

Podolian, Maria and her mother

On September 30 1941, when Maria Henson was 16 years old, the Jews of Kirovograd were murdered. Maria was late in arriving at the gathering place designated for Jews, and saw her family being shot to death. Non-Jewish residents of the town gathered in the area, and one of the women in the crowd attempted to save Maria, claiming she was Russian. Since Maria had no identifying papers, she was led to her home. Upon her arrival, her neighbor, Maria Podolian, saw her. The neighbor understood the situation and greeted her with the call “sister”. In accordance with the gendarmes’ demand, she presented the birth certificate of her sister Anna, who had died a few years earlier. The policeman was not satisfied, and took them for further interrogation to the German supervisor. Podolian was able to convince the German supervisor that Heinson was her sister.

Heinson, however, could not remain in Podolian’s apartment, so her neighbor transferred her to her mother’s home in the town of Deprodzerzhinsk. There, she was presented as the mother’s second daughter, bearing the name Anna Shapovalova. Within a few days the two women were called to the local police station where they were interrogated following a neighbor’s complaint. In spite of all of the police efforts, they were unable to prove that Maria Heinson was Jewish, and she was able to remain in the “mother’s” house until the liberation.