us will be first called for inquiry? We heard somebody walk along the corridor; the door opened. A policeman came in, he called Olya first. She was glad that she went first, we suspected nothing, but about 10 minutes later she ran in together with the policeman and told us she was free to go to her working place at the doctor's, that he had come to fetch her. So she said good-bye and left.

In a while the four girls whom I had found in the ward were summoned. They were two sisters and two their friends. They went and I was left alone. I sat shivering with terror rather than with cold.

Soon the policeman came to call me. It was the same SS-policeman. I put on my jacket quickly and followed him. He led me I did not guess where. At last we came to a door. In the room there sat a Gestapo-officer who began the inquiry.

After his very first questions I understood that Olya, a doctor's assistant, had told them everything. He repeated everything I had confided to Olya. I began crying that Olya had betrayed me. There was no choice for me — I had to tell the truth. I told him that my Lagerführer had beaten me with his rubber stick, I produced my bruises on the shoulders. I said he had beaten me for finding a pass, and it was not a crime. I ran away because he had beaten me.

However, I did not betray my friend that had given me her pass with the "U" mark, neither did I confess of going to Shverin twice using that pass.

It looked I should manage to get out of the situation, the policeman said if I had told them everything on Friday, they would have let me go, but now I deserved a penalty — I had to stay a month in jail, and after that I had to go to a penalty-camp in Lyubeck — Shlyutopp. The Gestapo-officer told me that even Germans guilty of some fault, served their terms in the penalty-camp. It was a law in Germany, he said.

After the inquiry, I was sent to the same ward, but now I stayed there all alone. I was given food twice a day and taken to the lavatory thrice. I stayed there a few days. After that several girls were brought in who had to serve their month's penalties for escapes, too.

So there were several of us now. We had already been punished, so we weren't afraid of another "Olya". We spoke freely about ourselves, our native lands, feeling sorrow for our Ukraine, our relatives. Each of us described her village as if it were the best in the whole world. It was after each of us had gone through famine and tortures, if not our own, then our relatives'. We grew sad, trying to sleep as long as possible, as we had nothing to do. During the whole month we had not had a bath, so no wonder that we developed lice. There was only cold water in the lavatory, we had no chance to wash properly. We even agreed between ourselves that it was a part of our penalty: the dirt and the lice, for our escapes. A month

is not a very long time, but when each second of the month lice sucked your blood, it might seem eternity.

Time was flying. The war went on. We heard bomb blasts, Shverin or its outskirts were bombarded. Bombs were not thrown with great precision, so we were afraid for our lives. Who would like to end his life in jail, far from his native land?

The ward was half empty, the worst time was night when bombs were heard near by. It often happened that I cried out to be allowed to run and hide from bombs. But who cared? Jail ward were accustomed to it, they had gone through the front, they used to play cards or sleep at night. Will they pay attention to the Ukrainian girl's crying, the girl that is kept in the ward, frightened and lonely? No, they won't, they are indifferent to her fate.

Sometimes the following things happened in jail: I sit still and feel some invisible person sitting beside me and whispering — sleep, girlie, sleep, close your tired eyes, don't be sad, don't cry, you won't die of hunger, you are protected by your angel, he will guard you and give you strength for you to overcome it all, be patient.

I heard this whisper, it entertained me, and I felt better and calmer. Sometimes I whispered: Christ! Be merciful to me, I am still young, I want to live, give me strength!

Many sleepless nights went by. Appeal to God calmed me, gave me strength healed my soul. After that I fell soundly asleep.

And morning brought daily routine the lavatory, a piece of brown bread, hot water, low-grade cheese as if containing chalk. I ate all this, my stomach swelling, but I had to avoid hunger.

In jail I often recollected my Mother whom I did not remember, I imagined she was far away. I knew Mother was not alive but I felt sure her soul was with me. She must have heard my sobs. There were souls of all other girls' Mothers with us, the orphan-girls who cried like myself, both in childhood and now, in the strange land, in German slavery. We saw no happiness in childhood or in youth. How many blossoming lives have Hitlerites brought to Germany? How many children have they separated from their parents, taking them to Germany? How many of them died on the way? And their parents dreamt of their little ones for years and years. This was our fate, the fate of slaves!

SLAVISH FATE

My jail term was coming to an end. The month seemed a year to me. I was nearly eaten alive by lice, I was exhausted by scanty food. We were summoned by a policeman — three girls and I. A German farmer was waiting for us, he needed hands to pick potatoes in the field for the canteen of "OST", or "U", or "R" workers.

We were glad that we did not have to go to the penalty-camp

at once. The German promised the policeman to fetch us to the penalty-camp after harvesting. He signed some papers, put down our surnames and took us away in his small truck.

It was not far from Shverin. When we arrived in his farmstead, his wife invited us to the house and gave us hot water to wash. After that we dined and went to the field. We picked potatoes walking behind the machine that dug them out with its long cogs and left them on the ground. We worked till sunset when the German said it was enough.

Coming home, the hostess gave us hot water to have a good wash, our hair in particular. She might have known that we had lice, so she gave us oil to spread it over the hair. She advised us to keep the hair oiled for 30 minutes to kill lice. After that we washed it again and felt much better, fresh and as though born anew. We felt the oil smell for three days, but it was no trouble at all.

We spent 3 days in the farm picking potatoes. We had fine food and felt revived. After we had finished work, our hostess gave each of us half a loaf of bread, a piece of self-made sausage, and the farmer took us to the penalty-camp in Lyubeck — Shlyutopp.

It was getting dark when we arrived there. They did not bother with us, locking each in a separate ward with no windows. There was a wooden bed with no mattress, or blanket, or pillow. So we stayed there.

One day in autumn, when the nights were cool, we were digging potatoes. How could we sleep after the day's work? We were chilled to the bones. All night long I walked from corner to corner, though you could hardly call it walking as there was no space enough, so I rather trampled on the same place. Not to go mad I started my prayers asking God not to let me die of cold, inviting morning which could bring warmth.

At 7 in the morning a policeman came and unlocked our wooden wards letting us to go to the lavatory, then he locked us again — not a single word about our future. Again sad thoughts, trembling with cold and uncertainty, fear of being beaten again. I was afraid of it, my body ached almost the whole month since I had been beaten by the Lagerführer. I could never forget it or forget my fear.

About 9 o'clock a Gestapo-officer came and ordered to get us out. We were let out, one by one, like dangerous criminals. But we were not beaten. We were told we should go to work to a fish factory. They also reminded us of being in a penalty-camp, so they would not bother with us, each breach of discipline would be mercilessly punished.

After that short speech we were taken to a women's barrack not far from the factory. We were shown the place where we should stay during the following five months, where we should come after the working day at the factory. For breakfast we received only a piece of bread, and some soup for dinner. We were left there and went to sleep on straw as nobody remained to give orders. So we, i. e. three girls and I, had slept till workers from the factory returned.

All the workers stood in queue for supper, brought from a Polish or French canteen. We also stood in queue, I was the first, the 3 girls behind me. I looked around to ask something of the girls when I saw a familiar face. I looked attentively and saw a very good acquaintance of mine from Lyubeck camp, Zina Stadnik. I was glad to see my friend, it would be easier for me to overcome penalty-camp conditions and work. Zina was amazed as she did not in the least expect to find me there.

Taking our food, potatoes with some gravy, we sat down to have supper all together. I could not identify the meat of which the gravy was cooked, Germans could give us horse-flesh or something else that people never used. We were happy to fill our stomachs with anything, whatever it could be. After supper we went to our barrack.

We got acquainted with other girls who served their penalty in the camp, asking about their native parts and the camps in which they worked in Germany. Zina asked me to go to sleep beside her. We talked long about our adventures. We slept side by side upon old straw which produced a lot of dust if touched.

I was glad I had a friend beside me, so the night did not seem horrible and cold. In the morning we were woken up and ordered to go to the fish factory which stood by the canal, not far from our camp. Zina did not go to the factory as some other girls and she worked at a big shop where they cleaned the floor, did the shop, and packed goods. I liked to go to the factory. I knew that filling tins with ready-to-serve fish you could have something to eat, at least dipping fingers in sauce and licking them.

Here I am at the factory. We worked on the conveyer line, watched by the ward, policemen who had rubber sticks, fiddling with them, like children. We were afraid of those sticks, I especially, remembering how I had been beaten with such a stick. When a policeman would wave his stick, I used to shiver and feel pain in my back that remained from previous beating, my back still ached.

Returning to the barrack, we continued our endless talks of our miserable fate, the fate of slaves of the Third Reich! We had never had rich life at home, we had gone through famine, we had no proper clothes. We were sad about our youth that gave us no joy. Germans came, took us away half-dressed, drove us in goods cars, treating us like cattle. We were convoyed even to our work. True, there were humane people among Germans but they were few. We felt shy, and they saw we were poor, having no clothes. We wore wooden-soled shoes — this was a chance to humiliate us. When you walked in those shoes, you were heard from afar. Germans recognized foreigners by the sound which reminded the sound of horse-shoes in the road.

I hardly slept a wink the night after my first working day at the factory. I was thin and exhausted with undernourishment, I was afraid I should not stand five months in the penalty-camp. Again I turned to

God, I prayed asking him to give me strength, patience, and courage. I tried not to lose heart, not to give way, not to stop fighting. Otherwise, there was no way out, I knew it watching life in the camp.

Lying on the straw, I thought I was not alone, that there were many people like me. We were all collected under one roof, all of us were united by similar fate. In the morning we shall again be convoyed to work like dangerous criminals. Our only fault was desire to run away from the camp to find some easier work, perhaps not much easier, but the one for which they would give us more food.

THOUGHTS TRAVEL INTO THE PAST

Lying upon the straw, I recollected my Uncle Ivan Mikisor, who lived in the town of Orikhiv, Zaporizhzhya region. He told me when I studied at the medical school in Orikhiv how his parents and he faced famine in 1932-33, and before that his father had been dekulakized. I was only 5 or 7 at the time when this tragedy fell upon them. He was a young fellow at the time. When authorities came, he ran away to avoid Siberia. He ran away without saying good-bye to his friends.

At that time, he continued, even schoolchildren, taught by their teachers, denounced people who aroused suspicion. There were lots of people that following their own interests started to help Stalinist regime and denounced people to village Soviets or other officials.

The Uncle had to go to the Caucasus, farther from home, from his native village. He had no documents, so he had to change jobs not to be arrested. He went from place to place like a frightened rabbit. And his parents were deprived of their house and thrown into stables whence horses were taken to the collective farm. The old Mikisor fell ill. There was no food, no means. They lived like cattle. His old wife put him in the gutter laying it with straw, fed him little by little, giving him water to drink. He got worse and worse, the worst could be expected at any moment.

My Uncle Ivan Mikisor gave them news of himself through some people. From time to time he met his mother in Orikhiv where she used to come. He also brought now a loaf of bread, now something else to save the old people.

Once Uncle Ivan got a note from his mother which said — come back, son, father is dying. The son arrived but did not find his father alive, his son's miserable help could not save him.

The old Mikisor was buried without much ceremony, no priest, no coffin. He was put in a pit dug in the bushes, and that was all. The relatives cried secretly, his wife most of all, saying — "Heaven with you, end has come to your landish torture."

It was true, people were not afraid of death, it was often better to die rather than stand torture and outrage. Why? The old Mikisor had his own piece of land, not much, a few hectares, and his own

lous. Everything he had -- each brick and every bench in the house -- were earned by him and his wife through hardest labour. All of them, the whole family, worked hard to get everything necessary in the household. Under Stalinist regime everything was confiscated, they were thrown to the stables in which he suffered for a few years, in those gutter which served him as a bed he died.

After his father's death, Uncle Ivan decided to stay with his mother. To live in the village my Uncle had to go to the collective farm. In the collective farm, the Uncle was known as Jack-of-all-trades, so he was not refused, and was given work in the team in the village of Preobrazhenka. During his wanderings in the Caucasus, the Uncle learnt many trades, he had also worked as a driver, they wanted people like him in the repair teams. My Uncle's friend P. Budko, promised to get him a driver's job but this required a special permission from the collective farm head. That very Budko wrote a note to the head saying that Ivan Mikisor was a very good driver, that he had already accepted him to his job, so let them register him as a driver. The head of the collective farm agreed and the uncle began working in the settlement of Robotivka.

Though they boiled some soup in the collective farm, people were hungry. It often happened that people gave the soup to their children thus saving them, and went to work hungry, not a single crumb of bread or anything else. They could hardly move, the Uncle told me, like shadows, their feet swollen; the ankles of some women cracked, some liquid oozing out. These collective farmers were destined to die, like the old Mikisor. Our people were dying, it was no tale, it was cruel reality, for which Stalin was solely guilty together with his assistants, the so-called "companions". In this way, Stalinist regime solved political problems of extinguishing kulaks (rich peasants) as a class and introducing collective-farm system all over the country. The newspapers declared that peasants went to collective farms at their own will and with great joy. People were not considered people, they were treated like cattle.

Uncle Ivan had a comrade, they were of the same age born in 1903. One day the Uncle saw a man riding a cart. It was driven by a single horse, they were often used at the time by the heads of the collective farms or team leaders. So the man was riding a cart, but when he came closer he turned out to be my Uncle's friend. He made a sort of career, being one of the leaders, taking part in depriving kulaks of their property. So the former Uncle's friend asks -- what do you do here? The Uncle said he worked as a driver. The man glanced with suspicion, said nothing and left.

Soon the Uncle learnt that the collective farm was giving some aid to old people who starved. The Uncle came to his village and asked his mother whether she was given any flour. No, his mother said, they gave me nothing as we were former kulaks, we and the like are given nothing. The Uncle got angry, went to the collective

farm administration and asked — why did not you give my mother flour, she is old and starving and I am a collective farmer, too?

The head told him — No, you are not a collective farmer, you are the son of the enemy of our people, we hired you because we needed you, but you will for ever remain enemy of the people.

The Uncle was angry and decided to leave the collective farm and to go to Donbass, to the mines. Everybody knew that they hired runaways in Donbass, as they needed coal. So he hoped to settle there. There was no chance to continue living in the village.

Though famine was devastating villages, the authorities went on exiling those who did not want to go to collective farms.

They were exiled together with little children, even one-day babies, in spite of the danger of their death with cold.

I was told about it by my Uncle Ivan Mikisor in Orikhiv. He spoke in detail, giving names. So let his story which I remembered, testify about that awful period, that fell upon Ukrainian villages in early thirties.

Uncle Ivan is the husband of my Mother's sister.

IN THE PENALTY-CAMP

From the recollections of my Uncle Ivan's story I returned to ruthless reality in the penalty-camp. In the morning the policeman woke us, we got up quickly like soldiers, washed our faces, feeling bitter in the mouth, and went to the window through which we received our food — a portion of bread for the whole day, but hot water was given at work, at the factory. We munched our bread quickly, remaining absolutely hungry. But it was a penalty-camp, we had no one to complain to.

We went in column, policemen in both sides, to our work. The policemen shouted at us like at cattle, as though we were deaf. But we even ministered them secretly to relief ourselves. Dogs followed policemen. The dogs barked like policemen with no reason at all. It turned out, the policemen and their dogs were of the same breed. These dogs were trained to catch runaways.

Having tried to work at German factories, our fellows and girls risked to escape to get job at some farm more and more often. They escaped though they were not strong enough to run quickly. But to escape from a penalty-camp was not easy. The camp had a high wire fence surrounded by a canal, so only those who could swim well managed to run away, but those who could not did not even think of it.

I worked at the fish-factory. In the morning the camp ward brought us to the factory entrusting us to factory policemen and went back to watch those who worked in the night shift. To be caught up by SS policemen meant to be beaten or even a concentration camp for an attempt to escape.

At work, as I had already mentioned, we were thoroughly

watched by policemen for us not to eat fish which we packed in tins. Starved, I was eager to swallow a fish or a morsel of it. We were warned that we should be beaten for stealing. Each policeman had a rubber stick. It grew more and more difficult to keep from having some sauce at least; you had to fight the desire to swallow a bit of fish.



Three "OST-girls" — Tonya, Nina and Nadya. 1942. We managed to crawl through wire, taking off our "OST" marks and make this snap-shot. We took risks, but we were eager to breathe a bit of free air.

It was very hot in my working place, they brewed tomato sauce with sour-cream for tinned fish. So we drank a lot of water, I drank a big mug at a gulp. There welled such a nice smell of spices that our mouth dried. We used water stored in a barrel. It was used only by workers, neither policemen, nor foremen drank it.

After work we washed our hands, especially after herring and went to the barrack. We lined in a column and went with convoy. The way from the barrack to the factory and back was our only walk, which we enjoyed as it meant fresh air and motion of people

around. People, but not slaves. Our camp policemen came to take us to the camp, their dogs beside them. They were not afraid of our escapes, as it was utterly impossible under such conditions when the dogs were there.

Each time we were brought to the factory they counted all the workers. Sometimes they missed a person or two, counted again and again and found everybody in place.

Again the barrack, a queue for supper. Our stomachs sticked to our backs. We got hungry watching herring prepared for canning, swelling the fine smell of spices and sauce. It was an additional penalty. It looked like putting water in front of a thirsty person and forbidding him to touch the glass.

Our meals, as I had already mentioned, were brought from French or Polish barracks. It was due to this fact that the gravy tasted well which accompanied potatoes which was our daily food. Perhaps it tasted well because we were hungry, though I remember we liked it, licking our fingers.

After supper we went to the barrack, lying on the straw. In spite of being exhausted and starved, sometimes our youth took the upper hand and we began joking. Jokes at long-term prisoners helped them to survive. Those who took their fate too tragically were often defeated, but those who joked out their misfortunes were more resistant to torture. Though unaware of this theory, we made jokes lying on the straw. It made time flow faster.

At midnight the policemen used to check us, searching every corner, and went to their room, sitting in their soft arm-chairs and discussing war news. And the dogs watched, lying by and glancing at their masters. In the morning when it seemed we had just fell asleep, they woke us blowing their whistles.

There were different people even among policemen. Some often treated us horribly, like cattle, others were more humane. We used to hasten time when the worse team was on duty to see a better team next day. Those better policemen gave us somewhat larger pieces of bread in the morning, perhaps they tried to divide it more thoroughly, and those from a worse team gave us smaller pieces of bread. Whatever remained, they brought home and fed their pigs with it. We learnt it later.

Day after day passed, going to work in the morning, the whole day at the factory, coming back to the barrack in the evening. Weeks passed, time flew, we counted how much longer we should stay in the penalty-camp.

We did not work on Saturdays, we were allowed to sleep longer, lying on straw to while away the time, our strongest desire was to leave the place. Life went like in a dream, no joys, no hope. When we had time we washed our clothes and linen. We washed clothes in cold water, hanging it on strings in the yard to dry it. Our clothes tore so we had to darn them. Not each of us had needles

and thread, but we helped each other. My friend Zina Stadnik that worked in the shop sometimes gave us thread which she could bring to the barrack. So did her friends who worked there. They wound thread on some paper and hid it under their clothes. Our childhood practice from the collective farm to steal and not consider it immoral proved of great use. Stealing from Germans, we recollected some events associated with stealing in the collective farm — who brought home wheat in specially made long inside pockets, or sunflower seeds, or corn. We had been saving ourselves from hunger then, and now we are saving ourselves both from hunger and from going half-naked.

Oh, how many things I went through in Germany! I got another illness in the penalty-camp. Either through undernourishment, or because we ate anything we could set our hands on (it might have been far from sterile), I developed intestinal worms. They occur in people and animals. Thus, we were not only given little food in the penalty-camp, but that food was sucked out by worms as though I were sharing food with them. They exhausted me immensely, I grew thin. What I describe here spoke of the fact that Germans never observed sanitary regulations at the factory that produced food — tinned fish. It is certain that workers dealing with foodstuffs should be tested by medical inspection; lab assistants should test their excrement to avoid parasites; blood should also be tested to avoid infection. There was nothing of the kind; having intestinal worms, I continued working at the production of tins intended for the German army. They said at the time there was not enough food in the German army, there were often irregularities in food supply due to which large military formations starved. I could only guess that Germans robbed the population as they had occupied our land.

The Gestapo-officer was right when he told me the penalty-camp was no joke. Discipline was ensured by terror. For the least fault you were put into the cell. Thus, as soon as we heard policemen whistles, we got up quickly, rushed to the lavatory, washed ourselves with cold water and ran to the yard, the Appelplatz. We fell in line, stood still and ran to the window for our portions of bread at a command. Those who fell a bit behind were beaten with policemen stick. Who is not afraid of beating with a stick? We were tender girls, exhausted and thin, but those who used their sticks were huge men, always malicious, always shouting at us out loud as though we were a kilometer away from them. I was afraid of the stick, so I ran feeling I could fall at any moment and never get up again.

You heard people sighing: Good Lord! Help me! Why this punishment?

You had to run again from the window to fall in line to be conveyed to work. We, penalty-campers, worked not only at the fish factory but at some other enterprises, so on the way to work a group or two left the column. We were twenty workers from the fish factory. After we took a turn towards our factory, we were

allowed to talk to each other. We could also exchange a word or two as though speaking of some current necessity. Talks were forbidden, policemen watched us closely.

IT NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS

Coming to the factory we took our usual working places, some scaled fish, some stewed sauce for cans, some packed fish into tins. Our mouths oozed, we could have swallowed the fish we were packing, it looked tasty. Stealthily we sometimes tasted it. But those were tiny bits thrown into mouths in horror when you were even afraid to chew what got into your mouth. Those tins were produced according to fine recipes, Germans seemed cultured people doing everything under strict observance of sanitary norms.

But what sort of culture was that if they chiefly shouted at us, young girls, calling us "swine" or "dirty swine", etc.? Who reduced us to conditions under which we found ourselves? Was it our fault that we could not observe the hygiene as we lived in barracks, slept on straw, had no hot water? A good owner keeps his cattle under better conditions, he changes straw litter, cleans his cows or horses. Why should not we develop lice? We were unable to wash our miserable clothes we had. We had no soap, so we scrubbed clothes with sand, thus washing out dirt. And we were called "dirty swine"! Was it real culture?

Once I was scaling herrings, cutting and throwing them into a big pan in which they were boiled or steamed, pulled out then, packed into tins, poured with sauce, some spices added, and rolled up. I could not comprehend the whole process of tinned fish production as I kept to my own operation, having no access to others where only Germans worked.

Intestinal worms caused great trouble, I really felt how they turned inside me, I knew they were sucking me out. Getting my portion of bread, I chewed it thoroughly on the way to the factory. There we received barley coffee, i.e. boiled water with roasted barley. Though we often found barley bran in it, it was pleasant to have it, it smelt of genuine barley. Hot coffee drained down my stomach, it was a comfortable feeling. I think there were some vitamins in coffee, it was made of roasted grain. After coffee I usually felt cheerful and joyful. But this feeling did not last long, in several minutes I felt hungry again, my stomach seething. At such moments I could have eaten anything.

After work we had to do our working places thoroughly, to wash everything. It was autumn, flies were a nuisance; as soon as a door opened they would fly in or through the tiniest chinks. Flies lay eggs on fish, in several minutes we could see something stirring in the place. That's why Germans ordered us to wash everything carefully.

Scaling and cutting herring, I threw heads into a separate pan,

and when it was full up, I carried it to the garbage-can, though it was not exactly the can, merely a place where garbage was piled. So instead of throwing the heads away, I ate some as I was very hungry. I did not scrutinize them whether they were clean or not while they surely contained fly eggs. Coming back to my working place I could work awhile before the whistle announced the shift end. Just then I felt something wrong in my stomach, it swelled, I felt sick. I fell on the floor, crying and twisting with pain. German women ran towards me asking what the matter was. The ward arrived, the women asked him if he saw me eat anything. But he did not know that I had eaten up herring heads which might contain infected fly eggs.

Ambulance was called, I was taken to the hospital, they inserted a rubber tube into my stomach and I vomited. The doctor understood that I had eaten herring heads, I was lucky the doctor was not German but Czech or Slovakian, I'm not sure. He asked me what I had eaten and my name. I told him the truth, I also said I was Ukrainian, I had been hungry and had eaten those miserable heads.

The doctor left and I saw he told something to other doctors. In a few minutes he returned and said he would give me an injection against inside infection. He also told me he would bring me to the camp and tell the Lagerführer I was unable to work a few days.

True, the doctor brought me to our barrack, the hospital attendant put me on the straw, and the doctor gave me a sandwich warning to have it only an hour later. Besides he gave me a bottle of milk with medicine inside, as he told me. I was to drink milk and to have nothing else after that. Saying that, he told me he would attend me in the morning to make an injection and would bring something from his own dinner.

The doctor left and I stayed all alone with my thoughts. It was great that such a good doctor worked there, he was humane. Did he leave his own daughter at home, was he forced to work there? I knew I had poisoned myself with dirty herring heads. I also knew I did not have to eat them. But what could be done when you were hungry, when you felt nice smells, there was food around you, but the ward watched lest you should eat anything? Hunger was perhaps my (or not only my?) fate. At home we had lived through hungry years, and here, in Germany, I starved too. People used to have swollen legs with hunger, and here I ate uncooked herring heads and poisoned myself. Where is the end of all this? When shall we eat enough? Sometimes I thought that I would die in the penalty-camp, that I would never see freedom, the Ukraine, my native village, nor my dear Father. But later hope returned, I believed that the kind doctor would save me.

Being very sick, I began dozing after the injection and did not know when my friend Zina Stadnik from Dnipropetrovsk lay beside me. I heard neither the door slam, nor any other noise. I slept the whole night long without waking.

In the morning, after the importunate policeman whistle, the

girls rushed to the lavatory and to the yard to take their portions of bread. Lying a few moments longer, I tried to get up and go to the lavatory. I washed and thought I felt a bit better. But my feet were uncertain, trembling and bending. I could hardly reach my place and lie down on the straw again. I felt like sleeping again. Because of the injection, I thought. Again I thought about the kind doctor. I knew all the doctors should be kind to their patients. Doctor is not merely a profession but a vocation. Neither a doctor, nor a medical nurse should do any harm to a patient, they should never differentiate between patients as to their origin, religion or race. A doctor or nurse doing their duty should endure a lot of things witnessing pain, wounds, or even death. I myself, when I worked at the hospital among children many of whom were ill, did not ask whether they were Ukrainian, Polish, Byelorussian or Russian. Each had to be taken care of. I had learnt essentials of a medical nurse behaviour since school, I had covered half the programme at the medical school. The war did not give me a chance to acquire a profession which I was eager to pursue all my life. The war and Germans made me lie on the straw in the penalty-camp, seeing no future for myself.

What could I expect of Germans if they were executing Jews solely for their nationality? I did not know anything about "Mein Kampf", a theoretical work by Adolf Hitler, according to which Jews were to be exterminated, followed by Slavs, Ukrainian, first of all, whose lands should be inhabited by German Landknechte. At first, Ukrainians should have served as slaves, but when they were of no use, unable to work, they should have followed Jews. No wonder that German SS-policemen or Gestapo-officers treated us like cattle. They were good pupils of their leader, Adolf Hitler.

Have there been any doctors or medical assistants among those Germans who executed or ordered to execute Jews in Berdyansk and in other towns of the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia or West Europe, wherever the German foot stepped? I think, there were, there had to be as each military unit had to include doctors and assistants. Why didn't they protest? Was it at the same reason as teachers and culture people under Stalin's regime? Was it terror that shut their mouths? I think, it was. They saw, like I did, how Germans brought all the Jews in Berdyansk, ordered them, old and young, fathers and mothers, their little and teenager children to strip of their clothes, to stand naked along the ditch to be shot a moment later. It was horrible, it was atrocity. In the same words we may qualify events much spoken of in the Soviet Union now — mass executions in Kuropaty in Byelorussia and in Katyn, a wood near Kiev where NKVD killed thousands, hundreds of thousands of innocent people. They were executed without trial or inquiry. Such were these regimes — Hitler's and Stalin's.

After the war I read about mass extermination of Jews and people of the other nationalities, including Ukrainians, in death camps where

prisoners choked in specially constructed chambers where their corpses were burnt, where there was no place to bury them.

It was a sort of madness. Germans killed people as though they themselves were guaranteed from death. They killed people like cattle. They say everybody has consciousness. I don't believe it. Those who adored their wives at home, petted their own children, but easily killed someone's wives and children an hour later have not a morsel of consciousness. A man with consciousness could not do that.

Since ancient times people have shown respect towards the deceased. It has been a common practice since Roman times to speak only well of the dead. What did Germans, or to be more exact Hitlerites, do? Only Hitlerites, as not the whole German people grew callous, conniving the atrocities done by SS, Gestapo and other special institutions, subordinate to Nazi machine. Hitlerites piled people into carts, or barrows, or stretchers and dug them in ordinary pits. These were pits because those burial places could hardly be called graves. Or otherwise they burnt corpse in crematorium ovens.

Hitlerites could not hide their atrocities from the public. However, first they did not care to hide it, they thought they were invincible, they would invade the whole world, and victors are not to blame.

Honest men were compelled to work for those degenerates, like the doctor, a Czech or a Slovakian who treated me after my poisoning with herring heads. He looked upon me as an ordinary innocent Ukrainian girl. He helped me. He did like honest people do, unlike "my country-girl" that denounced me to the Lagerführer with my false pass; like Olya did who worked for German police.

You should not wonder reading the present memories that lying in the barrack I pondered on the things I had described above. A person facing death thinks about different things. The ward came, saying the doctor had come to the camp, he was talking to our Lagerführer in the ward room. I guessed he was talking about my illness, that I had to keep to "bed" a few days (lying upon a straw, at least). I think he asked them not to punish me for eating herring heads as I had been hungry — a hungry person is unable to keep from eating food in front of him.

After he had talked to the Gestapo-officer, i. e. our Lagerführer, the doctor attended me, greeting me like a human-being, saying "good-morning", asking about my health. He made another injection. I can only guess that it was penicillin. After that he gave me two sandwiches, a bottle of milk with medicine and a bottle of currant syrup to support me, to restore blood. The doctor told me it had to last me the whole day, warning to have nothing more to eat; he said he would attend me in the morning together with his wife who would bring me some easy handwork — to darn stockings and socks.

I thanked him and he left for the hospital in which he worked.

I AM GETTING BETTER

Lying in the barrack, I heard the creak of boots. Only Gestapo-men wore such creaking boots. I listened attentively and saw that really an officer was approaching, the Lagerführer.

He stopped beside me and asked how I felt. I was astonished that Gestapo-man addressed me in a kind way. It was the result of the doctor's talk to him I thought. Though the doctor was Czech or Slovakian, he must have been a good specialist if he was so highly reputed by Gestapo-officers. Well, power was power, but health was above it, everyone cared about himself or his relatives. Maybe the doctor treated that officer, too? He announced that I was to have a rest, to stay out of work for 2 weeks. But will Germans let me remain idle? No, they won't. I made sure of it at once. The German told me he would come again at 9. 30 in the morning together with his "Frau", she would bring me socks and stockings to be darned. He must have taken my doctor's example and thought of giving me work. Germans were neat, they adored cleanliness, why should they wear undarned socks? It was difficult to buy new ones, the war manifested itself even in such trifles as buying socks or stockings.

The Gestapo-officer left, and I was glad I would stay away from the factory for 2 weeks. The day passed. The girls arrived from work, each snatching her basin and rushing to the canteen. There was noise among the girls, demanding their soup, to have some hot food for their stomachs. A ward stood by the pan demanding order. He threatened with his stick fiddling and waving it like a toy. Sometimes he struck a girl with it as if jokingly. He would strike on the back and laugh. A girl would twist of pain. There was no fault on her part, simply for fun.

I thought it was worth giving my portion to any of the girls while I had to abstain from camp food, for her to eat. But on the second thought I did not dare being afraid of the ward, they knew I was not to eat their food on that day. So they could beat me, I was afraid. I did not take the soup. Zina agreed with my decision when I told her of my hesitation.

This is how the German ward treated us, penalty-campers. We were "Ausländer", "dirty swine" for them. Following the doctor's advice, I ate nothing but what he brought to me. Being almost a medical assistant, I knew I had to follow doctor's directions to recover. And I was eager to recover, to go through that camp, to live, to see freedom.

In the evening the girls were in their places, sitting on the straw. As usual somebody sang sad songs quietly, somebody joked, somebody cried, being soothed and consoled by others, saying: "Wait, it won't last for ever, we shall be released from the camp, we shall be able to go to a farm on Saturday and Sunday to earn something." Farmers were chiefly kind people, giving us good food, and we worked hard in our turn. We were accustomed to work,

especially work in the field. Back at home in spring and in summer though we went to school, we spent many days in the fields helping our parents or weeding our own kitchen gardens.

We would have been glad to go to German farmers, meanwhile recollecting the past. Some recollected their mothers. I would also like to imagine her, but I did not remember her. We were about eighteen, we were grown up girls and could have been mothers ourselves. We well understood how painful it was for mothers to separate from their children when we were taken away to Germany. Oh, if only our mothers knew how much we suffered, how we slept on dirty straw! Many of our mothers lost not only us, taken away to Germany. The majority of our mothers remained alone with little or teenager children when we were going to Germany. Their husbands had been either arrested when kulaks were being exiled under Yezhov's regime, or enlisted to the army, or had run away before German invasion. The more so the mothers suffered. Arresting their husbands, NKVD did not care about lonely women left with little children, just like Hitlerites did not care about our mothers taking us away to German slavery from our native villages. Why was our Ukraine so misfortunate? Why is it governed by the forces that do not promote the will of Ukrainian peasants, or workers, or intelligentsia? They were oppressed by Stalinist companions, now they are oppressed by Hitlerites. We cannot live in peace to work for ourselves, however poor, but with no stick over our heads, no menace of being arrested, or exiled, or taken away for forced work.

Hitler, much like Stalin, deceived his subjects, promising them the space of Ukrainian steppes, Ukrainian black earth to settle on it, to live like masters, and we, Ukrainians, had to be their slaves. Germans believed their Führer, believed that they were a superior race, that they were allowed to exterminate Jews, to have Slavs as slaves. They really took a liking to the Ukrainian land that could feed half the world. But for their defeats at the East front, they would start arriving in the Ukraine together with their wives and children. The children of those degenerates might have been shooting Ukrainian slaves like they did it in Hitlerite death camps.

Fortunately, Germans suffered defeat at the East front. But there arose another problem. What will Stalinist regime do to those who had not evacuated in due time, who remained on their land under German government? What is going on upon the liberated territories? We could not guess it.

Many girls must have thought the same, like myself, when we were lying upon dirty straw, sleepless.

After injections and dietic food that I had due to the doctor, I started to recover. I was sure it was my angel who saved me.

I started to think again and again about God, religion, insight, and life after death. At school we haven't been taught prayers, just on the contrary, we were instructed to despise everybody who did

not share materialistic outlook, to despise believers who went to church or prayed. Especially priests were mocked at, they were called parasites. Antireligious propaganda as far as I remember was weak. A Russian poet and satirist Demyan Bedny joined it deserving a mocking rhyme:

*Demyan Bedny
Muzhik vredny.*

(Demyan Bedny is a notorious man).

It was he who wrote a poem which I remembered: "No bother with priests or kulaks — thrust a bayonet into their bellies." If you think about this verse, the "poet" called to murder kulaks and priests! To kill with no trial — "a bayonet into their bellies!", stab them like Germans are doing now. In this way Stalinists regime was fighting against the church and faith in God.

Though school taught us there was no God, praising Stalin and his regime and though I was not convinced of it, I was glad to study. I knew that for centuries, peasants had been uneducated, they could not sign their name. This was the result of continuous national and social oppression of the Ukrainian people who once had been almost completely literate. People had worked on their land, growing plants and cattle, following their parents' experience, the latter having learnt from their parents in their turn. Agricultural knowledge had not been wide-spread, peasants had not been using the achievements of agronomy.

So their harvests were much poorer than in West Europe, especially in Holland. People need education, everybody needs it, peasants too. Before the revolution, there had been a common idea that peasants did not need education, it was not necessary to be able to write and read to look after cattle. But it was not true. How often was a peasant taken in because he was illiterate! But that was not the whole story; new technology of growing grain, vegetables and cattle was to be introduced. I saw it in German farms, where everybody was educated.

What was planted in our kitchengardens? Only potatoes, onion, garlic, cucumbers, haricot beans, reddishes and peas. Did many people grow tomatoes, lettuce, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts or spinach? No, nobody knew them. These vegetables had been unknown to our parents or grandparents. Nobody could read somewhere and learn that you needed not only carrots, potatoes, etc. for health, but many other vegetable species.

Our people were not dull or stupid, they lacked education. My step-mother, for example. I thought she could do everything to keep the house, to look after cattle and kitchengarden, she could weave and spin and sew. But she was illiterate. If she were literate, if she could read, if she had access to agricultural and other literature, she must have experimented much, though time did not promote experiments, everything was being decided by those "who made no

mistakes" somewhere in Moscow. My step-mother having finished courses for the illiterate learnt to sign her name only.

The Soviet power, however much I disliked it under Stalinist regime gave me and many others a chance to study free of charge, scholarships being paid to students. I must acknowledge that. What would I do in Germany if I were illiterate? I could write in Ukrainian and in Russian, and knew Latin alphabet, learning German. All this helped me in my hard life, I was not blind, being able to read the name of the city or a street or an establishment.

I pondered over it, sitting in the camp and darning stockings and socks brought by the doctor's and the GESTAPO-officer's wives. I was doing it glad that I did not have to go to the factory or to sit idle. Those women giving me the work brought me something to eat to accumulate strength. They also gave me some clothes they did not want — a dress, or a shirt, or a blouse, or shoes. I felt much better recovering my health and seeing I had something to wear, to cover my sinful body.

When the doctor came to give me the last injection for blood inflammation, he told me I could eat the food from the camp canteen, he also said he would ask the Lagerführer not to send me to the fish factory but to give me some job in the camp. I was certainly very grateful to the doctor and thanked him for his care, for the measures he had taken, for returning me to life.

WORK AT THE CANTEEN

I thought — what kind of work will the Lagerführer give me if he satisfied the doctor's request to leave me working in the camp? I could find no answer. At about 10 the Lagerführer came. He asked me about my health, I answered, then he told me the doctor had stood up for me asking him to leave me in the camp. He was silent for some minutes and then told me to go to the camp office, he would give his orders there. The Lagerführer went and I followed him. Over there he let me sit in an arm-chair and spoke officially that I should not go to the fish factory, that I should work in the canteen where I was to cut and butter bread. This work had been done by policemen on duty before. Besides, I was to distribute food brought for our campers from a Polish or a French camp.

I could not but be glad to see such a change in my situation. I shall work dealing with bread, soup, potatoes, sauce, etc. I shall not starve. The Lagerführer told me I could eat as much as I wanted in the canteen, warning me though that I did not have to make difference between workers giving them what was due to them, not more than that.

I shall again take up the necessity to study. After primary 7 years schooling, I studied at the medical school where we were taught German grammar in particular.

It helped me a lot, I learnt to speak German very quickly,

much quicker than many girls. That is why the Lagerführer speaking about my appointment to work in the canteen, told me I should act as an interpreter because he could not understand the language of the campers when they explained something.

Being appointed to the new job, I well knew that the Lagerführer, though he did me good, was a GESTAPO-officer, he spoke very officially to me. It was no wonder, it was part of their breeding, when doing somebody good, they remained ruthless.

So I had to take for granted his words when he warned me that if I gave workers more food than was due, he would shoot me.

I began working in the canteen, cutting bread, pouring soup, giving potatoes with sauce. I was behind the window, the girls with their basins standing in queue. I was so sorry for those girls, their portions being tiny, and they were hungry. But what could I do? I was dressed better than they. I was ashamed of my position, ashamed that I was not hungry, that I was dressed better.

The Lagerführer ordered the ward-policemen not to interfere with food distribution. It was good in itself as they would not loom by the pans, would not wave their rubber sticks and beat for fun. I was appointed to work in the canteen, besides I had to do a lot of work there — wash up after meals, wash the pans to be sent for new food. Though ward-men did not interfere, they watched me, my hands especially. They watched me not to give anybody extra food. So when I was giving out food, my hands were trembling and face burning. I was afraid if there would be enough food for everybody, as I had to feed 150 campers, most of them our girls, my friend Zina Stadnik among them. Zina Stadnik was not the one to keep her mouth shut, she even quarreled with wardmen. They called her "the notorious blonde" and threatened to beat her.

When I finished my first distribution of food, my hands trembled, the face was red. But each had her portion, there remained a bit of soup in the pan, about 4 unpeeled potatoes and almost a basin of sauce. I had it for supper. Such was my work in the canteen, after meals I washed up, scratching out what remained on the pan walls. I ate it, too.

Day after day passed, I even put on some weight. I got accustomed to the new job. The time was passing. I was to leave the penalty-camp soon, where girls worked under severe conditions, absolutely unpaid. This was the fate of new slaves — to work for the benefit of Germany. How many people like us worked free of charge for Germans? How many "Ausländer" be suffering far from their homes, far from their native land?

EAR-RINGS

Germans are cultured and clean people. There was only one drawback with them: they exterminated hundreds of thousands of

people, having used their slavish labour. Those hundreds of thousands were adding into millions of innocent victims. We saw lots of executed, shot, and working by force with our own eyes! And we have been told about many more! But it was not the whole story, there were lots of victims whom we had not seen or heard of. We could only imagine great losses of people, they ached in our hearts, independent of whether they were our countrymen, or Jews, or Poles, or Russians, or anybody else. This was the function of Hitlerites, of their special formations. I best remember SS-policemen. They were arrogant, holding their chins up, a rubber stick in hand, a pistol on the belt, a dog by the side. He would walk, watching out, his dog with him. If the policeman sat in the room, or at the restaurant, or on a bench, in the yard, his dog would lie by his side expecting orders. These dogs were trained to attack and strangle people.

Policemen lived their own life, and we, penalty-campers, ours. Once a friend of mine who worked at the shop brought home 2 pairs of ear-rings which were called "Kulchiks" in some parts of the Ukraine. She was unpacking goods in the shop brought from a wholesale storehouse, ear-rings among them. She could not keep from taking 2 pairs, hiding them. It was an ordinary theft, not of food-stuffs but of luxury goods. The ear-rings were not intended for us, German slaves, they were intended for German women to decorate themselves to attract their fellows and husbands.

At that time almost everything was sold on special cards for goods, for foodstuffs, for clothes, etc. in Germany. Ear-rings were also sold on cards to Germans exclusively. All over Germany and occupied countries you could see signs "Nur für Deutsche" — for Germans only. Germans wanted to ration food, and clothes, and footwear till the end of the war, so they sold everything on cards consoling themselves by the idea, that they would relax as soon as they won the war. They were sure of it even after the defeat of von Paulus Army near Stalingrad.

Turning back to those miserable ear-rings. My friend brought them and gave one pair to me, praying me to tell nobody in the world about them. I promised and pricked her ears in the evening. In a few days the ears healed. I did the same to myself, looking into the window glass. My ears also healed quickly. Window glasses served us as a mirror as we were forbidden to have real ones in the penalty-camp.

Was it our fault that we had done it? We were young, each trying to look attractive, neat; ear-rings had been popular back at home, too. Our mothers used to prick their little girls' ears inserting chiefly silver ear-rings. Everybody wanted to have their children most beautiful.

We were eager to dress well, not to wear those penalty-camp uniforms, miserable dresses, and wooden-soled shoes, the so-called "Holtzschuhe". Such clothes made us look poor, everybody recognized us not as ordinary girls, but people brought to Germany for forced labour. We had been caught like mice, we enjoyed no

rights, had no protection. This was our fate, much like our fathers and grandfathers!

Did our mothers want such fate for us? Our mothers especially loved their daughters dressing them the best they could, children wore the best clean clothes, mothers used to embroider their shirts, bought beautiful waist coats and ribbons for them. This had been long ago, but under Stalinist regime neither my coevals nor I had anything of the sort.

Mothers did not care much about decorating their girls' clothes; surviving was the only desire, overcoming famine. The girls of my generation, thus did not have much joy in their childhood. Later we were separated from our mothers, at the time when we were to study, meet our fellows, walk and sing songs. More than one mother would have enjoyed her daughter's singing, hearing it from round the corner of the house.

The German regime differed little from Stalinist one, often being still more cruel. We did not see any good under this regime. Is it natural for a young girl working daily to be unable to buy tiny silver ear-rings? They were not very expensive, but they were no trifle for an eighteen-years old girl — an important thing that had reduced my girl-friend. Was she to blame for the theft? Should she have hesitated? No, I think. She was not to blame like me, when I had eaten herring heads. Cruel Hitlerite regime was to blame, that had crippled our youth. Although the theft of the ear-rings had never been discovered, our consciousness suffered a lot.

What was left for us under such conditions? We used to console each other that soon the war would end, our sufferings would come to an end, too, we should go to our native Ukraine, to our villages, to our fathers, sisters, and brothers.

Hope is a great force. Due to hope, people survived and were expecting changes; hope helped to live, to resist sorrow and despair. We dreamt of freedom, we should return to our villages, we should either resume our studies or work in the collective farm, together with our relatives, in our native country. Hope was something to console the weak, who thought of a suicide, who did not want to live. We tried to reason with ourselves — there is nothing eternal but God, everything goes past and changes, so our slavery will come to an end. The more so, we heard of German defeats at the front more and more often. Hitler's hopes of "Blitzkrieg" did not come true, he had not finished war by the autumn of 1941. Although he had invaded the whole of the Ukraine, he was compelled to leave it. This was also our hope that strengthened our hearts. Hope if you think of it is also a Heavenly gift, it is not material, it cannot be measured or weighed, it cannot be perceived by the mind, it is not subject to mathematical rules. It simply exists! Like love which is also a gift of God! If it were not for hope, I would not stay alive, not only me, but hundreds of thousands.

When we were thinking, talking, even joking, hope did not

leave us. It was hope that gave birth to something in my mind for which I should be excused. This is what I thought of and put it down for myself.

ABOUT HOPE

We are Slavs, we are all friends here. We are of Slavic origin, coming from Slavic lands. There are wide vistas there, the orchards blossoming like a snow cover. The springs are magnificent, even the winds being native. We had never been afraid of snowstorms, we had lived on our native land.

We were born there some day, we were great friends back there, like here, too. Though our life was not full of joy and we saw no happiness, it was our native land, unlike here, in the far-away country. We were not destined to share joy with our brothers, we were oppressed by an inhumane regime. But still we remain Slavs, we are united by hope both in happiness and grief.

Our life is hard in German camps. Why can't we live in our native parts? We were and are united by blood relations though we belong to different families.

We might be beaten and oppressed, but no one can prevent us from thinking, no one will steal our hope that one day we, Slavs, will return to our native land.

We saw much grief and spilt many tears. Our souls are innocent, our consciousness is as clean as a tear. God saves us from sins, He won't let us die here. Our star has not fallen yet.

My dear friends Zoya and Stepha! Don't feel sorrow, my dear, we are still young. Though our work is hard, we are stronger than our masters.

Few people might understand us in future, it won't be easy for us to speak. Those who did not suffer will forget about us. But our reality is hard for us, girls of different nationalities. We feel cold, we are hungry, we have to steal sometimes. Everything will pass, the time will come when we shall drink and eat as much as we wish. We shall recollect everything we went through. It won't be a legend for us. We shan't search garbage-pits to find a piece of bread or a peel. The time when we have a potato and some thin soup will pass. Everything goes past. But God!

Some day we shan't have to throw what was left of our meals into garbage-pits where Soviet prisoners would pick it as it had been in my previous camp. They had to do it secretly not to be caught by German ward.

I shall never forget the day when being very hungry, I ate herring heads. (Here I must say that generally when we speak of herring, we mean salt herring, but over there at the fish factory we dealt with raw herring, i.e. ordinary sea fish). At that time, having eaten the heads, I

swelled enormously, I feared it was the end of my life.

In that awful case and many times later, I heard something like a whisper: Don't be afraid, don't lose hope, everything will pass, believe ardently in God, pray to Him. When I fell asleep after the injection I saw a dream, I was tormented by it. At last something shook me, I woke up. It was dark, bombing was heard. Bombs were falling not far from our camp.

I always retain faith in our Jesus Christ in my heart, in His revival, in His might. I make myself remember how much He suffered. Not for His own sins, for the whole humanity. My hope is with Christ-the-Saver. It is hard to live without Christ.

More than once, I am sure of that, Jesus Christ helped me, my faith in Him helped me.

OUR FELLOWS

Our life was so poor and miserable, that it is difficult to imagine it today. Instead of dressing up and decorating ourselves with anything, we looked exhausted and thin, our skin had a greyish-yellow tint. No beauty remained in us, we lost it in hard work in Germany. By the word "we" I mean fellows and girls brought to Germany for forced labour — Ukrainians, Poles, Byelorussians, Russians, Czechs and others. Trousers used to hang on our fellows' hips like on scarecrows, they used to tie them with some rope or hold them with their hands, hardly dragging their feet.

The girls managed somewhat better. They washed their dresses or skirts, and darned their miserable clothes, and combed their hair. Not so with the fellows, they used to fall upon the straw after work and lied there till supper and then stayed in it till next morning. We couldn't notice any jokes as a try to survive, not to obey their fate, among the boys.

We, the girls, tried to bring hope to the hearts of our boys, we helped them to keep spirits. And it was hard for them, very hard. You know, boys' nature made them show their strength, dexterity, courage, endurance to the girls. But they were in slavery. They, young boys, were caught in Ukraine and brought for the forced labour to Germany. That's why they suffered, they who should have shown off before the girls, their sweet hearts. Lack of faith tormented them, they felt shy of their fate. But they weren't guilty that they found themselves there. They couldn't resist to the German terror.

I was a witness of the boys' worries. From time to time, as I've already told, I was called by the chief of the camp to interpret to him excuses of boys who were in fault. They were sometimes caught at some petty larceny and interrogated. They were asked why they had done it. I had to translate correctly because I was afraid that some German who understood our language could have given up that questions or answers were translated false.

Sometimes, when "penals" were brought, the Gestapo men questioned them about their former guilt the very first day. Sometimes a Gestapo man wanted to show his power, I was told to leave the room and the newcomer was beaten. It was very hard to interpret afterwards, I trembled all over and was afraid to look at the beaten boy, because just several minutes ago I heard him crying and moaning through the wall. Then I noticed traces of beating — blood and bruises. I felt pity for these boys but I couldn't help them. Those "penals" who came to our penal camp for the larceny, they never had stolen anything for luxury, but only misery and starvation made them do this. If any of them had stolen a piece of skin or linen from his working-place, that was only done in order to exchange it for a piece of bread.

I had many friends in the camp, they were girls from Western Ukraine. Among them was Zosya, Zofia, she was very kind, helped not only the girls, but also boys, notwithstanding where they come from. There was among us also Stefka from Galychyna. She had a boy-friend from Belgium. He worked at a manufacture and often risked to steal some clothes from here and brought them to Stefka and she shared them with us. She also gave me some clothes that didn't match her.

It was 1944, the Second front had been opened, and we had a hope that the war would end soon at last and we'd be free. We desired to prepare for this day, to get better clothes, to look like girls but not like scarecrows.

We could more often meet our boys and even, as girls, patched up or washed their clothes.

Working in the camp canteen I got acquainted with many boys and girls. They knew me as a person who distributed among them bread, soup, potatoes. When we come to know better of each other, they understood what it depended on that one day they could get more bread than another. It was connected with the fact that different watchmen were on duty in the camp. I'll tell you something of them.

DIFFERENT WATCHMEN

I've already mentioned that there were different watchmen here in the penalty-camp — two of them on one shift were good, and those of the other shift — were ready to eat alive everyone who was punished for escape or larceny or some other fault to administration. The watchmen were on duty in twos. Those better ones, they were not young people, invalid or so. They didn't call us "swine", didn't shout at us. I came to know them better when I worked at the canteen. In the morning and before supper I had to cut bread in pieces and those watchmen helped me on their own will. Also they helped me to give out bread, soup and potatoes in the evening. And if some bread was left after distribution, those watchmen gave it to

our exhausted, emaciated boys. They also gave them soup that was left. They treated me like a human being, even like a girl offended by her fate. They spoke to me in friendly manner, even asked me about my life in Ukraine.

But the two watchmen from other shift were such incorrigible Hitlerites, so full of hatred that it is impossible to describe. Though they didn't interfere in the distribution of food but watched me and saw everything I did. And when some bread was left after distribution I couldn't give it to our boys or girls, nor could I give to them some additional soup or potatoes if some was left in the copper. Those two watchmen behaved as if they waited for something would be left in the canteen. Then they took bread that remained and what was in the copper, put it to a bucket and brought it to their swine. You see, they liked sausages and fat but everything was sold in shops according to the rationing system, so they managed to feed swine themselves.

We knew very well that they liked to live on good food, especially I knew it when I worked in the canteen. They didn't eat what was brought to our camp from Polish or French kitchen, they had sandwiches for lunch brought from home. And when they unwrapped them to eat, such a pleasant smell spread from them that it took my breath away. And, certainly, none of them ever offered me even a piece. I and everyone in the camp were people of lower rate for them who needn't even be spoken to in a human manner.

Looking at those repulsive watchmen I often thought and told my friends that those watchmen wouldn't rule long yet, beat anyone for their amusement, our Army would come to Berlin soon and liberate us from German slavery.

They came to Berlin, that's true. They came even farther up to the Elba. But we hadn't ended being liberated but being humiliated and offended by the Red army political instructors. It was so offensive, unfair, so unhuman that the scientists should deal with it and investigate the reasons of such a treatment of us and our psychological state when such "liberation" came at last. That's why many sons and daughters didn't return to their mothers in Ukraine.

VASYL'KO

I'll return to the events in the penalty-camp. Once a young boy of about eighteen came to the camp. So I supposed he was. He had nice clothes on, his jacket was clean and good-looking, his trousers were "pumps" as they were called in Lvov and still are called now by Galycians. Those were trousers ending with elastic under the knees. I even wondered what was a boy wearing such good clothes doing there, where did he come from to the penalty-camp. And he came in the afternoon, when everyone was at the work. And in the evening he stood in the queue for supper with all the others.

When he came up to the window he whispered to me that he wanted to meet me after supper in the wash-room.

I told myself that this guy had got the right mind that he didn't begin to talk to me right then because the watchman looked at us and we mustn't forget that we were brought there not for entertainment but for hard labour. We often talked among us, girls, that this punishment was not from God but from devil, that only he could contrive such scoffing at people both here at the forced work in Germany and there in our Ukraine and other countries conquered by the Germans.

When that boy spoke to me, the watchman heard it and, though he was one of those better, he shook his finger at him not to speak to me during my work. The watchman also asked me what he wanted and I blushed and answered that he was still hungry and wanted some more food.

Though I was afraid of something and, perhaps, shy, after supper I came to the wash-room and met that boy there who introduced himself as Vasyl'ko, he was also taken for the forced labour but from Galychyna, so he wasn't "OST" but had only the letter "U" and he told me briefly that he worked at a shop and managed to steal two thousand marks from there. He concealed them so well and then managed to take them out and Germans couldn't prove him guilty, lest they would have put him to the concentration camp, but as he was suspected, they sent him to the penalty-camp. So he happened to be here.

From Vasyl'ko's story I recognized him as a smart fellow, who was never at a loss in life, also among Germans. And what he had taken that money, it wasn't a larceny. Though it's written in God's commandments "Don't steal", still it wasn't a larceny as Vasyl'ko explained and I agreed with him, because Germans brought hundreds Ukrainians, Poles, Byelorussians, Russians and others to their "vaterland" and forced them to work there without payment, so if one of those unpaid workers took two thousand marks, was it a larceny? We can't, really, even speak about a larceny in this case. To steal a trifle from the criminal, who stales millions, who mocks at people, is it a sin? No, it isn't!

So Vasyl'ko says that he managed to "pereshvartsovat" those two thousand marks, but he isn't alone in the barracks, there are seventy boys, and he is afraid that someone would steal his money. That's why he wants me, who doesn't go to work at a factory, to hide his marks for a fortnight, and then he would come and take it.

What was I to do? I felt fear of Germans and pity for the boy. And he was handsome, polite, talkative, good-looking. After some hesitation I took the money from him and put it at once into my brassiere to save it better.

I kept that money for a fortnight being all the time afraid that someone would trace me because I'd already had some experience due

to my "country-women" who had betrayed me twice. I kept that money and kept thinking about Vasyl'ko as of the man who gave me money to save and also as of a nice boy. At last, after a fortnight, Vasyl'ko stood again the last in the queue and whispered that he wanted to see me in the wash-room. And again one of better watchmen noticed it and forbade me to talk during my work. I explained to him that Vasyl'ko asked me for an additional piece of bread, that he was hungry.

After I finished to give out the supper, washed spoons and coppers that food was brought in, pulled them to their place and, due to the fact that watchmen went out to listen to the radio, I met Vasyl'ko. I gave him the money back and he confessed to me that at ten o'clock he was going to escape from the camp, that he dared to do it to crawl under the barbed wire and to run away far from the penal camp. I got afraid, I felt pity for Vasyl'ko, what if he would be caught? That's not a joke to escape from the penal camp. I even tried to persuade him not to do it, but he resolutely decided to escape. And with it, so far, ended my acquaintance with Vasyl'ko.

NEWS FROM FRONTS

We had no opportunity to listen to the radio, but the Germans-watchmen who kept eye on us listened to it. I've already mentioned that due to it I had a chance to meet Vasyl'ko. And sometimes I managed to hear something as well, or, rather not to listen to the radio, but to hear the watchmen's reaction to the news. Listening to the news, they more and more often nodded, whispered something to each other or even said loudly — "Mein Gott; mein Gott", that meant — My God! I made a conclusion from it that German's situation on fronts wasn't good and that the front was coming close to Germany. And the watchmen listened to the news as if they had stucked to the radio set.

Also our girls and boys could from the talks among German women learn some facts of the news from the front, the whole situation of German's country, misfortunate for them. And over and over again we heard that son or husband of this or that person returned invalid from the war, more and more often German women dressed in mourning after their husbands and sons who were not long ago stepping across Europe with their sleeves rolled up singing "Haillec, haillyo!"

Hearing it, we also began more and more often to analyze the past, everything we saw, that concerned ourselves and our relations. We saw that after tragic years of Stalin and Yezhov, one terror was changed by another. At the beginning of the war Hitlerites fought as if they performed their usual professional duties, the same they did when they executed all the Jews. We saw and heard how Germans treated our prisoners, they penned them, fenced them in with barbed wire and kept them under skies for weeks, months, in

hunger and cold. And towers and machine-guns stood around and Germans shot from them just if someone moved after the order not to move. One person moved but everyone could be shot. And they were like a flock of sheep, put together. They were so hungry that nibbled the grass. And at the same time the local inhabitants were not allowed to give the prisoners any food. That's why prisoners died not in dozens, but thousands and tens of thousands of them. And it took place, I repeat, in the middle of the twentieth century, when the ideas of humanity were familiar to all the civilized countries.

We spoke in the camp, while listening to the news, about the Jews. German propaganda said that all of them were covetous, false and worth total execution. And some of the campmen began to say that Jews (Galycians called them "zhydy") scoffed at our people as well both in past centuries and recently, during the years of Soviet power, when many of them craved for power. It was told that Jews were false people, that they even had crucified one of them, they had crucified Jesus Christ on Golgotha.

I don't know in what measure such thoughts were influenced by Hitlerite propaganda, what of them were fables, guesses and what was true. At that time nobody told and even knew that Jesus Christ was sentenced to death by the Roman court, that the Jews had no state of their own and it's ascertained yet to what extent Jews are guilty of Jesus Christ's death.

But, notwithstanding all the considerations of the Jews during two thousand years, is it possible to justify their massive execution? It was a real genocide. And what was the fault to mankind of my schoolfriends from Berdyansk, those young, pretty Jewish girls?

Whatever can be said about the fault of this or that nation, I still think that in each nation there are good and bad people, it's impossible to say that all the Jews are bad and all the Ukrainians are good. I had an example myself, when the Ukrainians betrayed me to Germans. It was because of a Ukrainian woman that I got to the penal camp. And Czech (or Slovak), the doctor, helped me, and among Germans also were kind people, as we found out when working at farmers. One mustn't defend the honour of its nation humiliating the others.

MORE ABOUT VASYL'KO

Let's return to that evening when Vasyl'ko escaped from the penal camp. It turned out that he had to stay in our penal camp only till the trial for that larceny. During the fortnight for which he was put to the penal camp, Germans, in particular the shop-owner who Vasyl'ko had stolen money from, hoped to find some evidence of his guilt. In case that the court would not justify Vasyl'ko the capital punishment threatened to him, or, the best, concentration camp. Germans never condoned those who robbed them.

So when Vasyľ'ko came for the money, he confessed to me and told that he had tested that there was no electric current in the wires of fence already, so he would overcome that obstacle, only he was to strain himself to swim the canal unnoticed. He ensured me, on my fears, that he swam well, that, lest nobody noticed him he would swim the canal over. For he was so afraid of the court, he was aware of what waited for him, and, young as he was, wanted neither to die nor to get to the concentration camp, he said, that the shortest way to liberty from it passed through the incinerator of crematory.

Our talk with Vasyľ'ko in the wash-room couldn't last long, because somebody could come in, notice us whispering about something, guess our plans and denunciate to watchmen, in that case all Vasyľ'ko's plans would be ruined and he'd never be free.

So we had to say goodbye. I thought about Vasyľ'ko as of a near one already. And when the time to farewell came, he embraced and kissed me, and I blushed up all over. I don't know what would happen if someone watched me at that moment. I couldn't conceal my confusion. So we parted that evening. It looked like I parted forever with my handsome, darling Vasyľ'ko.

After I parted with Vasyľ'ko I returned to the canteen once more to check if everything was in order, if coppers stayed in their place so that they could be taken tomorrow to the Polish or French camp. And, when returning from the canteen to my barracks, I met Vasyľ'ko waiting for me again. He said that he hadn't informed me about everything. And at that moment a fellow went out of the men's part of barracks and stared at us so that I suspected that he spied on us in order to betray. Of course, a guilty mind is never at ease, each move seemed suspicious to me. And that guy couldn't know anything about Vasyľ'ko's planned escape.

So, when that guy passed by, we whispered some more words to each other and came off, as we were afraid of some suddenness. It was clear that if Vasyľ'ko wanted to speak to me once again, he also was not indifferent to me. And it made me glad. Vasyľ'ko talked to me for a long time.

When I returned to my place I lay quietly near Zina Stadnyk, closed my eyes and began to dream. My dreams were mixed with fear for Vasyľ'ko — would he manage to escape or some misfortune would prevent him? Surely it was his last chance, because in two days the trial was to take place, so he couldn't delay his escape any longer.

When Vasyľ'ko explained his decision to me, he told that the court could sentence him to death, but also could take him, as a Galycian, to Hitler's army and send him to the front where death would certainly wait for him. Vasyľ'ko was not sure of the result of the trial, he didn't know whether the owner had found any evidence against him. They hadn't found the money, that's true, because it was with him, but there could be some other evidence, perhaps, the owner had found a witness, even a false one.

And he, Vasyl'ko, didn't want even in the best case to go to the front line and to fight there and die for Adolph Hitler. He said, that if he was to fight for the free Ukraine, things would be different, he would have gone to Army himself. He, Vasyl'ko, said then, that he would never go to the Red Army, it seemed foreign to him, though many Ukrainians fought in it. This prediction against the Red Army was left since 1939, when he had been a witness of mass arrests in Western Ukraine and exiling of the whole families to Sybir, without any trial, any investigation — whether one was guilty or not, it was enough to be suspected of wrong attitude to the Soviet power, to be taken with all the family at night and exiled. It was done in large scales, and people called it unfair, inhuman.

And Vasyl'ko said that he didn't like Germans either, when they came in 1941. Though he was aware of much better treatment of the Galycians than Ukrainians from Velyka Ukraine, still they weren't fair to Ukrainians.

So spoke eighteen-year-old Vasyl'ko, a common boy from Galychyna, who didn't know the details of Hitler's policy, that joined Galychyna to General Governorship, but the rest of Ukraine including Western Volyn' and Southern Polissya was called "Reichkomissariat Ukraine", that meant a territory equal to colony. But who knew it at that time?

I lied on straw and imagined Vasyl'ko crawling under the barbed wires, coming noiselessly into the water. I even thought that he couldn't undress when coming into water, he had to do this having his clothes on. And I was surprised admired at his courage, he became a hero in my eyes. His shoulders must still ache after beating on the first interrogation that he also mentioned to me. And no, he wasn't afraid of Gestapo, he ran risks to escape, being aware that he wouldn't obtain mercy if caught.

And as that money was concerned, I thought lying on the straw, he had done right because it was difficult to live without money even among the Germans, and with money it was possible even to bribe a Hitlerite.

And he was innocent before God of these two thousand marks he had stolen, he had only paid to himself a small part of what was due to him. Due not only to him, but to all of us. Because we weren't paid anything for our labour.

But what if they caught Vasyl'ko? They would take money from him, sentence him, he'd die and never use what he had stolen. Was he afraid of death? Sure, he was, like any human being.

And if Vasyl'ko wasn't caught, would those two thousand marks last him long? Very soon he would spend them, buying things. But was it necessary to upset that he had no money? We, for instance, don't have any money but live on what Germans give us. After all, a man is born without earthly wealth and when he dies, can't take anything with him. Isn't it God's justice? Even the

inveterate Hitlerites won't avoid death and will have to leave this world whatever great SS or Gestapo-men they were.

Vasyl'ko had done well that he had stolen money from the rich man, he wouldn't grow rich of it but the rich one wouldn't turn poor because of this larceny of two thousands that was a trifle to him.

From my home yet I knew fables about the rich. Such a rich man after his death got to the hell and was boiled there in a copper with pitch, and kept complaining and regretting that he hadn't taken his money with him for he thought he could bribe devils. But the devil is said not to take money after death, he isn't avaricious of it. He only tempts people with it during their life and some of them sell their souls for money.

Vasyl'ko is wiser than that rich man, he, as it was noticed from his behavior, would never grow rich, he needs money to spend it but not to save. He is swimming along the canal now and fish in it can't even suspect that he was a fugitive who wants to escape from Hitlerites. I was sure that Vasyl'ko would manage to swim the canal over, prayed for his success, that he wouldn't be caught.

Thinking about Vasyl'ko I couldn't help thinking about the very essence of life, of the man's fate. I was already for a long time sure that each person had a destiny of his own, each person who is just a little fair had got its angel who prompted him what to do and how to behave, to avoid danger. Angel's advice — that's advice of one's own heart, one's conscience, presentiment. It leads us along this or that way. We aren't able to decide our future with our mind exclusively, people aren't able to draw mathematically the way they go. There is something that can be placed neither in human mind, nor in many centuries experience of mankind. That's something that can't be recognized. That's some unknown force. It exists and can't be rejected.

It forced Vasyl'ko to turn to me to save his money. That force defended both of us. I couldn't betray Vasyl'ko to Hitlerite administration, but there were some among us who could make a denunciation about him. Vasyl'ko didn't know me, he couldn't know who and what I was, that was some invisible force that prompted him to turn to me.

So I lay and couldn't sleep, lay and waited for twelve o'clock when policemen came to check if everyone was in his place and nobody escaped.

I was still awake when I heard the dogs bark. It was a watchman who let the dogs out, that ran, barking, and later returned to his master and whined. I understood that watchmen went to check men's barracks. And, really, in several minutes I heard that someone there was asked, questioned. They had already noticed that Vasyl'ko was absent. They would now start to seek for him. And where is he now? On the other bank of the canal, I was sure.

In a minute that lame watchman who seemed kind, who had his leg wounded probably in the previous war, came to our barracks.

He came in and at once went to Zina who slept and even snored. He pushed her with his stick and cried: "You nasty blonde, get up". I uncovered myself because lay with my head covered and asked watchman what he meant. And he asked Zina: Where is that blond you spoke to? Zina stared at him and didn't know what he meant, but the watchman threatened that he would beat her. Then I asked the watchman what blond he meant, and as if I just recollected, explained to watchman that Zina knew nothing about him, it was me he spoke to when asked for some more food, that was what watchman saw himself. And then that boy left the canteen and went to his barracks, and I went to mine, and Zina was sleeping at that time, so she couldn't have spoken to him.

The watchman believed me and went to the guard-room to telephone somewhere, perhaps he informed about the escape of a worker. And Zina at that time thanked me that I stuck up for her. How could I not intercede for her if I knew that Vasy'l'ko had escaped and she was absolutely innocent, she didn't know anything about him. And the watchman could beat her indeed and later she would have been suspected of assistance to Vasy'l'ko's escape. In such circumstances I couldn't keep silence and put my friend in a danger. She was thankful, though she didn't know that I knew about the escape.

Very strange indeed but there never was too big noise about Vasy'l'ko's escape. We could guess that Germans were unable to chase the fugitives because their armies were approaching German frontiers, they retreated and that caused the relaxation of discipline even in the penalty-camp. Perhaps, the officials whom the watchman telephoned to and informed of the escape, told him to give it up as lost. So it happened that there were no interrogations, no investigation of the case as it used to be.

As I've already mentioned, the discipline in the camp became weaker and weaker, watchmen didn't cavil at us, they turned their noses a bit down. Under those circumstances we, the campmen, began to hold up our heads, and didn't trample just when a watchman appeared.

Zina Stadnyk, that "nasty blonde" as Germans called her, was a friend of mine from the previous camp. As she is concerned in case of Vasy'l'ko's escape and watchman's claims on her, I must tell why she happened to be in this penalty-camp. When we were yet in the previous camp, some worked at the amunition factory and some at other factories. We went to factories in columns, and not from our camp only but from others, for example from the camp of Gotman. The columns were led by policemen and they passed the workers to the overseers who watched us at factories. So one morning Zina joined the marching column of our camp. A policeman noticed her and drew up a report, where he wrote that she, Zina, spent the night out of the camp. That's why she got to the penalty-camp where we met. And there Zina told me that, really,

she didn't pass the night in the camp, that on that Sunday she visited her boy-friend, Ivan Kokot, a Galycian, stayed with him too long and was late for the last tram and had to spend the night at his place. And after the night on Monday morning she joined the column of workers of the camp. Zina was brought to the penalty-camp though she wasn't guilty of any crime, she didn't miss work, wasn't even late, she only spent a night outside the camp because her boy-friend detained her.

At that time, when we worked in the previous camp, we began to work more and more often at farmers, when we learned in what villages kind bayers lived, many of the girls working on their own initiative at the landlords didn't return for the night to the camp, they joined the column in the morning and everything was all right. It even happened that during the week, for days are long in summer, returning from work at the factory, they left the column, went to the farmers, worked there till night, slept there and in the morning joined the others for work. It was helpful for the camp-girls, because, though they had to work for sixteen hours a day, still they ate well at farmers, so they had got more strength.

As it did no harm to the interests of Germans, because workers were not so weak of hunger, Germans didn't pay much attention to it. But Zina, who spent a night outside the camp, was punished. Maybe because she was, as Galycians say "pyskata"*, never held her tongue.

The described practice of visiting the farmers by our girls more and more often caused more frequent escapes from the camp. Girls working at farmers, secretly arranged that some day they would come and stay, with their names changed in order that camp administration didn't cling to those who gave a job to the girls. She was lucky, who managed to do this, for though she worked from sunrise till sunset, but in the open air, in the field as she used to.

But some of them were not successful, camp administration found their trace and the beating seemed indispensable. Not each unsuccessful escape led to the penalty-camp, but in any case, policemen took vengeance on the fugitives. For if someone ran away from the camp, they were guilty and incurred a penalty for the bad service. So the girls were often whipped by them.

Still neither penalty-camp, nor beating could prevent them from trying to run to farmers. Those who escaped usually didn't lose connection with their friends in the camp, they, as I've already described on example of my cousin Anyuta, helped us as they could, they constantly took something from their landlords without their consent, hid it into straw, thatch or so, and those who lived in the camp, picked and refreshed with it. It proves that there was a great

* *Pyskata — chatter-box, woman that always finds what to say.*

solidarity and unselfish aid to each other among the girls.

We could touch here the question of morality of those girls who worked at farmers and stole food from them to give it to their hungry friends. We didn't think of it then, but such a behavior justifies itself. At the distance of time we can speak of it as follows: girls worked for the farmers from sunrise till sunset, their landlords fed them well, even gave them sometimes some clothes. But they, those farmers, never paid for the work. Girls and boys worked for them without payment. So didn't the very instinct of group self-preservation prompt them that nothing immoral was in taking just a bit of their payment in the form of larceny. It was larceny not for amusement but in order to save their friends who also worked for Germans without payment and almost always were hungry. So let the people reading these memoirs not condemn their behavior, not suspect them of ingratitude to their landlords that gave them job and food.

So — our girls stole, as it should be called, and that stealing was absolutely justified. And we didn't have to be taught to steal. Although we weren't taught it at school, but the very life under Stalin's regime taught us. We saw our parents who brought home some stolen wheat or vegetables. And when we were bigger, we went to fields ourselves and took (stole) something if nobody watched us. And it wasn't considered to be immoral in our families, though, as I've already mentioned, in God's commandments it's said: "Don't steal".

After all, if we look at the matter from the point of view of relations between the unpaid worker and taking from the employee a small part of the product, it won't be a larceny but only a partial self-payment, though from the formal side it has all the signs of larceny. So was it in the Soviet Union under Stalin's regime, and the same, even much worse, took place under conditions of forced labour of young people taken out to Germany.

I'll return now to the subject of Vasy'l'ko's escape. The Germans did not worry that one more fellow had run away. But that boy who saw me speaking to Vasy'l'ko the day before, came up to me the next morning in the wash-room, and said that if he wanted, he would say to the people concerned that it was me, but not the "vredna blonda"* spoke to Vasy'l'ko. And I kept thinking about Vasy'l'ko all the time, so I got angry and whispered right to his face "You just try, soon, when our army comes, you'll be the first hanged on a branch! I'll do my best for it!" He got afraid of my threat, because Germans suffered one defeat after another on the fronts.

I must say with bitterness that this boy, born in Poltava, and his friend signed a commitment of cooperation with Germans, not, in fact, of cooperation, for what a cooperation could be between

* *vredna blonda* — nasty blonde.

the omnipotent Hitlerites and slaves taken out for forced labour? Those boys for some benefits unknown to me, committed themselves to spy after their friends and denunciate to watchmen. I came to know it afterwards, but on that day I only started to guess about that Poltaver's services to Hitlerites.

Why does it happen among our people? Why so many Ukrainians helped Stalin's regime to repress their own countrymen? Why did so many Ukrainians curry favours with Hitlerites during the war? I can't understand it, it hurts me. But I don't want to ignore it.

I supposed then that I would never see my dear Vasyly'ko, that fate had joined us together for a very short time. But I had a hope that he wasn't caught by Gestapo. The morning after his escape, as I've already said, there was no noise, only, as if for some formality, some strange Hitlerites brought dogs to barracks, gave them to smell the straw at Vasyly'ko's place, those dogs took the trace, went under barbed wires to the canal. So they didn't do anything besides what watchmen's dogs had done, they also led them to the canal. On the water Vasyly'ko's trace stopped. But the fact that Gestapo men tried to do something in the morning to find Vasyly'ko meant that he didn't fall into their hands, and I was very glad about it. It meant that Vasyly'ko was alive, he hid somewhere, his clothes became dry. And later he wouldn't be lost, he can speak German, he wears nice clothes and has got money in his pocket.

Everything proved that Gestapo didn't pay much attention to his escape, in particular, they didn't provide any investigation or questioning. It was obvious that they began to worry mostly about themselves, and no wonder, because on the fronts German armies are more and more often surrounded, more and more Germans were taken prisoners both in the Eastern and Western fronts.

And we, girls who worked at the amunition factory, were glad that we somehow caused defeats of Germans while pouring sand instead of gun-powder to the cartridges. We imagined that Germans couldn't perform a shot because there was too much sand instead of gun-powder. And they had no time already to provide investigation about such sabotage. I can't tell you in what measure were our thoughts about this petit sabotage true, but they helped us to keep spirits, those thoughts made it easier for us to wait for the end of the war.

We waited for the end of the war, and at the same time we waited for the term of penalty. Everyone waited there when they could leave penalty-camp and be employed by some farmer, to eat well. And waiting for it we continued to work, and on days off we put our place in order, we, particularly, shook up the straw, swept what had been rubbed of it and through the rubbish on the dust-heap, together with fleas. Also on Sundays we washed our clothes, sew them up and mended. We were waiting eagerly for liberation, or rather for discharge from the penalty-camp.

THE END OF THE PENALTY-CAMP

We counted days left to the six months' term of the penalty. We were discharged from the camp not so accurately, Germans didn't keep us there for six months sharp. Together with Zina and another friend of mine, Stefka, we dreamt about leaving the penalty-camp together. We got there also at the same time. Five months had already passed, only two weeks left and we waited with tenseness for the discharge.

I remember that it was Monday, a fine sunny day. After supper we sat on our straw, preparing to go to bed. Suddenly a watchman came with a list in his hand. He looked at me and at others and began to read the names of the girls being free from the penalty-camp. He also read the names: Antonina Khelemendyk, Zina Stadnyk, Stephania Synyshyna. What a joy! We all were to be discharged on Thursday. We began to embrace and kiss each other. At last! At last freedom comes! But was it freedom indeed? That's only discharge from the penalty-camp, and we would get to another camp. Still, our joy was great, because there we weren't able to go to a farmer on Sunday, to work and to eat.

Though I, working at the canteen, was no longer hungry, still I couldn't help thinking about my friends as well. And they continued to go to work at the factory or in the shop.

Three days after that Monday passed quickly and on Thursday we were discharged from the penalty-camp. I and Zina Stadnyk were appointed by Gestapo to the camp Gotman, to "Gotman-lager" as we used to say. The Gestapo man who discharged us said that he didn't send me to the camp I had been before on purpose. I was very glad about it because I didn't want to meet once that lagerführer who had beaten me with gum stick and even had knocked my tooth out.

As I didn't want to come back to the previous camp, I asked the Gestapo-man to let me go there to take my things, in particular my clothes. I hoped that during seven months of my absence in the camp they were safe.

On my request the Gestapo man sent a policeman to the camp Lyubeck — Brandenbaum to go there and take my things from my friend, also Zina, whom I worked with at the hospital. The policeman returned from there without anything. Later I came to know that as I was absent for a long time, girls had shared all my things and they were already worn out, only Zina kept my plastic coat, but she also wore it. I wasn't surprised because I was absent from the camp for seven months and the clothes I left there weren't new, they were rather bad and no wonder that they had been worn out already. When I found out that I didn't have got anything, I cried a bit and that's all. I had almost nothing but those clothes I had on when I came out of the penalty-camp.

I've already told here about the girls' solidarity and how they helped each other. So it was that time. My friend Stefka had a boy-friend, a Belgian, who had a possibility to get some ladies'

clothes. And she, that Steffsya, gave me and other girls many clothes to wear and all of it only due to that Belgian. She even came to my new camp "Getman-lager" with that Belgian, usually on Saturdays or Sundays and he together with her gave us a dress, sometimes a skirt or a blouse. That boy said that he got those things from German women he worked with. Certainly, those weren't first-rate clothes, they did not fit German women, but we were glad to them because we had nothing better. We, the girls, going to town on Sunday, often changed clothes with each other, not to wear always the same. Nothing can be done with woman's nature.



The first day after discharge from the penal camp Shlyutop — Lyubeck where I spent six months. Near me stands Stefka. Photo was made by Stefka's boy-friend, a Belgian, in 1944.

Gestapo-man that discharged me from the penalty-camp, on that very day appointed me on work in a laundry situated not far from the penalty-camp. It was laundry for French and Polish prisoners, we got there soup and potatoes I distributed among our people at the penalty-camp.

In that laundry only Germans worked and there was a master (foreman) above them all who was responsible of the work of laundry. Everything we washed should be clean, washed in the washing-machine and later, when it became dry, we ironed it. I don't know what a camp it was, that linen for prisoners was washed and ironed there, maybe it was a camp for the demonstrations to the international Red Cross or so, I don't know.

The work was rather hard in that laundry, but we had no reason to complain as we were brought not to a resort, but to forced labour, unpaid. So I did work there, waiting for the better times.

ON THE EVE OF HITLER'S CRASH

In the new camp — Gotman-lager there were new acquaintances, new friends. Days passed slowly, and we more and more grieved for home, relations, our home village, Ukraine. The last winter came when German armies still tried to defend. Till January 1945 German army stayed on the left bank of the Vistula, but almost a half of Poland had been liberated, the Red army stood near Warsaw and didn't give it any help during the uprising. Only at the end of January 1945 the Soviet army crossed the Vistula, and stroke Hitlerite armies, it was one but the last attack upon Hitlerite hordes. At the same time the allied armies moved forward in Italy and France.

On the background of such events which we learned by snatches from talks between Germans, we began to cry either with joy or worrying about our fate in the last months of Hitlerite Germany. We were still there like defenseless birds in a cage. We kept thinking how to survive in order to hold it out. And everybody already knew that the end of Hitlerite Germany was coming nearer.

That last winter was one of the hardest for us, working at the forced labour. There wasn't enough food not only for us, but for Germans as well. In winter we couldn't be employed by farmers, at first, because it was winter and there was no immediate work about the household, and secondly, because days were short and we went to work and returned in darkness.

One of the most interesting occupations in the camp during that winter was talking about the German's situation in the fronts. That talks helped us to endure hunger. Everyone who worked at the factories, shops, or as I did, in a laundry, listened to the conversations among the Germans who had got some information from the radio or from those who was wounded and returned from

the fronts. That German armies had neither winter clothes for their soldiers, nor enough ammunition. We knew that German aviation didn't control the air any longer and the bombers of western allies released thousands of bombs on German towns, destroying factories and plants that produced ammunition. During those bombardments many Ukrainians died, because a lot of us worked at military factories. Germany wasn't prepared for the long war, the Germans lost belief in their Führer who continued to promise them to use some miraculous arms. But he wasn't believed. It never helped to German armies that their women knitted warm gloves, sweaters etc. of wool. It was a drop in the sea comparing to the heats of great armies. In the city one could notice some alert, sadness and fear. Many German women wore only black after their killed sons, husbands and brothers.

And the Germans could not be glad to hear the news that the Red Army also suffered the great losses, that it cost Stalin many millions of killed soldiers and officers. Stalin never reckoned with the people, soldiers were nothing but the cannon-fodder for him. What was necessary for him was "Pobeda!"*. But that victory over the Hitlerite Germany didn't come easy to him. Stalin had to conclude a treaty with Great Britain, the USA and their allies. Even, as we knew in the camp, he ordered to imply in the army officer's ranks, shoulder-straps, that had been severely punished before. The USA sent to the Soviet Union a great many of armament, military technique, also equipment for the factories and plants, a lot of tinned food. All of it helped greatly to inflict a defeat on Germans. But the most heavy burden of the war was placed on the shoulders of a common soldier, and every fifth of those soldiers was a Ukrainian. Germans said that the most cruel on the front were soldiers of Asian republics — Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turks, Kirghizs, Kazakhs. They, as we heard, were ruthless, it meant nothing for them to kill a man.

So German spoke about "cruel" Uzbeks, but they forgot how their own soldiers, SS and Gestapo-men, behaved, how they treated even now, by the end of the war, the prisoners. They saw cruelty of the Soviet soldiers, but didn't want to see the cruelty of theirs. And not only of the soldiers on the fronts but also in the rear, of all those Hitlerites who exterminated people in concentration camps, that we knew well.

German were indignant at the cruelty of the allied bombardments, they called it annihilation of peaceful people who were not implicated in the war. It was true only partially because German also annihilated peaceful, civil population, they didn't take into account the fact that they killed inhabitants of cities and villages who didn't fight against Germans.

In the last months of the war life was terrible. Sirens often alarmed of a coming bombardment, many houses were destroyed,

* *pobeda - victory.*

the fires arose. There was not such discipline as there was when they brought us here. Chaos and fuss ruled everywhere. I don't know whether it was true or not, but it was said that on request of Swedish Red Cross, the allies didn't bombard Lyubeck, but we saw and at night heard thousands of British or American bombers who passed Lyubeck aside and flew toward Berlin.

We have already seen soldiers, for how can be called fifteen-year old boys called up for military service? They were often unable to carry a gun, it was too big for them. And that persuaded us definitely that Hitler's end was approaching, that he couldn't arise from the crash that had overtaken him.

THE END OF THE WAR. WHAT NEXT?

At last Germany was dealt the final blow. To us, in Lyubeck, the end of the war came even unexpectedly. We, as usual, went to work, Germans also worked.

But once we saw in the yard of French and Polish camp some military cars strange for us and some soldiers near by, but not Germans. In several minutes we knew that those were British soldiers in "jceps". They told us that the war had finished for us.

Everyone who worked in the laundry were stuck dumb, as we hoped that our, Soviet soldiers would come here, but the English came. They explained to us that, fighting as an allied state, Great Britain in the course of war operations occupied northern-western part of Germany and the city of Lyubeck where we were located.

Well, could we help being glad?! The slavery ended for us, we didn't have already to go to work every day, to listen to the howls of watchmen that suddenly disappeared. There was joy, cries at the camp, not only girls but also boys wept with joy.

Our joy had no limits, there was no phantom of hunger before us, we didn't have to be afraid of beating. In several days Swedish Red Cross brought on big lorries a great many of food, mostly in different tins. Those who brought them told us in German and English that they would feed us as long as we stayed in that camp, they also said that soon we would be taken to our home countries. And then we began to think — what should we do. At the beginning of the war we saw that people lived differently from our life in the Soviet Union under Stalin's regime. Germans wore nice clothes, we were only jealous to German women for their dresses, nice coats, shoes. And, for those several days we saw that, though it was the war, British soldiers had uniforms made of good fabric, they seemed to have everything they needed. Also we saw those who brought us food to the camp, they were civil persons in nice clothes, it was

obvious that they didn't suffer hunger in their life.

So we began to think, to change thoughts: what you, Tanya, will do? What do you think, Galya?

And we thought all together and each of us by herself that there in Ukraine we left our relatives, our parents, mothers, sisters. I have not yet found my half-sister Maria. Where was she, what happened to her, to my sister Shura, to brother Mytya? We were eager to join them at that moment. But were they alive and healthy?

Bad rumours began to spread among the campmen about the treatment of Stalin's regime to those who got into German captivity and also to those taken for the forced labour. They said that everyone who returned from the captivity was sent to Siberia as a traitor of motherland. By hearsay, in the Soviet occupation zone Soviet political instructors said that girls taken for the forced labour were traitors of motherland and not only girls but also boys as we all worked for Germans, even produced arms at German factories, that Germans used fighting against the Red Army.

How could we reconcile ourselves to such hearsay, how could we perceive it? Not somebody else, but we ourselves saw the fate of soviet soldiers who got to German captivity. We also saw that at the beginning of the war soviet forces retreated before the attacking enemy. Were those guilty that they were surrounded? The soldiers couldn't influence the strategical or tactical operations of the army, they went to the war, shot where they were told to, fought as they could. But none of the soldiers, taken separately, couldn't influence that fact that the whole armies were surrounded. And not everyone could break encirclement.

We saw and heard from many witnesses about the way Germans treated prisoners. They were massively exterminated, millions of them died. And Stalin just considered them to be "enemies of people" and didn't even try to investigate under what circumstances they were taken prisoners.

Has anyone ever heard about war where soldiers are not taken prisoners? It can never happen. It only happens that prisoners are not held captive, they are shot at once, but soldiers from all armies in the world get in captivity. And it usually happens not because of their fault, but of their commanders' of higher or lower ranks.

About ourselves, about those taken by Germans for the forced labour we knew the best. We hadn't asked them to take us to Germany, we were ordered to go there, we were brought in goods wagons. And we were treated there like slaves. We experienced there incredible mockery, humiliation, suffered from cold and hunger, lice ate us, we slept on straw, like cattle. And now we are told bad words, called traitors of Motherland.

We had what to think over. We remembered well the attitude of Stalin's regime to millions innocent people, we remembered the terror that our fathers and grandfathers, all the Ukraine suffered.

The question we faced was: What next? If we were to be treated as traitors of Motherland, we knew well what was done to them in the Soviet Union. So could we risk returning home? To return and even not to get to home village, to be sent to Sybir, to taiga* at once? To change one slavery for another? That was the question we faced.



Tonya Khlemendyk with the girls from Western Ukraine — Stefka, Hanya, Caterina and Zofia. They were kind to me, saved me, I came out of the camp arm-in-arm with them in order that my "OST" hadn't been seen.

Such problems never occurred to Belgians, nor to Italians, Frenchmen and others. Only we were to be stigmatized as traitors. Everyone who came from Western countries, didn't stay long in camps, they at once returned home. Only Ukrainians, Russians,

* *Taiga - thick forest of Sybir.*

Byelorussians, Lithunians, Latvians, Estonians faced the problem to come back or not. Poles as well couldn't solve this problem at once because they knew that the Stalin-like regime had been established in Poland.

In German cities the camps started to be organized for those who of this or that reason happened to be on the territory of Germany after the war and didn't return home. They were mostly camps for Ukrainians, Russians and Poles.

I had many friends among the Poles and they suggested me to come to live to their camp. When I told it to my friends — Galycians, they began to persuade me saying that they knew Poles, they were bad and so, they governed Galychyna before the war and humiliated Ukrainians, they didn't like Ukrainians. I didn't know anything about it but had no reason not to believe Ukrainians — Galycians. So I didn't go to Polish camp and couldn't decide — whether to return to Ukraine or to stay here so far.



After discharge from the camp Dornirverke — Lyubeck. Girls joined together by the resident of the camp whose name was Zvarun, she taught us to embroider. I can't remember everyone after so many years but can recognize on the photo — Olenka Zhenevchyk, the organizer of the group Zvarun, three Lyubas, Marusya, Pavlina Solomchak, Pazya Velyka, Sulyma, Kasya — all of them from Western Ukraine. Others — be recognized by yourselves. I believe that all of you are alive, everyone moved to different countries. Pazya Velyka — Kryvoruchko, I know, owns a hotel in Niagara — Falls, Canada, and Zvarun lives in the USA.

SOME WORDS ABOUT PRIVATE

I've already told that my friend Zina Stadnyk had a boy-friend from Lvov Ivan Kokot by name. They were acquainted rather long, for about three years, after capitulation of Germany they were close to each other. And I had my Vasył'ko who hadn't got into German's hands after his escape and waited at last for the end of the war.

Vasył'ko had come from Galychyna, he was a handsome boy and smart. But he had as well some drawbacks, in particular he liked to speak a lot but his actions differed from what he said. We met each other after his escape, when I was in Gotman-lager, also after the end of the war. We weren't just friends, we also had an intention to marry. He wrote about me to Galychyna, maybe to Lvov. He had a good mother, when she learned that I was an orphan, she asked Vasył'ko to be kind to me, not to hurt me. She even knew me from the photos that Vasył' sent her. It seemed to me that he loved his mother and obeyed her.

One day a letter came from Vasył'ko's mother that turned out to be the last. She died soon. If she was ill and what was her disease, I don't know. In that last letter Vasył'ko's mother asked her son to marry me, wished us to be happy, live in harmony, to avoid every trouble.

I couldn't learn Vasył' well during my staying in German camp, but I believed him. He promised me that we would marry just after the end of the war. But, when the war ended, Vasył' didn't hurry to keep his promise and also his mother's request to have respect to me. I wasn't yet experienced in relations with boys and still believed Vasył'ko, I believed everything when he spoke to me, made excuses, I fell in love with him yet behind the wires of the camp, from that day when he asked me to conceal the money.

Vasył'ko could speak to me, he could soften my impatience. If he brought me some trifle, I felt happy that he didn't forget me, that he cared about me. I was like a blind. He fondled me, nestled me up, kissed me and I needn't anything more. Nobody fondled or nestled me up in my life, I was brought up by step-mother, it seemed to me that I loved a prince from a fairy-tale. I became blind, I didn't see anything around but Vasył'ko. I waited for the day and the hour I would be able to meet Vasył'ko.

Vasył'ko didn't live in the camp, but in a private flat that he rented from a German. Just after the end of the war the Organization of Red Cross gave us food packs. I also got two such packs. How could I not share them with my Vasył'ko? May be, he had nothing to eat these days, and it would be pleasure to share it with him all the same. So I waited for him for three weeks but he didn't come. I thought and thought but couldn't guess what happened to him.

I had got Vasył'ko's bag on which he brought sausage-salyami when he visited me last time, and I'd got different food from the packs given by Red Cross. So I decided to bring this bag and something else to him to his flat. I also brought a packet with

different tins, cigarettes as I knew that he liked to smoke and I didn't need cigarettes at all.

I took it all, went to town, got in the proper tram and went to Vasil'ko's place. I came there, the landlady let me in as she knew me from the previous visits. I asked if Vasil'ko was in, she answered yes, but somehow her answer seemed strange, a bit suspicious to me. Vasil'ko lived in that flat with his friend Mykola Pikulik. They had two separate bed-rooms and a common kitchen. I knocked at the door, Mykola opened it whom I was acquainted to but (at that time) forgot his name. In his room I saw a girl Olya by name, whom I knew from the camp Brandenbaum, I was even glad to meet her, because I didn't see her for a long time.

When I came in and greeted them, I asked Mykola if Vasil' was in. He said yes at once, then opened the door to his room and I saw my Vasil'ko sat half-dressed and drank coffee or tea. I came up to him asking why he was absent for three weeks, he did promise me to come? And when I said it, I saw a woman in his bed. She was a blonde, she was also from our camp, but older than we and we knew she was married. Her name was Stefka. She also lay half-dressed, it was obvious that they slept together.

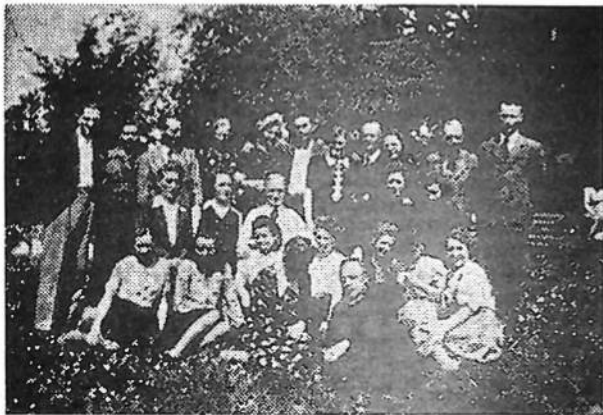
I estimated quickly the situation, came close to Vasil'ko and asked him — What are you going to do? And he answered me impudently that he decided to find another woman, for he knew that everyone who came from Velyka Ukraine* would be forced to come back to Soviet Union.

I don't know whether that hearsay was the reason, that Vasil'ko betrayed me, or he only justified himself saying that Stalin ordered to return with compulsion all his citizens to the Soviet Union. But I waited for him, Vasil'ko, looked for him every evening, expected that one day we would get married.

Then, in his room, I reminded to him of his mother's words, all his promises to me, that he promised without any constraint that just when the war ended, he would marry me. And he said nothing. As if what I said didn't concern him.

The German, landlady, came out of the room, saw me in tears, asked why I wept and I told her my sorrow, confessed that Vasil'ko had betrayed me, that he didn't keep his promise, that he had another woman. And while I was speaking so to the landlady, Vasil'ko appeared, and I had to keep silence. Vasil' touched my hand and asked what I was going to do. I answered that I decided to stay in Germany so far, and later I would see, but I wouldn't return home, I'd find some job and flat and would live somehow. I also told him that perhaps I would come to the camp of Poles, they had asked before to come to live with them, and knew me as a kind and compliant girl.

* *Velyka Ukraine — Great Ukraine, central, northern and eastern parts of Ukraine.*



Ukrainian boys and girls, taken for forced labour to Germany, made photo after discharge. All of us worked hard under control of German policemen. We'll never forget that life. On the photo there're Kasya, Olenka Zhenevchyk, Maria Kholyavko with her husband, they live in Toronto. Friends! Show this photo to your children and grandchildren, tell them how we lived during the war in german slavery. Let them know about us, our suffering, let them, our descendants, never go through misfortune that we experienced. And let them never forget the motherland of our childhood.

At that moment I really thought that it would be nice to go to the Polish camp, we would surely, have what to eat, UNRRA organization supplied us with food, clothes, even cigarettes. So, thinking like this, I said good-bye to Vasyl' and told him that we should see how that woman would treat him, and that he hadn't kept the promise given to me and his mother. Vasil' looked shy, but didn't add anything.

I went back to my camp where east Ukrainians, Russians, Byelorussians lived. Germans kept calling that camp "OST". I came to the camp, fell on my bed and began to cry. I cried long that time, feeling pity for myself, for my orphan's fate. I wept and didn't understand what to do? How was I to live?

I wasn't inactive in the camp, I had some medical education and began to work at the local medical station as a nurse. The Red Cross sent us parcels that were brought on lorries each Friday. Those goods were distributed by the same people that brought them and among them were also nurses in clean white aprons with Red Cross bandages on their sleeves. I also had white overalls on. I

managed to make acquaintance with those nurses. They addressed me as a nurse. Among them was a Latvian who worked in UNRRA. I supposed that this acquaintance would help me to find some good job. The Latvian could speak Russian.

The next day, on Saturday, at about 10 a.m. a girl runs from the neighbour barracks and calls me, saying that my brother has come to me who worked at a farmer before. I was stuck dumb, what brother? I had no brother who could have been taken for work to Germany. I didn't know what to think, it could have happened that my brother Mytya had been taken with someone older and was employed there by some farmer. I became glad, though I wasn't sure that it was true about brother.

But when I ran out of barracks, my Vasyl'ko met me, though he wasn't mine any longer. I asked him what the matter was that he even lied he was my brother who came to me. Vasyl'ko explained that his landlady turned him out of the house and he had nowhere to stay and told me to ask the necessary man to let him be registered in the camp I lived in.



Mariyka Stefanyuk, married Kulyk. Born in Brest - Lytovsk, in 1946 we were in camp Lyubeck - Dornirverke. Emigrated to Great Britain, Manchester - Lester.

What a trouble I had with Vasy! How was I to do this? I thought a lot and at last decided to tell the barracks commandant that he was my brother, in order to register him there.

The commandant was a kind man, he agreed that Vasil'ko as my brother, would live in our barracks. He, the commandant, told me to arrange that Vasil'ko would live in my room. So it happened that Vasil'ko lived at my place, with me. I cooked and washed for him, took care of him. But told him not to look at other women.

"NA RODYNU!"*

So we lived for a fortnight in a quiet a peaceful life, when it was declared that we should prepare to return, as they said, "to Motherland". But to Ukraine or not? By no means to the Soviet Union.

Soviet officers used to come to our camp, agitated for returning to the Soviet Union. They ensured us that "Motherland forgives you everything!". What's this, our Motherland should forgive us? Forgive what? Some fault can be forgiven, but we hadn't done anything bad, so what are we to be forgiven for?

We listened to those officers and each time became more and more sure that in the Soviet Union nothing had been changed, that terror continued there, Stalin's regime ignored people. And Vasil'ko who didn't know the essence of that regime, told me not to worry, told that we would come to Kiev, marry and live in our country.

Then I began to persuade Vasil, explained to him what I knew from my own experience. I at that time decided not to return home, and the only reason of it was fear of Stalin regime's repressions.

And Vasil'ko is like Vasy!ko, light minded and all. He said that we wouldn't be able to solve that difficult problem ourselves, that he had to go to town and ask his friends what they thought about it and how they solved the matter of returning home.

I must say here that the Ukrainians from "Velyka" or "pidradyans'ka"*** Ukraine were put in conditions different from those of Ukrainians of Galychyna. We, Soviet Ukrainians, were not considered to be a separate nationality, all were treated as Soviet citizens notwithstanding their nationality. But Ukrainians from Galychyna, though since October 1939 they became Soviet citizens, were called Polish but not Soviet citizens. Allies of the Soviet Union didn't recognize the annexation of Western regions of Ukraine to the USSR, so they didn't recognize everything that happened after the 1st of September 1939. So the allied states treated everyone

* "Na Rodynu!" — *To the Motherland*

** "pidradyans'ka" — *what is under the Soviet power.*

who used to be Polish citizens till 1st of September 1939 as before, that meant that they weren't liable to forced returning "Na Rodynu".

That's a task for respectable who could establish what means "skhidni"* Ukrainians used to avoid the forced repatriation. Everyone started urgently to study Polish language, began to look for a possibility to find some document to prove that one originated from Western Ukraine. To avoid forced repatriation, one should indicate in what region of Western Ukraine one lived, named the chief town of a district, one should also know at least several Polish words. Such a fuss arose around that matter, that is hard to describe. I don't mention here the situation of those who left Ukraine together with retreating Germans, those who were starostas or policemen during the occupation, or in some other way cooperated with Germans. If we were called traitors of Motherland, what is to be said about them.

Vasil'ko went to town and in about two hours he returned on a bicycle accompanied by a fellow on a bicycle too. Vasil'ko came into the room with that boy and introduced him to me. He was a friend of Vasil'ko who called himself Olexa Volynyak. And Vasil'ko told me that he wouldn't go to any "motherland", that he was moving to another camp, and advised me to go to Lvov, to his sister, I'd get a job there and would live at his sister's and he would live there, in Germany.

I couldn't bear it and began to shout at Vasil'ko, calling him names, I cried that he deceived me all that time, what I would do at his sister's, I didn't know her at all, she was strange to me, and you, scoundrel, I cried, even didn't fulfil your mother's will, didn't marry me.

I flew into a temper so that girls from the other rooms ran, who thought that Vasil'ko was my brother. They ran in and began to wonder that "sister" shouted at "brother" like that. Then Olexa turned to Vasil' and asked why he was leaving me and the latter, as if it was true, said that he had to leave me because I wanted to go "to the Motherland". I couldn't bear it and cried that it wasn't true, that Vasil'ko had just fabricated this lie.

Olexa saw that Vasil'ko was unfair to me and that I would be taken to the forced repatriation from this camp and asked me resolutely: "Don't you really want to return to Ukraine?". I said no. And Olexa suggested me to go with him to that camp where Vasil' was going. I became glad and answered that I could go immediately, as all my things had been packed. As I had many things, Olexa took some of them, went to that new camp, and in the afternoon he returned to take the rest of my luggage and me and left for the new place.

* "Skhidni" — eastern.

Before my left the camp for "Ostowtsy"*, Zina Stadnyk ran to me and said that she wouldn't stay there, would return home. It appeared that she was going but didn't even know whether any of her relations were alive and their house not destroyed. But she informed me that she was leaving her Vanya, that was Ivan Kokot, who had been her boy-friend for three years. Zina explained her decision saying that she missed her relations very much, that she had a hope to see her father and mother again. Then I said good-bye to Zina, and my "angel the keeper" — Olexa whom I was very grateful to because of his interest to my life.

I was really very thankful to Olexa because I was alerted very much of the frequent visiting of our camp by the Soviet officers, who, and it was very strange, wore polished high boots, service caps with shining peaks, golden shoulder-straps, they walked haughtily as if they personally invaded the whole world. All of us had to be ready by seven o'clock when lorries were to come for us. There was an instruction to take out our luggage, to go out in twos, to keep order. Of course, those were military men who organized repatriation. They threatened us not to try to run away. That threatening proved mostly the "voluntariness" of repatriation.

I didn't have already to take my things out, as Olexa had taken almost all of them before and brought to the other camp on his bicycle.

So I avoided the forced repatriation "to the Motherland". I went to the new camp with Olexa and on my way I thought of Vasyl'ko. I thought that he was a reprobate, he was just a "batyar"*** from Lvov, he was an unrespectful man. I could have already stayed for a long time in Polish camp with those who didn't want to return to Poland as we — to the Soviet Union. I could, but Vasyl'ko as usual, did me an ill turn. As I found out, he not only liked to smoke, but never refused gorilka***, not only didn't refuse, but he liked to drink it, and that often happened to him when he was absent for three weeks after the war. He also liked to play cards that I couldn't understand at all because playing cards was not popular in our village. But I was sure that I should part with him forever, for he was an unreliable man.

That time, just after the war, wasn't suitable for young girls, there were much more of us than of boys, it wasn't easy to find a boy to match. And there was nobody to give advice, neither father, nor mother. But we had to hurry, it wasn't like home, when you could walk together with a boy for a year or two, and marry him afterwards. Here the time passed quickly, we had to decide whether to stay or to repatriate, and if to stay — what next?

* "Ostowtsy" - those who came from eastern Europe. †

** "batyar" — reveller.

*** gorilka - vodka.

IN POLISH CAMP

Many Ukrainians gathered in Polish camp that consisted of several wooden barracks. We, Ukrainians, occupied two barracks where singles, bachelors, found room for themselves, all of them young, for we at that time were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old. We were almost children when Germans brought us for the forced labour. There gathered the Ukrainians who didn't have to be afraid of the forced repatriation and those who, as I did, had to adapt themselves to new circumstances to avoid repatriation. All of us, coming from Eastern and central lands of Ukraine didn't return home not because we were indifferent where to live — in Ukraine or somewhere else. No, we weren't indifferent, for all the years of our slavery in Germany we dreamt about Ukraine, raved of it, saw it in our dreams. There was not a single day when we didn't remember the beauty of our motherland, our steppes, calm clean rivers. We didn't return to Ukraine not because we didn't love it but because we feared to return. That's the reason. We had no other reason, in particular, no chase for high incomes. Let our children, grandchildren, all our descendants know about it.



Boys and girls from camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck, preparing to emigration. I hope all of them are alive and healthy and can recognize themselves on this photo made in 1945.

Polish camp was also under the wardship of international, or American organization UNRRA. We hadn't many troubles to be registered in Polish camp. I believe that many officials from UNRRA

knew the true reason of our reluctance to return home and they often winked at some informalities.

The treatment of camp administration was good, but we hadn't avoid troubles from another side. Strangers often came to the camp in civilian clothes and asked us where we came from, tried to speak to us. And we, Ukrainians from the Soviet Union, were easily recognized by our speech that we were not "western". Those people were spies, sent by the officers of Stalin's regime, that didn't even in British occupation zone leave its citizens alone.

In the camp for no-returners in Lyuber it even happened that Stalin's servicemen, catching the Soviet citizens, shot after runaways. Then our "skhidnyaky"* turned to British military commandant with a request to defend us from violence. The result was that later we weren't chased so insolently, patrols of British army saved us.



A group of girls and boys from camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck, 1945.

I turned to the administration of UNRRA (United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) with a request to register me as a nurse. They registered me and sent to week courses to test whether I could work as a nurse. I passed that test successfully and received a certificate that let me work as a nurse. I was given a job in the temporary hospital of Polish camp, where many tubercular patients were. It was the result of several years of underfeeding, exhausting labour, cold that

* "skhidnyaky" — eastern Ukrainians.

the slaves of Hitlerite Germany had to suffer. Due to UNRRA, we could give those patients cod-liver oil and orange juice to equalize the shortage of vitamins. There also were many children ill with tuberculosis as well.

A doctor came every day to that temporary hospital, examined patients seriously ill, gave instructions, prescribed medicines. My duty was to take medicines from pharmacy, to keep them in doctor's room, to give them to patients. I also had a possibility to strengthen my health, I drank cod-liver oil and orange juice. I felt that health and strength returned to me.

In that Polish camp I got acquainted with many new friends, and there were a lot of those whom I knew from the camp Brandenbaum.



1945, camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck. Girls from Western Ukraine cooked borslich and eat it before their wooden barracks.

There was a large room, where in a family way settled Mariyka Shutka, Mariyka Syomykha, Pavlyna and also boys Ivan Kokot, Skolozdra, Tus'ko, Solomchak, S. Pepliy, Ruzya Shmaglo, Vlodko and Ganya Zabolotski and their mother who was like a mother for all of us. It was she who gave us advice, taught us to cook. Though we hadn't much to cook because there was a kitchen in the camp where we were given food, and that we got from UNRRA needn't cooking, but what's cooking always tastes much better. We were convinced of it due to Vlodko and Ganya's mama. To cook a soup, we had only to pick some sorrel, put a potato and a carrot into a saucepan, to fry it all with something. We cooked in our kitchen, heated with

firewood, usually brushwood that we picked in forest not far from our place. We also heated water to wash our clothes and to bathe.

In that room six couples of us were completed and so we, six women, cooked meals in turn, lived in peace and friendship and never complained about our fate. Only sometimes we felt sad about our relations in Ukraine, because each of us left somebody there. Most of our room were boys and girls, in fact men and women already from Western Ukraine, who knew Polish language and didn't have to fear of forced repatriation.

Soon administration of UNRRA transferred me to work in Latvian camp where the Ukrainian Melnykov worked as a doctor, who married a German and stayed to live in Germany. I worked in Latvian camp but lived in Polish.

Our life in camp was camp-like, that is under the circumstances when one should hope for some change, at first a bit chaotic, but then came in order. We began to organize various performances, a chorus, concerts. We studied also English.



Tonya and Ostapko who were best men at Mariyka and Stephan's wedding in camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck.

There were former teachers in the camp, even professors. There was also a priest, father L. Kunitsky, who married us there, in the camp church. He also advised us how to live to avoid the devil's way. We listened readily to him, he had a great prestige with us under conditions of emigration as well.

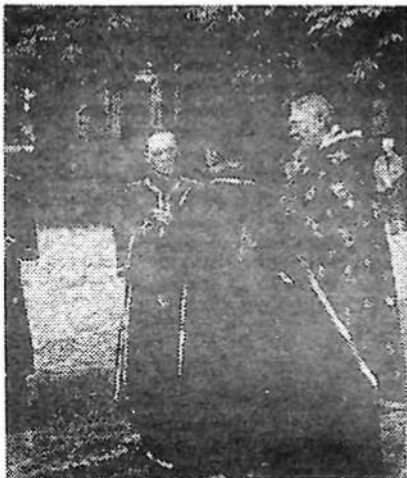
ON THE WEST!

Time never stops, it flies in camps also. Emigration committees started to work. If one passed them, he could hope to emigrate to Great Britain, USA or Canada. It wasn't easy for us, who came from Eastern or Central Ukraine to pass it, because such people could be members of the committee, who didn't want to subtilize the reasons of our desire to emigrate. But there was a hope that members of that committees knew neither Ukrainian nor Polish languages, those languages sounded the same to them, and interpreter from Polish to English, mostly Poles, helped us, didn't cavil at lack of knowledge of Polish. And before facing the committee, father Leonti Kunytsky, who came from Lvov admonished us. He gave us instructions what we were to say and what we weren't and the most important was to remember one's birthplace.



Volodymyr Zabolotsky and Ostapko were best men at the wedding of Stepan and Mariyka Teplykh that took place in camp Dornlirverke, Lyubeck, 1946.

I must say that Father Leonti Kunytsky's advice proved useful for us not only during the work of committees but also here, in the West, in Canada. Also during last days of our staying in camps.



Lychakivsky cemetery in Lvov, 1944. Father prelate Leonti Kunytsky reads Gospel on the funeral of Dr. V. Malys. After the capitulation of Germany father Leonti Kunytsky in 1945 came to our transitional camp escaping the forced repatriation. Father Leonti Kunytsky married me to Ivan Kokot in camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck.



Mariyka Syomykha and Stepan Teply got married in camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck. Tonya Khelemendyk and Maria Shutka were bride's maids, 1946.



Oles', my husband Ivan's countryman, who came from village Gnoynytsi. He lived in the camp till 1947, then emigrated to Great Britain.



Interpreter Anna from town of Pology who often pleaded for us during our way to Germany when policemen hurt us. She was also an interpreter in camp Aikholts-Brandenbaun, Lyubeck. We felt respect for her.

We lived in that camp for two years already, preparing for emigration. People became impatient, the life in the camp didn't create any life prospects for us. We didn't prepare ourselves for settling in some country, everything was temporary. And we kept dreaming that we were taking from the camp straight to Sybir, caught, put into goods vans.

At last we had to decide our future. My husband Ivan Kokot registered us for emigration to Great Britain, to England, because he was healthy and Englishmen naturalized only such people. Our friends tried to emigrate to the USA, others to Canada, Australia, Argentina, Brazilia, Paragway, some of them to neighbour Belgia to work there at coal mines. Some men decided to stay in Germany. They were those who married german women after the war. In Canada only those at that time were naturalized who had some relations there, or signed a contract of job in a forest.

SISTER MARUSYA'S FATE



Sister Maria Zinchenko, Peshcherova in her marriage, who wandered for 12 years in Kazakhstan and for 2 years in Sybir only because of innocence of her husband Fedir. She brought up two sons — Anatoli and Mykola

So, when we were preparing to emigrate not very consoling news began to come from Ukraine. At that time I was sure that both my step-mother and my father were killed by a bomb. I didn't know at that time that my father was alive. Sister Mariyka's address had burnt in the fire of barracks, and I had no other addresses. So it turned out that I lost everybody during the war.

Later on I found out that my sister Mariyka who got married and was Peshcherova by name, was alive, but, together with her two children, in exile in Kazakhstan. She had son Mikola who was then two years old and four-year-old son Anatol'. Later I came to know why she was evicted to Kazakhstan.

Mariyka's husband, Fedir Peshcherov, was taken prisoner at the very beginning of the war. After escaping from captivity, he went through fields, forests and steppes, in cold season, to his wife. His clothes — what left of military uniform — were worn out. On his way he found a dead german soldier, that had a good uniform on. Fedir undressed that corpse, put his uniform on, and covered the dead body with his clothes, for the latter wasn't already troubled with it. And he moved secretly farther, till came to the very Donetschyna, to his wife. But people watched him and remembered that Fedir returned home as a german soldier. That's why after the war without investigation, without any defence, he was sent to a Sybirian concentration camp for ten years. And his wife and children — to exile in Kazakhstan.

And now we should think over the criminal nature of Stalin's regime. That was him, Stalin, who together with Clyment Voroshylov and the like, drove to the defeats at the beginning of the war, they reduced Ukraine to be preyed by Hitlerite army, they were guilty that hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers were encircled and then taken prisoners. And because Fedir hadn't died in the camp for prisoners, didn't wish to cooperate with germans, because he escaped from the camp risking his life, he was sentenced without any investigation to ten years of concentration camp. And his wife and small children were exiled to Sybir.

At that time, as it was before the war, if someone had been taken and sentenced, his family wasn't informed. Sister Marusya asked, seeked for her Fedir but never learnt what happened to him. Only when she was already in Kazakhstan, she got a notification that Fedir Peshcherov was a "traitor of Motherland" and that's why he was sentenced to ten years punishment in Sybir. And she was exiled for ten years as well. So how could she live?

After the war there was hunger not in Ukraine but all over the country, including Kazakhstan. When the sister was brought to some station in Kazakhstan, she began to look for something to eat for her children. She asked some people and they told her that she was seeking there in vain, she had to find some job to survive herself, and that she would better leave her children at the station, militiamen

would have find them and bring to an asylum, where they could survive and were not so hungry.

Marusya had no way out but to follow that advice. Quietening the children, she told them she would go to find something for them. But her elder son Tolya heard her conversation with those people and began to watch where his mother went. And she, my sister and their mother, got into a carriage that was to go in that direction people pointed her. Tolya and Mykolka got into the same train, but to another carriage so that sister didn't know it. I didn't know names of stations they went from and to, but it was so that Marusya got out of the carriage, went to town, found some job and worked for a year, worrying about her children.



Sister Maria and her husband Fedir Andriyovych Peshcherov with their grandson Anatoli, who is now a professor. Fedir A. Peshcherov after 10 years of camps in Sybir returned to Ukraine being exhausted and didn't live long. Let memories of his torments be eternal, let his grandchildren and all descendants remember him. Photo — 1956.

And the boys who also came to that station, were picked up by militiamen and placed to an asylum. They lived there and were brought up as orphans.



My cousin Marfa and sons of my sister Maria — Anatoli and Mykola.
Town of Artemivsk.

A year passed, my sister couldn't live without her children any longer and began to search for them. She turned to different offices, and at last was informed that her children were in that asylum. She was both glad and surprised that they were so near, not far from her. She came to that asylum and began to ask the head mistress

to give her a job of an office-cleaner. The head mistress wondered why that woman begged her so insistently to give her a job. Then sister explained that two boys of hers were there, that she had to do so in order to save them from starvation. At first the head mistress didn't want to employ her because she said, it was not allowed for mother of children who were brought up in asylum as orphans, to work there. But sister knelt to her and begged her so that the head mistress took her with the condition that nobody would learn that she had her sons there.



Nephews Anatoli and Mykola Peshcherovs, sons of sister Maria whom I didn't see for 43 years. Boys grew up in Kazakhstan and Sybir. They are standing here with their girlfriends — Nina and Galya. Artemivsk, Donetsk region, 1957.

And sister began to work there, scrubbed floors, cleaned lavatories and so on and told her sons, begged them, not to confess to anyone that their mother worked there.

Her son Tolik was a big boy already, he was five, so he looked after Mykolka to avoid him from letting out a secret.

So my sister lived there, working in day and at night she came to her sons to kiss them and to look at them. Ten years passed, sister could already return to Ukraine and so she did, together with her children.

And already in Ukraine she received a telegram from her husband Fedir where he told her to meet him as he had been discharged. Marusya didn't understand well where to meet him, she took children and went to Sybir! When she came there, Fedir was already on his way to Ukraine. But she had no money to buy tickets to return. So she had to find a job and picked pitch in a pine wood. Long time passed until she met her husband Fedir and began to live in Ukraine. And for all those years her children studied and helped their mother. They had always been polite, clever boys.

FATHER'S FATE

Those memoirs are about kolkhoz childhood and german slavery. So I wouldn't describe there our life in England, from where we emigrated to our wonderful Canada. As I already said, it occurred from my sister Shura's letter that the bomb killed not only my step-mother, but also my father. That's why father had been dead in my imagination and I buried him in my mind long ago. But I was lucky to find out that wasn't true, my father was alive, I met him. How it happened that I came to know it, I would describe briefly.

My father was found by my syster's husband who lived in Lvov region. I got his address, we began to write to each other, I had a possibility to invite my father to Canada and met him after twenty four years of separation. Then my father told me about his fate after the war.

Despite the fact that my father was a soldier of Red Army, participated in the defence of Kiev, fought honourly, even bravely, was awarded with order of Lenin, he was arrested at once after the war by the denunciation of a neighbour. It was time when tens of thousands of former Red Army soldiers and other suspected people were arrested. And the denunciator said only that during the war father returned to his village. That was all his fault. You see, he returned to the village and didn't die though he fought bravely. I often ask myself — what he had to do when he escaped from encirclement and Red Army units were already far to East. germans governed everywhere, also in our village. Didn't he fulfil his soldier's duty when he didn't yield himself prisoner but escaped from the encirclement? What was his fault? As it happened all over the world, in many other countries during World War Two, when he finished to fight, not because of his fault, he returned home, to his wife and children.

But what was ordinary in other countries, was considered a crime under Stalin's regime, and a heavy crime — betrayal of

Motherland! And that's why father was sentenced to fifteen years punishment in camps of severe regime. He worked there in gold mines. So it turns out that there was no family in Ukraine after the war, some members, or the whole of it, before or after the war, hadn't been to Sybir or Kazakhstan. Everyone turned out to be guilty, only Stalin was right. Stalin and his pre-war marshals, such as Klyment Yefremovych Voroshylov. They were heroes and soldiers like my father, Petro Tarasovych Khelemendyk, who fought defending Kiev and other towns of Ukraine, were criminals. Stalin and Voroshilov loaded themselves with orders and my father had been taken his order of Lenin away, that he had got for his bravery.



Father Petro Tarasovych Khelemendyk in exile in Sybir where he was punished from 1947 to 1959.



Father's returning from Sybir. He is met by my brother Dymytri (Mytya), sisters Maria, Galya and son-in-law and grandchildren — Nina and Igor, daughter-in-law Maria. Orikhiv, Zaporiz'ka region.



Relations in Ukraine welcome in the yard of their house in Orikhiv my father Petro Tarasovych Khelemendyk, who returned from Sybir. 1959.

Father didn't like to speak about his life in concentration camp, I can only guess, only imagine according to the description of Stalin's camps in Olexandr Solzhenitsyn's book "Archipelago Gulag". In any case, it wasn't sweet for him. And he served almost the whole of his sentence, worked there long after Stalin's death. Rehabilitation was very slow there, only in 1959, after father's requests, when he added to them his certificate of receiving the order of Lenin, he was discharged and allowed to return to Ukraine.

After father's visit to Canada I often thought about his unenviable fate. He worked hard during the whole honest life of his, took care not only of himself, but of people. It was due to his efforts, his acquaintance that many people could survive during the great hunger in winter 1932-33. It was father who went twice a week to Berdyansk to change there the rest of gold of villagers for bread, for fish, herring. I can't forget this and those of them who is still alive shouldn't forget it either.

Father is already 86. This is an epoch! And all these years father lived honestly, he never hurt anyone. Let there be more such parents on the world as mine — Petro Tarasovych Khelcendyk.

My sister's Marusya's husband, Fedir Peshcherov, died. My sister Marusya is alive, so are her sons who were brought up in Kazakhstan, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Sister lives, as before the war, in the town of Orikhiv, in Zaporiz'ka region. And there, with his family, my father lives. In 1986 I visited Ukraine, met my relations. It was then I met first in my life my sister Mariyka who was in her youth also called Mariyka. So my many-year dream was fulfilled.

ADDITION

WHY DID I WRITE MEMOIRS?

However well we live now, still the most important in our life were years of childhood and youth. I had retained my friends who I went with to our village school, then to seven-years school, then to medical school in Orikhiv and Berdyansk. We have got many friends, together with them we went through hard years of german slavery when we were brought for the forced labour to Germany. Our relatives, friends, acquaintance live in Ukraine and in different countries of the West — in Canada, the USA, Australia. All of us have children, some have grandchildren, also relatives. We had experienced hard times, but we never lost courage, we supported each other.

What we had experienced must not be forgotten. Let our children know it, our grandchildren, our descendants that will come after us. Let them read how we lived, how we survived.

We, Ukrainians, are usually industrious and thrifty people. The more thrifty, that the life taught us to save any property. So here, in Canada, like in other countries of the West we with our own hands earned houses, live in dignity, and not without some savings. We won't leave to our children any great belongings, they have already regulated their life, and don't depend upon us of money. But to them belongs that what memoirs of one's relations consist of. Let my memoirs be such a keepsake for our children and grandchildren. A book is such a thing that can be kept for many years, and passed on from one generation to another. And the money, whatever we can save after our death, would be quickly spent. That money could even hasten the process of forgetting the person who had left it.

I have got a hope that my memoirs would also be read in Ukraine by my relatives, friends, read by their children. That is why I decided that this book should be edited with the preservation of spelling used in Ukraine.

I have a hope that our friends and acquaintance would also read these memoirs. They would read them and recollect our hard past. They'd also recollect us.

I have also got a hope that people unknown to me would read this book with interest. As I've told in the preface, I'm not a writer and I don't have a claim on the title of a writer. I'm a common Ukrainian woman who had experienced a lot and that's why can tell something about her life. And what is told here is not only my private life, I've also described the fate of half a million girls and boys taken by germans to the forced labour, I've also described the fate of millions of children who had suffered one of the biggest terrors of the twentieth century — great hunger in Ukraine.

I also want to say that I've got a hope that others would follow my example, that they would also write their memoirs. In order to combine many memoirs into one truth, that sometimes the researches would get the material in the base of which our,

Ukrainian people's unfalse history would be ascertained.

Believe me — it's not so difficult to write memoirs. It's enough to state your ideas, to give facts, and the rest would be designed by those who deal with it.

I've kept a lot of photos that, to my opinion, make up not only recollection but the evidence of what had happened before. That's why I use these documents, publishing them in the book. My relatives, my friends, their children and grandchildren will find here their images. Those photos will also be documents of the epoch we went through.

I'm thankful to God Almighty that He let me pass through all my hard times that also were hard times for my people. I'm grateful to God that gave me health and strength to write these my memoirs in commemoration of my relatives and friends and as a witness of time.

THE FIRST WONDERFUL DREAM

I had that dream in 1944 when I was discharged from the penalty-camp and sent to the "OST" camp called Gotman-lager. Though it was also a camp, I felt much more free there. In the former one we only slept on straw put just on the floor and all of us slept there in a row but in the latter I had a bed, on the deck as it was a double-bed. I was happy that I could lay alone, had a better rest. In the penalty-camp we weren't let go to town and here we could go out on Sunday, even to walk, meet friends, boys and girls.

Though policemen with dogs led us to work, they didn't keep an eye on us as it used to be in the penalty-camp.

Once I slept on my bed in Gotman camp and, I don't know at what hour I had a dream. I dreamt that I was poor, in straits and poverty like a beggar in rags. And I'm hungry, very hungry. And I'm thirsty, my throat is dry. I'm afraid of death and begin to cry, but my voice can't come out of the dry throat. I cry — "My God! Save me! Save me, my God, I don't want to die of hunger, I'm young, I want to live! My throat is still dry, I repeat to cry "My God! Save me!"

Suddenly it becomes quiet, and a voice comes from that quietness. I recognize that voice, it's Our Lady's. I heard and see as Our Lady speaks to me with her tender voice, like a flute.

— Come to me! — and she reaches out her hand to me, — come! — she calls me as a mother calls her child. — Go, she says, — with me on this mountain of Golgotha, I lead you where my son, Jesus Christ, God's son, died on the cross.

So speaks to me Our Lady in my dream and shows me a pole diggen to the ground. I look — it's so high and I can't see a cross. It stretches so high that to see it's end, I throw back my head, look, as it reaches far above the clouds. Near this pole two other poles stand. Our Lady explained me that on those pillars two brigands

were crucified. Those pillars are also so high that they reach above the clouds. I look at them with my neck craned so that it begins to ache.



Antonina Khelemendyk-Kokot. Photo 1945, camp Dornirverke, Lyubeck.

I dream that all what happens — Our Lady, and those pillars, and Our Lady's words — is very wonderful and interesting and I would like Our Lady to speak to me once more.

I began to think in my dream how wonderful it was that Our Lady came to me and spoke to me in such a tender voice. And I thought that she had a son whom she loved very much, because everybody loves his children, it's impossible not to love them.

And Our Lady in my dream continues to tell me about the torments of her son, Jesus Christ. She tells me and gazes at me, like as she doesn't want to let me go from her. And I, wondered, listen to her and want her to tell more.

— Here, — Our Lady says, — he had been tormented for all of us, and here, look, he was buried, and that's grave he was buried in, and here a stone lies rolled aside. God's son rose from the dead on the third day.

I look and see that grave, that place where Jesus lied, that shroud he was covered with.

— And that's, — Our Lady says to me, — is a fence made in

order that watching Jesus's body more easy. But they, Pilat's soldiers, hadn't kept him. He rose again!



Olenka Zhenevchyk-Kupchak, a friend from the camp, my child's Godmother, lives in Lyashin, province of Quebec, Canada. It was she whom I was with during my third wonderful dream that I describe farther ahead in this book.

Our Lady speaks to me, tells about Rise of Jesus Christ, I listen to her, those words are so truthful, and while listening I kept looking up on that the most high pillar that must be the cross, I watch it and can't see it's end in the clouds. And I think in my dream — where are those crosses, why can I see only poles? And then Maria, God's mother, looked at me, smiled tenderly and said that she would come to see me once more.

And I began to go back from the mountain, feeling easy, with a smile on my face. I began to wake up.

It seemed to me that I dreamt rather long, when I woke up I felt very touched. I stood up, jumped down and tried to wake my friend Marusya who slept on a bed under mine. I woke her and began to tell her my wonderful dream. Marusya was sleepy, I don't

know whether she followed what I was telling, but she said to me: Go to church. And repeated once more: Go to church.

I couldn't understand what church she meant. For me a church was a great building with domes apse and icons inside. There was no such a church in Luybeck, so where had I to go to? And how could I go to any church if we were not let out every day and when we can, on Sundays, germans watched us with disapproval when we got in the tram, even nudged as if they say us not to go before lords.

So I thought being under impressions of the dream and decided to go to that old, lame Gestapo man who was on duty in the penalty-camp and was more humane than the others. Once, when he helped me to cut bread, he dropped a hint that if I had some peculiar troubles, I could turn to him.

I had the dream on Friday night. On Saturday we didn't go to work, on Sunday as well, we could even go to town though our clothes were marked with "OST". Usually on those days we washed our clothes, mended the torn clothes that had worn out during those long years. But that we did on Saturday or Sunday, and it was before dawn, the day of Friday hasn't broken yet. I looked at Marusya and she was sleeping already. I also decided to climb on my bed.

I lay on it, but couldn't fall asleep, my thoughts flew around my wonderful dream. I started again to think of Marusya's words that she advised me to go to the church. I thought that she was older than I, she understood more, so she knew what she said.

The working day had broken, the morning came. I never fell asleep. I decided to get up earlier. So I did. I got up, washed myself and began to dress. When the girls began to wake up, I was already fully dressed, ready for work. My friends began to ask me what happened, why I got up so early. On that morning I didn't explain the reason of my early getting up, I told just that I couldn't sleep.

So I sat waiting for the time to go out in a column to work, and kept thinking about my dream, thinking how much I learned during my dream from Our Lady herself, thought also how and when I could go to that Gestapo man who promised to help me. I decided to ask him to give me a pass so that I could go and look for a church. That was my plan, but to get to the Gestapo man, I should turn to my foreman to let me out during the dinner break to go to penalty-camp. I was sure that the invalid Gestapo man was a kind person, that he would help me. I confessed my plan to Marusya, who advised me to go to church, she approved my idea about the pass.

The time had come to assume a column, to go for work. We, as it took place every day, were led by policemen, we were always escorted to work. We go and they go nearly, and their dogs with them. And "Schnell, schnell" is heard every second, though we went rather quickly. We were fed up with their shouting, no matter what and how we did, they still urged us on and even threatened us with gum sticks.

When we reached the laundry I turned there, for it was the

place I worked. Some Germans were already on their place, preparing to wash or to iron. It was a laundry for French and Polish prisoners. I greeted them, they answered, and I took my overalls and began to work — to iron the linen, already washed. Later on the foreman came and greeted us that day with more endearing words, perhaps, he had some personal success, some private joy.

When ironing, I thought, when it would be better to turn to the foreman with request to let me go to the penalty camp during the break. And he walked among the workers, watched their work, looked at things ironed the previous day. At last I dared to run to him and said: Mister foreman, can't I during the dinner break go to the penalty-camp because I want to ask for a pass in Gestapo? The foreman without any questioning or thinking said yes, I could go during the dinner break. I thanked him and continued to iron the linen that lied in a pile on my table.

When the siren notified the beginning of dinner break, I switched the iron off and at once ran to the penalty-camp. I ran to the gate, pressed the button of the bell and the Gestapo man whom I needed let me in. He happened to walk during the dinner break in the camp yard that was empty because everybody was at work. I noticed it before that he didn't like to sit in the guard-room, he preferred to walk in the open air.

The Gestapo man when he opened the gate, was surprised, he asked at once what had happened, why I came. I said I wanted to speak to him, to ask for a piece of advice. He closed the gate and told me to go with him to the guard-room, there he placed me into an arm-chair and began to question. I asked him whether he could give me a pass to the church. He wasn't even surprised of my request, only said that it was a good think to go to church, he and his wife attended church every Sunday. He didn't ask me for the cause of my request, but sat at the table and began to write a pass for me, saying that's valid not for one but for all the Sundays, that I could attend church without any obstacles.

I thanked him politely, got up and we went in the direction of the gate that he opened again and let me out. I thanked him once more, said goodbye and ran to the laundry.

When I returned to the laundry, I yet had enough time to have dinner, that was brought from that Polish and French camp. The afternoon passed quickly and I joined the column in the street that returned from work.

In the camp I told my friends about my wonderful dream, that I went to Gestapo and got there a pass to the church. Girls became glad that I would be able to attend church and tell them later what was there. We took our plates and got for supper, as usual, potatoes in coats with some sauce and "balanda", that is a soup of nondescript taste. After refreshment we went to barracks, and, because the next day was Saturday, some girls began to prepare linen to wash and the others lay down to have a rest. When I prepared mentally to fulfil my plan to go to the church, it occurred to me that I must wear

something more becoming not to go there in rags. So I turned to one of my friends if she could lend me her dress for the Sunday. We were all friends in the camp, helped to each other, so she answered me yes, I could take it because anyone else hadn't turned to her with the same request. Altogether, we were very patient there, didn't become panic-stricken, waited for the war to end soon and everything would be all right. And we had what to expect because we were exhausted already, our organisms were weakened with malnutrition, shortage of vitamins and calories. But all the same we often sang though sad things mostly.

At that time all of us could speak German well, if we had just to ask something or to answer, one couldn't even suspect that we were not Germans. But we had clothes, as a rule mended, where on breast or sleeve the sign "OST" was sewn on. So Germans knew whom they were dealing with, knew that they could mock at us, shout at us and even punch us. The knowledge of German language didn't help it as well, that I, for example, began to study at medical school. At that time we didn't try to master it, we hadn't anyone to speak to, but there, under the circumstances, we quickly caught its pronunciation and spoke German on work themselves. It was caused by the fact that there were representatives of different European nations among the workers but the foremen were all Germans.

At last the Sunday came and I went to town wearing the lent dress. I got in a tram and began to listen to the conductor announce the stop "Church", for I knew from German women that there was such a stop. When the tram lingered on the necessary stop, I got off and began to look around. I looked but didn't see any building with domes, instead there's high building standing not far with steep towers, but on their ends there were no crosses, but something else, and the windows were high, oblong with multicoloured panes. I decided that still it was a church, though I didn't see people come in but someone came out.

I crossed the road and came inside the building that I was already sure to be a church, I went timidly forward, it was empty inside, there were no people, but I saw decorations, saw the image of Our Lady like I saw her in my wonderful dream. I saw and heard in that dream what I had never heard before. I had never saw any statue of Our Lady, but when I saw her in that church, I just recognized that she was Our Lady.

The church was empty probably because the service was over, the faithful had gone. But suddenly something rustled and someone came to me. I looked back, and that was a minister of church, a priest in a cassock. He came up to me and asked whether he could help me. I was taken aback but in a minute felt some courage and began to tell him my dream.

Telling my dream to the priest, I also confessed to him that I had never gone to any church before, that we weren't taught the God's Word at school, I only knew from my home that one should believe

in God and pray, but we had no church, so I didn't attend it. The priest asked me what was my denomination? I couldn't answer him, because I never knew that different denominations existed, I thought that there was one faith, one religion, that there were churches attended by believers and that's all. Then he asked me where I came from. I answered that I came from Zaporizki region. The priest led me to the side wall, where was a map of Europe. There he found Zaporizhzhya and said that I was an "Orthodox". I never heard such a word before, didn't know its meaning, it never occurred to me that our faithful people were orthodoxes.

After asking me for some details of my previous life, in particular, he asked me if I believed in God. He explained me a lot about the churches, for I'd said to him that anyone could go to the church. Then that priest asked me if I would like to accept the faith that he had told me about, and that agreed to all what had dreamt to me, that was the same as Our Lady had told me about in my dream. I said yes without hesitation.

When he heard an affirmative reply of me, the priest asked me to wait, entered some other room and returned in some time, not alone but with a woman. She greeted me, held out her hand to me and named herself. I remembered well that her name was Anna Lichman. That was her who was to become my Godmother. I remembered her name well maybe because I didn't know for a long time the name of my own mother, I was an orphan and my mother's name had been concealed from me before.

Then, in the presence of Anna Lichman, the priest christened me. I was so agitated that it happened so quickly that details of my own christening weren't retained in my memory. After the secrecy of christening Anna Lichman, as my Godmother, began to explain me something about the Catholic faith, because in that faith the priest christened me. I was at that time eighteen years old. When he spoke to me some more, the priest invited me to attend church every Sunday, and when I was leaving, he and Anna Lichman gave me many books and booklets, a prayer-book among them, and asked me to learn from them.

I thanked them, left the church, and went to the tram stop. In the camp I shared my joy with the girls who were interested in all the details — what the church looked like, what was inside, if there were figures and icons, how the priest spoke to me, and how the christening itself was held. I told them everything and showed the books. The books were printed in German, but we could read already, understood the printed word.

In the evening while reading the religious books that I brought, we thought that German occupants had oppressed us already for several years, but Jesus Christ had also suffered, he suffered for all the people and his torments were so terrible that it's hard to describe them. We were starved and cold, and Jesus Christ was crucified, his hands and feet nailed, and he was pierced with a lance. When Jesus

Christ died, he forgave his killers, that wasn't known by any religion in the world. Christianity that's a humaneness, a humanity.

We, the girls of Getman-lager, made one conclusion from what we had read: We should believe, and in any trouble turn to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to his Mother — Maria. They would help us to wait for liberty.

After supper we returned to the barracks and continued studying of the books I had brought. We read them thoroughly and those who came from the Eastern Ukraine as I did, learned more and more about the life of Jesus Christ, his disciples, who preached Christianity, about Our Lady who gave birth to her only son in a den, in a crib it happened and escaped from the persecutor with Joseph and the baby.

That did happened as a result of my wonderful dream. I believe in God, believe in Jesus Christ, the God's son. I believe that it was God, Jesus Christ who helped me to go through my slavery. I believe that everything is in God's hands, that nothing happens in the world without the God's will.

We must be faithful to Jesus Christ's teaching, and he would never leave us, he is always ready to hear us out. Amen!!!

That wonderful dream I had in Germany, in camp of Gotman, in town of Lyubeck, not far from Hamburg.

THE SECOND WONDERFUL DREAM

That dream I had in England already, in 1953. It dreamt to me that I with some acquaintance, a woman and a man, went to some town, as if to the market. We went by a nice trap, like the villagers used to go to town, not by a modern one, but some ancient-looking. It was harnessed by a pair of horses. They were a sort of my friends, but I never knew those people, but we travelled together, they as hosts and I just accompanied them.

So we travelled maybe for several hours, but there was no one on the road, it was deserted. It looked like there was no one alive in the world, everything was deserted and silent. I became thirsty, I wanted to drink, my throat was dry, lips dry and hot. And no sign of water around.

At last we came to that town, the host tethered a horse, they were going to visit a market. And everything around, like on the road, was silent, nothing could be seen or heard. It looked like the town was dead, there was nobody alive there. And I was still feeling very thirsty so I told those people that I would have run to the field and look for a well to drink. Then, said I, I would immediately return.

Those people agreed on that I would have run to look for a well and they went as if to the market.

And I started to run slowly till I appeared out of town. I looked around and saw meadows everywhere, so green, and fresh and odorous. Grass was not trampled down, it grew thick. And the sun shone, its

rays flew upon the whole world — upon me, upon those meadows, warmed everything around, I felt those sun rays touching me. And I saw sheep, many sheep pastured on those meadows. There were flocks of them. And they were so nice, especially lambs, and kept running and jumping, bleating with such pleasant voice. There were white and black among them, and all of them curly, clean, as if they were drawn. And everything that surrounds me is like a picture. I never saw anything like this in real life. I run among those sheep, they part before me, run after me, play, bleat all the time. And I'm so pleased to watch them, and they, snow-white and tar-black, know their mother and play with her as well.



Antonina Khelemendyk-Kokot. Photo 1957, England.

And I run farther because I want to drink, I'm very thirsty. And I know that there must be a well or spring, because it should be water where flocks pasture as sheep couldn't pasture without water. I run and see that grass is so fresh and green that I'd, perhaps, graze it myself and cancel my thirst with it.

I run farther and the weather is so fine and warm, the sun shines. Still I'm thirsty. But suddenly I notice that something is seen at a distance, but it looks like a well. I run in that direction and though I'm thirsty, can't help admiring the landscape around, those lambs who play as if they were wise creatures. I run and see some figure sitting near the well. And I see the wooden pail. And a path leads to the well, a narrow path in high grass. I watch that figure and recognize a woman covered with a wide shawl. Her feet in sandals are stretched on the path. To come to the well, I ask the woman to let me pass, tell her that I'm thirsty, I must drink. The woman answers in a tender voice that she would gladly let me pass and at the same time pull her feet away to vacate the path.

I pass along it and look at the woman, she seems familiar to

me. I go farther, put the wooden pail down, take water out, drink it and the water pours on the ground, on green grass. I drink but keep watching the woman who seems familiar to me. And suddenly I recollect. That is God's Mother, Maria! That was she. I dreamt about the birth, and martyr's death of her son Jesus Christ. Yes, I'm sure that's she! Just several minutes ago I ran looking for a well, sheep played with me, I explained to them in my mind that I was thirsty, that I had to find some water and now I'm drinking and Our Lady is sitting before me!

I watch her and images of Jesus Christ's birth, his hard way to Golgotha pass before my eyes, I see him carrying a heavy cross, and the crowd around him howl "Crucify! Crucify!". And the Roman soldiers go aside and executioners whip up Jesus, whose body bleeds, also bleeds his head with a crown of thorns, I see Our Lady sitting nearby the well and see her sorrowful, as she goes and sees her son suffering. And he is crucified and his hands and feet are nailed to the cross. All of it is terrible. And there I see his Mother and remember her story, I am aware in my dream of her teaching that Christ suffered for the mankind, for the sins of all people.

But when I drank water, I dared not to speak to Maria, Mother of Jesus. I just looked at her timidly and at the same time with some joy that I had another possibility to see her, who gave birth to Our Saviour, whom I prayed so much and also to his Mother, I confessed everything to her.

When I came from the well, the woman again pulled her feet aside, let me pass and asked whether I quenched. And her voice was so tender, like music. I thanked, said that I had quenched, and ran back to town.

I run that very road that I ran there, and it's much easier to run now, because I've quenched, slaked my thirst, and even more because I saw Our Lady. So I run, and there are the same meadows around, the same clean, fresh grass, it's so green around and wherever I look, I see sheep pasturing, lambs jump nearby, they cluster round me as if they don't want to let me pass. And the sun shines so pleasant, so soft, and my soul is gay. I turn around over and over again, to see if that woman sits near the well. And I thought that she must have been looking after those flocks, but they pastured like by themselves, they didn't need looking after, everything seemed harmonious, calm, tender at that time.

For some more time I saw the contours of the well, and the woman sitting nearby. And later I didn't see anything, for I had ran too far. I approached the town already. I was afraid that I wouldn't have found the people who brought me to the town, I was afraid to be late.

I ran to the town, came up to the trap, but those people hadn't come yet. And the town was as empty as before, nobody could be seen. I must have feared that emptiness but I'm, sitting on the trap, only glad that I'd seen Our Lady once more.

Those people came up whom I travelled with, and in my dream I had no reason to go to the town. And I began to tell them how I

ran through the meadows, that I saw there great flocks of such nice sheep, lambs, that meadows were so green. And the most important is that I saw Our Lady sitting near the path that led to the well, and she let me pass and even asked whether I had quenched.

Those people listened to me attentively, adjusted the harness on the horses, sat on the trap and we moved back.

Not far from that place, as I dreamt, I awakened. I awakened and in reality felt joy that I saw Our Lady once more. I was strained all over, my body trembled because of what I had experienced in my dream. I began to recollect that first dream when I saw Our Lady who told me about her son Jesus Christ, she took my hand and led me to Golgotha, where Jesus Christ was crucified. I couldn't sleep any longer till morning.

That was my second wonderful dream. Usually I don't remember my dreams, but those two stay before my eyes, like it happened in reality, and not long ago, but yesterday or the day before.

I had that dream in 1953 in England, town of Garrogate, Hampshire.

• Dear readers! My friends! Don't wonder that I describe here my dream. I have suffered a lot in my life, I saw suffering, torments, and death. I was born and brought up in Great Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhya, at the time when it was forbidden to believe openly, when the priests were persecuted, churches closed and destroyed. I was brought up at the time when the God's Law wasn't taught at school, there were no religious books in the libraries. There were none of them in villages, as before.

When in my childhood and youth I believed in God and prayed, it was innate, it was a sort of custom in our people for the centuries, but not comprehensible, not based on the knowledge. My father, my step-mother, my neighbours believed in God, they must have also prayed, though they concealed it not to be considered as supporters of old regime. So I did. I believed in God, I often turned to him: "Oh, my God! Help me! Avert this trouble from me!". But I didn't know anything about the birth of Jesus Christ, about his mother, about Jesus's teaching, suffering and death.

But in German I had the dream and because of it I came to the priest, in the dream Our Lady told me about her son, in the church the priest and my godmother gave me explanation. I began to understand the Christian faith better and it helped me to believe stronger in God, in God's son Jesus Christ. That doctrine showed me my life way, taught me to love people, to tell the truth, to help people, to fight false and every evil.

I don't pay much attention to the dream that I began to believe consciously in Jesus Christ, God's Son. I worship his majestic mother that was one chosen by God among many women.

Let's pray to them, they would listen to us, they would help us in our life, our present and our future is with them! Amen!!!

THE THIRD WONDERFUL DREAM

I had this dream also in England, in town Garrogate, county of Hampshire, in 1955.

I dreamt that one day my daughter's godmother Olena Kupchak, who lives now in Lyashin, province of Quebec, Canada, came to visit us in Garrogate. Our daughter Ganya was twelve months then.

In my dream I suggested to Olena that we should go together in some distant town, where a famous man named Jesus was to preach. It must have been a famous and respectful man of great authority. It was said that he would preach in that town, make an announcement of something very important.

As it happens in dreams, though I didn't know the name of the town, but when Olena accepted my offer, I bought tickets for a bus and we started for a trip, accompanied by our daughter Ganya, to that town, where that man had to announce something important. So we got in the bus and went to that Announcement.

It took several hours to get to that place from Garrogate, because it was rather far. When we passed the streets of our town, wide fields and meadows stretched before us. Everything was beautiful, green, clean and peaceful, as if in Eden. I saw ripening wheat; fields swayed like waves in the sea, under the touch of slight wind, and played with different tints. Even the bus is reached by pleasant smell of early summer, I feel smell of ripening wheat, flowers growing in the fresh grass. Though we go by bus, I feel as if I see birds flying over the fields and even grasshoppers jumping. I hear their chirring. Joy is felt everywhere and pleasant warmth. I see delicate butterflies of different colours sit down in the flowers, and bees bustle on the flowers and fly away with nectar in their little pads. I even hear their wings moving.

And we sit in that bus, watch everything that takes place around and feel glad and easy, as if there were no worries in the world. I feel that not only we were glad, but everything living in this world, I see and hear joyful singing of the birds, see butterflies flitting about, see the bees eagerly performing their tedious work. We watch this all and talk, and our words are also calm and tender. We admire the beautiful nature, and show to Ganya wonders of this world.

So, talking and admiring the nature, entertaining Ganya we began to approach our destination, the town where an announcement was to be made. From afar I saw some unusual gate, carved in wood and decorated with different pictures. And the bus driver proclaimed that we came to the Announcement.

I and my gossip took Ganya's hands, thanked the driver that brought us there successfully and got off the bus together with many other people, they seemed to come here to hear the announcement. We hold Ganya's hands and go along the path beaten by the people and I think that many people have come before us to the announcement, we are not the first.

We reach the gate and it opens itself, and behind it there was another path in the field that leads us forward. And on the sides of the path a lot of people sit just on the grass, talk about something, even wave their hands. We go and I look around, watch these people if there is some acquaintance of mine. I don't recognize anyone, so we go farther till we get to the place where there are a few people. There we would be able to see and hear well, I thought. So we sat down there with my gossip and Ganya, made ourselves comfortable in the grass.

We are all joy, Ganya chatters something, she's gay, I tell her that the man will come soon to say something to us, my gossip yeses, and there's such a noise of people's talk around, so that it is echoed loudly. But then I look at the people, and see that though they are agitated and joy, still they look tired, as if they were exhausted during long trip.

So we sit and wait patiently for that man who is to speak of something very important, of some miracles he is to announce. The adults begin to worry, look around impatiently. And the children play nicely, and my Ganya also play with the grass touching it with her small fingers. My gossip and I desire to examine the crowd, are glad that Ganya doesn't bother us, that she is busy with herself.

Suddenly everything becomes quiet, people's noise disappears. I hear something rustle as if somebody passed by us quietly. And I see simultaneously that in the middle of the square stands something like a bed, covered with nice green cloth. I showed it to Olena and said to her: Look, how wonderful, this bed must have been prepared for those who'd be tired or not well, one could have a rest on it.

I hear someone going, but can't see anyone. All the market is based in bright sunshine, it's so bright that eyes can hardly look at it. In my dream I was aware that I was dreaming and wondered that the sun's rays are so warm, that they stretch from the skies to everything that surrounds us, I saw these rays, as we sometimes see them peeping through the clouds. People whisper to each other, I hear them saying that that man who is to speak here will come soon.

At last I see a tall man walking in easy manner, wearing gilded clothes, they are embroidered with gold in nice traceries. His face is calm and significant but at the same time friendly. It's him we're waiting for. There's a woman coming near him, she's lower than he and beautiful-looking. She wears dark blue clothes that cover her all, only her face is open. She smiles, her clothes outlines her figure wonderfully, she walks majestic and calm.

I gaze at her, look into her eyes and see that I know her, I've already seen her. Yes, She is Maria, God's mother, I've already met her twice, She told me about her son. That's the third time I meet Her, I became very glad because of her presence here.

And I thought at once that if she was God's Mother, the man, is nobody but Jesus Christ of whom Maria told me about already, when she led me the first time to Golgotha and told me there about

her son's death. Yes, that's him, Jesus Christ.

I see in his hands a big book in hard book-cover decorated with gold. This book lies on wooden support looking like a reading-stand. That's to make it more convenient to hold a heavy book. I gaze at those two figures standing in the middle of something like a square or perhaps a meadow. They stand facing the people.

The man looked at the people, opened slowly that big book, looked at the people once more. And I keep thinking that he was Jesus Christ, God's Son, I know a lot about him, know about his birth and death. I'm already sure that he's Jesus Christ. I look at him, concentrate myself ready to listen attentively to each word that the man would utter.

And He really began to speak. At first he said that who would believe today to what He says, was to stand on his right hand and who wouldn't, that must stand on His left hand. For it was said in that book by Our Lord himself.

After these first words I felt very happy, so happy, that it is impossible to describe, something trembled in my side with joy, something was playing, I've recognized that man, I've recognized in Him Jesus Christ, and now I hear Him reading from that great book.

Suddenly a big white cloud approached the glade, it made that man and woman invisible. All the people became rigid and waited for something, and the voice was heard. The man of I'd already heard from Our Lady spoke about that life and death, the truthful life and eternal salvation and His sinful life that resulted in punishment, eternal torments.

Listening to Jesus Christ, I looked at my Ganya and saw that she was very tired and sleepy, I thought at once that I must carry her on that bed so fine covered with green cloth and let her sleep there. I got up quietly from the grass and carried Ganya on that bed, put her there, covered her with that nice green cloth and returned to my place to continue to listen to the story of the Good and the Evil, of the Christian Faith, that one should be kind to the people, help them.

I caught each Jesus's word and engraved everything He told. The pictures of birth of Jesus Christ, His teaching, the death of God's son on the cross for the sins of whole mankind passed again before my eyes. And after his death God's son rose from the dead in order to be raised to Heavens and to sit to the right of his father, our God. But the day of God's trial will come where all the people's actions will be judged and listen, very soft wing blows, each word of Jesus's heard. And he reads of that book in a calm voice, stresses again that who believes Him that will be saved.

I hear voice, but can't see figures but I sit and listen. Soon my legs had got numb, I began to move them, to rub them. Later the people stood up, so I also stood up shifting from foot to foot. I was tired but stood and listened.

I heard God's son telling us how the God's Angel stood on the mountain of Sion and one hundred forty four thousands people around

him who admitted Jesus name, who believed in single God, and this belief was like written on these people's foreheads, and Jesus said that the Angel heard a voice from the skies, sounding like the voice of many, like the voice of Great thunder. That voice was louder than people's noise, than a yell of shouters, louder than psaltery that unbelievers played.

Jesus read that the Angel stood with people and sang a song, that nobody but those one hundred forty four thousand could learn, and in that song the Day of Trial was proclaimed, the harvest and questioning of people who would expiate their sins, the women who didn't sin and saved virginity. Those people being with the Angel are used among people faithful to their God.

So that man read whom I knew that he was Jesus Crist and I listened attentively though I was very tired standing and shifted from foot to foot. When I heard him and almost noted each of his words to my memory, engraved it, memorized the songs about victors. He read of seven God's penalties from seven cups, about seven cups of God's wrath. He mentioned the great fornicatress, Babylon, the harvest and vintage. He read and I listened and understood, everything had been clear to me.

Jesus repeated that who believed in Him would stand on his right, and who didn't would stand on his left, and once more we heard the voice: Praise your God, we are all His servants. Let's enjoy ourselves, let's give Him His glory, because the time of Lambs marriage and his wife has been prepared already, and the veil is given to her, the veil clean and bright for it's the piety of the sains. And yet he said: tell everyone that blessed are those called for the supper of Lamb's wedding.

Such God's words I heard there and again I understood and learned much.

I began to seek for God since my young years but I couldn't at that time hear words of truth, nobody told me about Jesus Christ. I was an orphan, my father was always busy, but it wasn't a custom that father taught his daughter to believe in God, and I had no mother, I grew up with a step-mother. When I was a child, the life was hard, people tried to avoid starvation, there were no priests already at least, there wasn't any in our village, nor in Orikhiv nor in Berdyansk.

Although nobody explained me what God is, or God's son or God's mother, I often, like other people, turned to God, asked Him to help me in my trouble.

So I thought, when the man whom I considered to be Jesus Christ, spoke farther, he spoke about New Jerusalem as God's abode, that it's clean, decorated as a bride to wedding, that God would live in it with His people. God would wipe tears of the unhappy, will gladden them in their griefs, and there would be no pain or crying among them, all their past sins would be forgiven. And then I heard: It happened. I'm Alpha and Omega — the Beginning and the End. I'll give water to the thirsty, from the spring

of life, victors will inherit the Eternity and I'll be his God, and he'll be my son. Those afraid and unbelieving, bad idolater, profligates, murderers, liars would be drowned in the lake of their own sins and burnt with a sulphuric fire. It would be their second death.

I heard: I tell the truth, let everyone who hears words of prophecy from this book, never adds anything, being afraid of the great God's punishment, all the words written in this book are to remain unchangeable, if someone rejects any words from this book the Lord would take the tree of his life away, because this book is holy and holy is everything written in it. Amen!!!

When this last word was told, the cloud had dispersed, Jesus stretched his hands to me and my gossip Olena Kupchak and told us to get up and follow him to the throne. And Our Lady stood aside, later she went nearby and said to me: I go to cook some food for those who didn't believe to what they read in the book, to those unfaithful.

Our Lady came to a big copper of square shape and began to stir there some soup, and that soup was as green as leaves or grass. She showed that fluid to me and repeated that it was for those who were on the left of God, they must be fed with it until they believed in Jesus Christ, God's son.

Then Jesus Christ took my and my gossip's hands and led us to the very throne that appeared suddenly and entered the altar. He wrote our names to his book that lied on the throne. Then Jesus asked me what was my denomination and I didn't know. Then he said to me and Olena: Go and study God's word, tell everyone the truth about God. I said to Jesus that there lay my daughter Ganya and he answered: Don't worry, you'll find her when you return, only remember the number that will mark her. And he said: One hundred forty four, that would be her.

So my Ganya stayed on that bed covered with green cloth, and my gossip and I went where Jesus Christ, God's Son sent us. He told us to go straight to the house that would have many gates, but we weren't allowed to turn there, only go straight forward, till we get to the doors that would open themselves. And when we were leaving, Jesus said us also that in that house a white cloth would lie in the floor, and there we should turn at first to the left and then to the right, there would be one more door and it was the place where we were to study God's word.

We went there, and it was rather far and on our way, on the left we saw three soldiers fighting, dressed in green uniforms. One soldier shot the other, and the latter fell down. I heard that shot very distinctly in my dream.

We followed the instructions and got to that house and I didn't even touch the door with my hand when it opened itself. Inside the wonderful house we saw the white cloth mentioned by Jesus Christ, and there we turned left and entered a room.

There was a man sitting whose name we didn't know. He had gilded clothes on. He put some mantlets on my and Olena's

shoulders and said that we would study further the God's word.

I at once began to explain to that man that we saw three soldiers fighting, that one of them shot another who fell down. That man asked whether we were sure that those were soldiers, couldn't they be some other people who went to study God's word as well. I assured him that they were soldiers, as they wore green uniform, but that man didn't say anything more on the subject and we began to study God's word.

The house we entered was beautiful, bright light peeped through the glass, the interior reminded of holy place, God's temple. Then I dreamt that I and Olena began to study God's word and... I began to awake.

I woke up not at once, it was difficult to pass from the dream to the state of reality. But when I became aware, that I wasn't asleep, that I just had the third wonderful dream, I was very much agitated, trembled with joy. My legs got numb, I began to rub them.

I awakened my husband Ivan and began to tell him my dream, I tell him and tremble with joy, with agitation. He listened to me and said that what I dreamt about was really written in church book. So couldn't my dreams be called wonderful. For me, at least, they were and are wonderful.

That was already the third dream, I saw three times Our Lady and once Jesus Christ. From that time I began to resort to the church, but I didn't tell my dreams to the people, only to my relatives. I didn't tell about them, though I was ordered in my dream to go among the people and to teach them the God's word, to teach those who don't know anything about Jesus Christ, God's son who died on the cross for us all, for our sins. I mentioned in fact my dreams to some people, but my acquaintances didn't believe me, even seemed to laugh at me.

So I didn't divulge my dreams, attended church with my family, listened there to God's word and felt glad that I had a possibility to hear services, and everything else I kept inside, even concealed what I had in my dreams.

So the time passed, it was already long ago that I dreamt about in Germany 1944, then in town of Garrogate in England once in 1953 and another time in 1955. I with my husband and three our children decided to emigrate to Canada.

In 1958 we come to Canada and settled in Oshava, in Gladstone street. We met there a lot of people, in particular, the Ukrainians, parishioners of St. Yuri's church. I also made there an acquaintance that later became a friend of mine, Ganna Sokilka. I found her to be a kind strong-willed person. I began to meet her more often, our acquaintance turned to friendliness.

It was she, Ganna Sokilka, whom I confessed my dreams to. When she heard about my three wonderful dreams, she sent me to the dean of our church. At that time father Pereima used to be the dean of St. Yuri's church. And before Ganna bought me a book, Bible, that is God's word so that I could study Holy Scriptures. Ganna Sokilka

was well — read herself, so she knew what she did when she gave me that literature. And for me it was another discovery for I never had the opportunity before to read God's word in Ukrainian.

The first time I read about Jesus Christ in German, didn't understand everything in those scriptures, and now I read them in Ukrainian. Everything was so clear, so understandable that I couldn't tear myself away from the book.

When I came to father Pereima, I told him my dreams and he advised me not to conceal them, not to conceal my thoughts.

The conversation with father Pereima gave me courage, cheered me up. I began to look more boldly at people, for I knew a lot myself.

When analysing my life I made conclusion that Stalin's regime shouldn't have oppressed the believers, have destroyed churches. A man needs faith, without it he is alike the burst bell that can never sound clear. Because any church, notwithstanding the denomination, any Christian church teaches God's commandments, teaches not to kill, steal or lie, teaches to live according the laws of moral, that mean in the church laws of God. So whom could priests and believers distrust, in whose light could they be? No, Stalin's regime did everything to eradicate the faith, to break down souls of the young, of children and even of adults.

It is also one of the biggest crimes of Stalin's epoch.

I recollected my childhood, the school where not only God's Law hadn't been taught, but on the contrary, on each occasion it was proclaimed that there was no God, so, as I guessed later, Stalin's educational system eradicated all the moral drags, everything was permitted if they said that God didn't exist, it meant that there was nothing to be afraid of, one could denunciate on his father, or steal, or kill anybody. One mustn't only fall under Stalin's lows. But there were no internal drags. It meant that there was no what we call man's conscience. People became like cattle, they didn't differ from it at all. And with such "moral" it meant a trifle to call father or mother a bad name. And I often met such facts in my life. Parents wept and worried, but children had no respect to them.

That I had to say as if on the banks of what I dreamt about, three times. I finished to describe my dreams with gratitude to Our Lord, I'm sure the Jesus's Mother, our guardian, helped me to do this, that was She who gave me strength to suffer and to bear everything. Even when I didn't know anything about her.

I'm sure that all of us in our life, when it's good and when it's bad should turn to God, to God's Son Jesus Christ and to his mother — Virgin Maria.

God's son, Jesus Christ, calls us, Amen!!!

I'm thankful to my late already friend Ganna Sokilka and to also late father Pereima, that they advised me to describe my dreams!

Let Our Lord save them in His abode!

TO THE FRIENDS

My life was formed in a large measure under the influence of my dreams. Liked to do good deeds, I was ruled by mercy, I tried to do every day something good to people, whom I saw in trouble or poverty, I helped them as I could. Such life resulted in my calm, it passes quietly, my conscience doesn't torment me. My life in Canada passes quickly, I know that I won't live eternally, the time flows, so I don't postpone help to the old, the sick or the children, I help them now.

Some time more and I'll go. There my actions will be estimated, all my life in which I always tried to remain clean, did everything with God. I'm happy that I've lived this very life, in which, as I suppose, I did good, tried to help the poor and unhappy.

But there was no person without sins, and I've got a lot of them. Oh, my God! Jesus Christ! I beg you and entreat you to forgive me, sinful, to wash me white, to give peace to my soul, that I would always be with you!

Judge me, my God, after my death, absolve my sins on the other world, and you, my friends, forgive me on this earth. And I beg you — don't sin, don't follow the example of the unfaithful, hope for God, my brothers and sisters. Why are you all so sad? It's time for you to get up early and to praise God!

If your heart is heavy, you have some grief, don't conceal it, reveal yourself to your friend, but first of all to our Lord Jesus Christ. If your near ones don't understand you, my friend, Our Lord will understand you for sure. Turn to God himself with your pains and troubles, and your heart will become lighter.

So I did when grief came after me, or near me, or before me, I turned openly to God and he supported me, helped me to stand hard minutes, days, years. The Evil passed quickly by and I praised God.

So don't upset, my brothers and sisters! Learn to live with God, praise Jesus Christ, don't forget also God's Mother, Holy Virgin Maria. Love all the people, and bright dawn will shine in your hearts, God's word will live in them. The Love to all will warm you, will dispel your hesitation and inspire you with happiness. Who serves to God, he expects Heaven's Kingdom. God will absolve your sins and call you to Him when necessary.

God forgives everyone, I hurry, my God, to your call, and beg for absolution. For myself and all my near ones. Be jovial, my friends, don't complain of your fate, of disturbed life, never complain on day or night. God knows your suffering, your worries, He hears your souls cry, He'll help everybody. So don't upset, you'll go through storms of this life, trouble will come and pass, and you'll be happy. Believe and pray, hope for God, He'll hear and gladden you.

The Lord will return a hundredfold to you for your good deeds, he is all your hope, the victory for all of us will come through him. Be always ready to meet Jesus Christ. He'll take you to Heaven's

palace and here would be no sorrow for you. Oh Heavens, in the place Holy and beautiful, there's no grief or crying, the life is most wonderful there. God will wipe everyone's earthly tears, no one will die there for the second time, and no one will take your wealth from you. Life and happiness will be eternal Here, behind that grand gate, where streets are golden, where people don't know what a sorrow is.

So let's work a little here, on Earth, and wait our labour to end and God to call us to the wonderful country, where we'll not have to work. We shall meet Jesus Christ there, He'll come to us. He'll take us to beautiful abodes, and then will understand everything.

My dear friends! I don't worry at all what each of you belongs to on this earth. It doesn't matter for me. I wish you all the best in your life. All of you are my brothers and sisters. I give you my hand saying good-bye to you.

Oh, My God! Millions of people die in sins. God, hurry up to the crying, give them advice and consolation. Help them, The Lord, for they are drowned in their sins.

I'm ready, my God, to come to you every moment.
Amen!!!

LETTERS TO THE RELATIONS

LETTER TO MY SISTER

*Autumn sun shines, wind blows,
and a sister shed tear over her sister.
Wind flows, wild wind sways the poplar,
I don't know, why my sister doesn't write letter to me.
I look for my sister every day, and you keep silent and I
don't know why.
I've got skirts and shawls for you,
my dear sister, can you be lost?!*
*I prepare here for you something to eat
and to drink and the bed white and soft
for you to rest on.
In bad moment, in hard time the mother
gave birth to you, so much unhappy.
All the paths and roads are overgrown with
blackthorns where my sister walked on her white feet,
Where she walked with her friends
in a green grove.
And now I weep alone, looking for you all.
From East or West —
where am I to wait you from?
And am I to wait here
long for you?*

Camp Lyubeck, Germany, 20 April 1942.

LETTER TO THE SISTER

I look through the window to the side where the sun rises, I stand on the threshold of wooden barracks and think a thought over and over again — when will I return to my mother country?

On one side and on the other side I see two roads. One road is where I walked and another is where my sister missed me.

And one more road where I passed, it leads to Germany, and my sister sheds tears.

It's hard for me to live in Germany, hard to work, I hadn't even a possibility to write a letter to you, when I went to work it was still dark, I returned late at night, late at night. Wherever I looked, I saw a foreign land.

Camp Lyubeck, Germany, 20 April 1942.

LETTER TO THE SISTER

So passes my youth in foreign land, my native Ukraine, my poor family stayed only in my memory. Don't cry, dear sister, don't cry, perhaps I'll be happy, if I'm healthy. If alive — I will do come to you. I'm alone in the foreign land, far from my motherland, I have no family here, haven't anyone. Only a nightingale worries my soul.

I'll write a letter small, the nightingale will bring it home. He'll bring it, sit down in the garden, and ask my sister whether she doesn't forget me. He'll ask also my brother and father, what they thought when the strangers took me to their land.

You said, my sister, that you wouldn't forget me, and perhaps the time will come for you to cry, my darling, with small tears. Either I'll return to your house and you'll cry with joy, or because you'll never see me again.

There's no, my darling sister, not a flower, I'd look for you, but don't know from where. Oh, then I'll come to you when grass becomes green. And grass grew and began to fade. They waited for sister over and over till they ceased to cry.

Waters overflow on four sides, perhaps I'll come to see you in twenty four years. Oh! I'll come to, and brother and sister will say — our mother is no more. Oh, my brother, my dear, you'll bury your mother in cherry garden in the corner.

Camp Lyubeck, Germany 1942.

LETTER TO MY RELATIONS

The time passed, and summer came again. It was a year ago, in Ukraine, when I was told to prepare for a long way no looking at my young age. For the slavery I had to prepare to say farewell to my relations. When I was preparing, saying good-bye I cried bitterly and didn't hear those dear words that my father told me.

I looked last at my house, and kissed last all my family. I looked at the flowers that were dear to me as children to their mother. Everything was green and nice around and I had to leave my family and to go to a far land.

My dear sister, my heart feels that your fate will be hard, and I also will suffer on this world. Don't forget me, my dears.

Camp Lyubęck, Germany, 22 June 1943.

LETTER TO THE SISTER

Dear Sister, I live abroad and greet sincerely all our relations. Cold days passed and spring came and all that time your sister had suffered in a foreign country.

Sun shines brightly but not for me, because here in the strange land everything isn't bright but dark. I have no right to admire or be glad of something, all my days from sunrise till sunset pass in the hospital. When I come out of the hospital for a minute, my eyes turn to cast to my home land.

There on the east everything is dear, rivers and roads, and I'm crying, I can't stop my sad tears. And I see — you are having supper remembering the daughter. And you go to bed in the poor, but native house.

And I have no rest in this slavery, I'm all the time in a hurry either to or from work.

Tonya, 5 of March 1943. Camp Lyubęck, Germany.

TO BROTHER AND SISTER

I know, my dear sister, I know, my brother, there were nobody to heat the stove, to bring water. You waited for help from me, the poor orphan. Don't be sad, the time will come and perhaps I'll be able to prove useful to you, my darlings, don't despair, everything will be arranged. I don't forget you like a mother can't forget her children.

Tonya, 15 April 1943. Camp Lyubęck, Germany.

TO MY RELATION

The Ukrainians worked till the dark night, they went to canteen being very hungry. And were given just one potato for the supper. All the girls began to cry — our fate is sad. A German came out of the canteen, she howls: "Russian swine, you always are hungry, you must be satisfied with what you are given!"

Tonya, 18 April 1943. Camp Lyubęck, Germany.

TO BROTHER AND SISTER

I had a dream in a foreign land. I dreamt that I'm in Ukraine lying alone under the snowball-tree, I looked around — nobody's

here but a bird flying high and singing gaily. Birds sing so gaily like a mother to her beloved child. I sleep, like under a showball-tree, night covered the God's world. And it's so quiet around, so calm. Our country sleeps. I dream that I'm at home, speaking to my father and kissing you, my sister and brother. And the river flows, water purls, as if the Lord murmurs a prayer, advice to me.

Tonya, 25 April 1943. Camp Lyubeck, Germany.



Sister Maria welcomes guests from Lvov Lesya, Volodya and Zenya and their father Stepan. Village of Mala Tokmachka, Orikhivsky district, Zaporizky region, Ukraine.

ABOUT MY LIFE

It was nice for Ukrainians to live in Germany — they worked all day long to get 4 potatoes. And we thanked for those potatoes, what could we do, girls, that's our fate. When winter comes, friends, we won't get even this. Girls became sad and so was I.

That was our good life in Germany, though we had nothing to eat we had to work hard.

And because pot-bellied SS men watch you all the time, you have no rest of the damned work.

And must work at the machine, being steeped in perspiration, and Friday comes, you've got only 2 marks — not enough even for soda water.

18 July 1943, Camp Lyubeck, Germany.



Sister Maria with her bread-winner — a goat. Nearby stand guests from Lvov — Oleg, Zenya and Volodya. The house is 100 years old already, it's made of clay. Village Mala Tokmachka, Zaporizka region.

ABOUT THE CAMP LIFE

We have worked till the late of night, returned to the canteen — very hungry. In the canteen the Germans sit — they have enough to eat. And we are said "Kam hier, weing barabole."

Old witch, evil German, like a snake hisses, instead of "we are short of potatoes" shows us a stick.

On Sunday satisfied Germans walk in a town, and hungry Ukrainians sing out of spite, with disappointment.

And in winter it's snow, frost and snow-storm, we are cold in barracks, our worn clothes don't warm us.

We were given good "Shug"**, it's nice to walk in them, let the Germans live so in the world. If we walk in them in the town, few of us don't fall down. Oh, wait, damned Germans, it won't be forgotten.

The light was switched off, we went to bed, but suddenly an alarm was, we had to get up. The German opens "Keller", put us

* Come here, but there's little potatoes.

** Shug — shoes.

these, and gads outside like a devil.

And in the cellar there's another danger — there's a pit aside, once our friend Tetyana fell there. All the girls were afraid, ran there because they thought they had lost their friend.

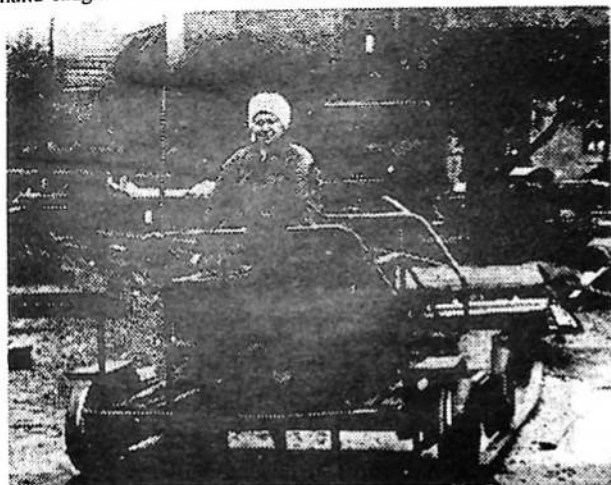
We have helped her out, she's chalk-white, we noticed blood on her forehead — he has broken her head. We returned to barracks, our time to sleep is over, so we had to nod a bit on work.

Tonya, 18 August 1943, Camp Lyubeck, Germany.

TO SISTER SHURA

Dear sister Shura! I've never dealt with poets, can't make verses, but I wan't to tell you of my life abroad.

We lived in our native land, we were free there, and the German hand caught us and made us serve to the Germans.



Sister Olexandra who worked at the plant "Zaporizhstal". She brings in and out the materials on this carriage.

We were brought to the strange country, we had bad life there, we were hungry and ragged and so passed our young years. We worked day and night, and we had fetid soup for dinner. And having returned from work, we were closed in barracks.

We couldn't speak during our work, we had to perform the norm, as they told us, and nobody asked us — whether we ate, or slept, or had a rest. When ill, we were pulled down from the

plant-bed, like dogs, and at work the masters were cruel to us. They pushed us, beat us, scolded and brought their bad fists to our faces.

And their shouts followed us "Du bist shwain". The words impressed us and bending over the machine, we remembered of our parents.

We cried then bitterly and cursed our fate and prayed. Oh, my Lord! Why do you punish me to?

We are in far, strange country. Our mother had better never given us a birth, or we'd better died in our native, dear Ukrainian land.

On Sundays all the Germans go for a walk, they are free, and Ukrainian girls in barracks sing out of spite, sit together at the window.

The wind blows among the colds, our sadness flows, and so do our bitter tears when we remember of our dear, unhappy Ukrainian land.

So I finish describing our camp troubles, the fate of Ukrainian workers in Germany, who were taken to forced labour. Don't pay attention to my writing, perhaps, it's not well-rounded, but it doesn't matter, what is important, that it's a document of a witness. You'll read it, and in many years people will know how Ukrainian slaves of XXth century lived during the war.

German slavery finished for us.

20 May 1945.

My dear relatives, my dear sister and brother. Don't cry, please, while reading this letter. All of it has already passed. These years I would remember for the rest of my life.

Write me, will you? Shurochka! I suppose you haven't drowned in the Azov sea that I don't receive any letters from you.

I wait for letters,

Your sister Tonya.

A LETTER TO SISTER

Several words for you. Look at the birds in above.

Those little birds are loved by the Lord,

He gives them food. If the Lord loves birds,

He loves you as well.

The Lord loves lilies in field, where river flows fast

If He loves flowers. He loves you as well.

He gives life to all birds and flowers.

He hadn't forgotten small children,

He loves you as well.

My darling sister, do you know how many bright stars shine in the skies? How many white and beautiful clouds pass with the winds?

And the God knows the number of it and keeps his eye on each of the great number.

Dear sister, do you know how many quick fishes swim in the water? And how many motley butterflies fly in the fields?

*The God gave them names, to live they all and in order
that all of them entertain us.
And do you know how many different people live on
Earth and how many sinful and happy people are among
them?
God looks after us and covers us with his love, and is
eager to save us.*

Tonya Kokot.



Sister Galina with her husband Olexi, daughter - in - law and grandchildren. Zaporyzhya, Ukraine.

THE LETTER TO SISTER

My dear sister!

I beg the God being here abroad, for you all, and for the motherland, for brother and sister, for my dear school friends.

I pray for God to save you all.

Though I'm here abroad, far from the native land and my family, but I believe the time'll come and the sun will shine for me and for all of you!

I pray, and you pray as well that the God allows us to meet whether in our Ukrainian land, or just here, abroad where I live, I'll wait for you with peace and love, like for a desirable sister.

We can already see from afar that wonderful land where the God is in his divine glory. Savior himself leads us to God's Eden,

leads people faithful to him.

Oh, my dear sister, you wake up, wake from sins and vanity.
Jesus Christ will call us, He'll call me and you.

Wake up quickly because He calls us in His love, don't avoid
him. Hurry up to him. He'll love us all.

He suffered for us all, for all the sins. He didn't keep away
from you also. Come to Him, he waits for you.



**Brother's wife Maria with the children — Galinka and Zhorzhyk on
father's yard. The children were born in Magadan, in Far Northern
East. Near them brother's step-mother stands. 1961.**

The sacred blood poured out of His wounds, His gaze shone
with love. My dear sister, he suffered for us unlucky.

The most clean blood clears us, whitewashes all the burden
and sin from the heart.

Love renews the soul, gives peace to us all.

Yours Tonya Kokot.

LETTER TO SISTER

Oh, my dearest sister, why do you always cry, so bitterly? Did you go astray or your love to me has already ended?

You look after father, but look also after yourself. Don't seek for earthly blessing, but communicate to God more often. My dear sister, earthly glory is a poison for heart. Who's late now, he could part with the Lord for ever.

I love the church music and choirs, and your soul is tormented by the strange rites. Sister, I beg you — wake up. All the world joins the Lord, hurry up towards him! Don't stop!

Many people have already been enlightened, they work for the Glory of God. They work eagerly, gladly. But there are those people who wouldn't move their finger for the God. And you, sister, and you, my brother, live well and honestly, in respect to each other.

For who loves God, he serves Him with it, and the God will also love that who serves Him.

My dear relation, sister and brother!

What a joy is to serve the God and later to live with the God on Heavens.

Tonya Kokot.

TO SISTER SHURA

Dear sister Shura!

I know, you are tired already of roaming, you can find no rest. Don't go the false way, for it leads to nowhere.

To nowhere. Turn aside from him as soon as possible, don't ruin your young years.

You'll be happy, your soul will calm, you'll come to me abroad. You'll forget who was your enemy! I'll give you everything and we'll love each other.

You don't cease to love your sister. Sister, my heart, calm yourself, abandon your sins, recognize God's strength.

Do you know how God told Noah to build an Ark. He told in details to build it three hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. The Deluge came and people got afraid, they cried: "God's Wrath came on us!".

Waters flooded all the lands, there was no rescue, people fussed till they understood that malice wouldn't help it. And people but also animals: lion and lamb stood together.

There wasn't place enough for everyone, so mother began to say good-bye to her daughter, father to son, brother to sister.

The time of punishment came. All the land was flooded, people that left, weren't already seen, they disappeared. There were no longer people, and birds didn't twitter in skies, the destruction came.

Life on Earth came to the end. There still seen here and there

people and animals trying to rescue, but high waves covered them. Only those, being in the Ark were rescued, as God told to Noah.

That Ark swam long, and Noah let a raven out, it saw only water. Then Noah let a dove out and it had flown for some time and brought in olive branch on the Ark. Then the hope came and the Ark moored to the mountain of Ararat. And all the people and animals left the Ark and the first was Noah himself.

Dear sister! This time when the end of the world comes, everyone will wish the better motherland. And in order to wait for it one must live without evil or sin.

I am eager to see you, my dear sister. You wait for me persistently, I don't know where to find strength, but I believe that, God will help me to overcome that far way. And we'll again embrace each other, I'll again be in my mother country, in Ukraine, I fly to my mother country with the strength of my heart, there's my happiness, my joy.

I began to forget slowly my torments, the despair I lived in during the war. This world I now live in is strange, foreign for me I can't get used to him. All my thoughts are in my native land. And here I can never be calm, my heart will get calm on Heavens.

It's sometimes very hard here, though I seem not to lack anything. But I'm tired, I'd like to live my last days with my relations, on my native land.

Very soon I'll go to another country, where sun does never set. There is joy and holiness there, all what we never saw on earth, of what we never knew and even didn't want to know. On Heavens there is no grief, no unhappiness, one can't hear there the miserable crying. Everything is shining, beautiful, happy there, and there are never hard or disturbed days.

God shines there among those who is faithful to him, who had expiated their sins. He wipes tears, consoles the unhappy. And I will soon be there, on that holy mountain, with Jesus. I'll never forget there those who saved me in my hard days.

Very far from earthly fuss, all the people's cares, there is a land where serenity governs and there never is gloom, joyful songs sound there. I fly with my heart to that land. There's eternal day's light, there's happiness, there's God's Eden. The holy love rules in Eden, there's a spring of eternal life, unearthly beauty.

The skies and earth are new there, everyone lives with true, hearts are saved there by Christ, nobody sheds tears there.

All of us are guilty before Christ, he saved us. Though the world is full of sin, He saved us. God came to suffer for all of us, for our sins that He whitewashes, He leads us to the country of paradise. Don't we also linger, for everyone's time will come. He'll find us everywhere, in sorrow or in faith, He'll never forget us.

Let our faith, my dear sister, not hesitate, and my hope will win, it won't let me die.

Why are you so sad, my sister? Don't be upset, dear sister,

don't grieve, be gay. God loves us, the happy time will come for us, the time that we'll live in Eden. Turn to God, pray in silence, alone, and alarm will leave your heart, your soul will calm.

In the world waves are storming as on the sea, wind blows, wind howls. Look, darling, at the stars, God watches you from there. We don't have to bear it long, millions of hearts suffer here in slavery, in poverty. You go forward with love, wipe your tears, don't remember them. Let the joy be spread from your face, give joy also to your friends. When you give them joy, you'll be happy yourself, and everyone around you.

God saved me in my trouble, He always defended me. I can't live in this world without God. I beg you, sister, to live also with God, Jesus Christ.

Christ, that suffered for all of us on the cross, liberated us from sins. He calls us all, let's come to him, he'll make our hearts happy.

Don't go, my sister, the wrong ways, don't hurt anyone. Live true, and God will love you.

I'm often sad here, for I don't see you, my darlings. I'm not calm, I keep silence as if I were dumb. And everything seems sleeping around me, and moon and stars are sad. Neither grove, nor meadows gladden me, my heart is full of sorrow. In Jesus only is my joy, my happiness. How wonderful, that I learned truth about him, about faith, about his torments. We should learn, study God's words, we are all fuss without them.

Some time ago I wandered as a blind, and death wandered everywhere, but at last I found Christ's teaching. God gave me strength, I wasn't weak already. I look bravely at the eternity, I'm not afraid of it.

In grief and sufferings I'll be strong with God everywhere, and nobody will tear me from faith. Christ will care of us.

For all my life, I'll sing glory to Christ, because he took the death for us all, sinful, he gave us salvation. I'll sing about Saviour, about the faith he gifted to me, that he rescued me from earthly fear.

When we get to despair, let's remember about Christ's suffering, his wounds and thorne crown, and torments he suffered. Here are his hands and feet nailed to the wood. People see Christ's torments, and he died long on the cross. And his heart was pierced by a spear long, not to hesitate, to confirm that death.

Let's abandon our earthly dreams, all that travels around the world. Everything is a fuss but the belief in Christ.

My dearest father, who is eager for salvation with all his soul, that will find his sins absolved by Jesus's blood. Don't worry about the sin if you really regret about it, God Himself will absolve you it and open to you the doors to His Kingdom. Dear father, all of us had to suffer for our sins, but there is a hope for liberation, that Jesus Christ had prepared for us by his torments.

Let's give Our Saviour honour and worship, because it was him who brought on earth His Salvation, he saves us from devil. Father, I don't want to spend my time in fuss, I want to live all my

life in the Belief in Christ, and I'll go along the way he showed. I'll never, not for a minute renounce him, I want to give him all my life.

I'll carry Christ in my heart along the world, I'll carry him to towns and villages. Let my Angel the Keeper lead me on that way, chosen by me.

Many souls are wandering in darkness, drowning in sins. Many hot tears are being poured by the mankind on earth, because the disease torments a soul, and it makes it grieve and yearn.

I want to tell about Jesus Christ where is disharmony in houses, where children are not taught to pray. Where there's drunkenness, darkness, lack of mind, where nothing is known about Jesus Christ. Of him I want to tell to these people.

Amen! Amen! Amen!

Yours Tonya Kokot.



Maria Paliy and her son Sergiy. My friend from village Kopani, Gulaipilski district, Zaporizka region. I went to school with her, she lived in neighborhood. 1951.



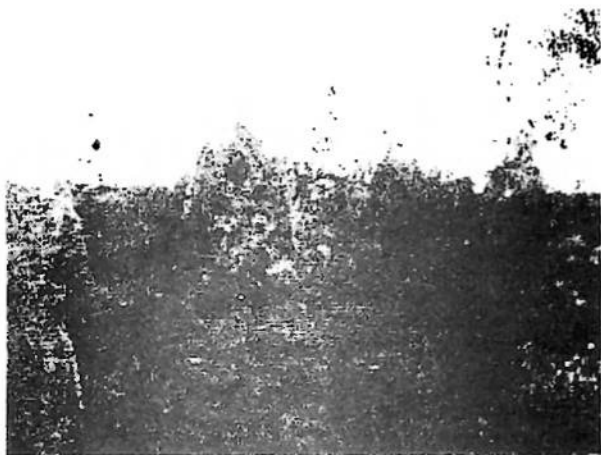
My husband's brother Yuri with wife and children. In the middle - my mother-in-law. Village of Gnoynytsi.



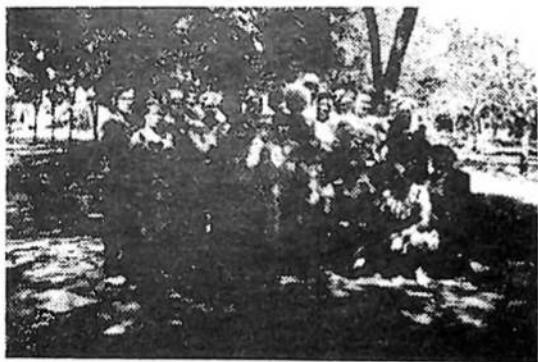
Father Petro Tarasovich Khelemendyk visited his daughter Tonya and son-in-law Ivan Kokot in Oshava, Canada, where this photo was made.



School friend Valya Bevz with her husband and daughter Tanya, sister Alexandra, Tonya Kokot with daughter Hanya. Village of Dolynka.



The grave of my mama Melania P. Zinchenko in village of Kopani, Gulaipilski district, Zaporizka region. On the grave is a garland from me. Mama died in 1925. May her memory live for ever!



My friends and relatives from village of Kopani, Gulaipilski district who met us during our trip to Ukraine in 1968.



Father Petro Tarasovich Khelemendyk in the yard of his house in Orikhiv. He looks through the photoalbum sent to him by his daughter Tonya and son - in - law Ivan Kokot from Canada.



Tonya (Antonina) Kokot admires flowers in her yard. Oshava, 1978.

CONTENTS

Preface	6
-------------------	---

KOLKHOZ CHILDHOOD

Orphan Childhood	
Before Collectivization	9
Collectivization of Village	19
Dispossession of Grandfather	24
Kolkhoz Weekdays	29
Foreboding of Famine	34
Weekdays of the Family	36
Hungry Guests	40
Country Life	42
On the Eve of Famine	46
Famine	48
Wise Stalin and Stupid Life	55
Ideological Profit and our Week-Days	63
Life of the Schoolchildren	68
Doctor's assistants and obstetrics	
School in Orikhiv	75
Foreboding of War	80
Medical School in Berdyansk	90
The War!	93
Germans in Berdyansk	95
Extermination of Jews	97
Back to the Village	98
Being Removed to Germany	100

GERMAN SLAVERY

Germany	107
Lyubeck	109
At the German plant	112
I Fell Ill	116
Life Conditions in the Camp	117
Letters from Home	119
Fate of Children	120
"...Youth will Never Come Back..."	123
Among people	128
My "Country-Girl"	132
Another "Country-Girl"	134
Slavish Fate	136

Thoughts Travel into the Past	139
In the Penalty-Camp	141
It Never Rains but It Pours	145
I am Getting Better	149
Work at the Canteen	152
Ear-Rings	153
About Hope	156
Our Fellows	157
Different Watchmen	158
Vasyl'ko	159
News from Fronts	161
More about Vasyl'ko	162
The end of Penalty-Camp	170
On the Eve of Hitler's Crash	172
The end of the War. What Next?	174
Some Words about Private	178
"Na Rodynu!"	182
In Polish Camp	185
On the West!	189
Sister Marusya's Fate	192
Father's Fate	197

ADDITION

Why did I write memoirs?	202
The First Wonderful Dream	203
The Second Wonderful Dream	210
The Third Wonderful Dream	214
To the friends	221
Letters to Relations	222
Contents	239

