



The Jews of Volhynia and their Reaction to Extermination

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THE CONQUEST OF VOLHYNIA¹ by the Germans was completed in July, 1941, with the exception of the forested areas and the swamps in the northeast corner. Harsh decrees were inflicted upon the Jews of Volhynia, of whom only 5% had succeeded in fleeing or in being evacuated. By the beginning of December, 1941, nearly a quarter of the Jews of the region had been murdered in "actions" and pogroms carried out by the local population, and approximately 180,000 of them remained.

Between December, 1941 and June, 1942, the mass murder of the Jews of the region was temporarily halted; in the meantime the Jews had been confined to ghettos or restricted to a single area by means of extremely strict travel regulations. They thought they were relatively secure and might remain so until the end of the war. However in the second half of June "actions" took place in which the "unproductive" ghettos of Korets, Dubno, Kovel, and other places

¹ Volhynia lies in the northwest of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Until 1939 it belonged to the eastern border regions of Poland as a separate district (Wojewodztwo), and when it was annexed by the USSR it was divided into the districts of Rovno and Volhynia (with the capital of Luck). Under the Nazis, together with Podolia, they became part of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

were liquidated. In July "actions" were begun to liquidate the communities of Olyka and Rovno. Although the Jewish communities were isolated, knowledge of the mass murders spread with lightning speed, carried by Jewish refugees or by local inhabitants. Then came August, 1942, the beginning of the extensive and final liquidation of the Jews of Volhynia.

It began at the time of the German attacks in the Caucasus and at Stalingrad, as the front was moving further and further to the east. The hopes for a swift Soviet victory entertained by the inhabitants of the ghettos were stifled. There was almost no Soviet underground in the Western Ukraine during the summer of 1942. Most of the attempts to introduce underground agents behind the German advance ended in failure, and the military intelligence groups which were parachuted in were generally liquidated. At that time young Jews attempted to contact Soviet agents in the area, but unsuccessfully.

On the face of it the geographical conditions of Volhynia should have permitted the rescue of many Jews, for both in the north and in the center of the region there were large areas of thick woods and swamps, which could have hidden individuals and groups. But those advantages were neutralized by the apathy and enmity of the local inhabitants, especially among the Ukrainians. Their traditional anti-Semitism was enflamed by nationalists who took control of the community and identified with the Nazi ideology. Proponents of Ukrainian independence saw the liquidation of the Jews as an important achievement. In the words of the editor Ulas Samchuk, in his newspaper, *Volhyn*: "The element that settled our cities, whether it is Jews or Poles who were brought here from outside the Ukraine, must disappear completely from our cities. The Jewish problem is already in the process of being solved, and it will be solved in the framework of a general reorganization of the 'New Europe';" the vacuum that would be created was to be filled by "the true proprietors of the land, the Ukrainian people."²

² In the Ukrainian newspaper *Volhyn*, Sept. 1, 1941, p. 2.

Because of that situation the Jews preferred to remain in the ghettos until the last minute, and their reaction to their extermination generally had an improvised character.

Signs of the coming danger were expressed in reports that pits were being dug, news brought by Soviet prisoners of war or by peasants who were doing the work or who saw it being done. In some cases the information came from German or Ukrainian functionaries. Also, when work was taken back from Jewish artisans before being finished it was a sign of what was to come. However, everything was either hinted at or known just a short time before the extermination itself, a single day or a few days. The Jews reacted by fleeing or by trying to hide, by personal opposition, and by organized rebellion.

Flight and Efforts to Hide

Mass flight was attempted, as well as flight in small groups, and by individuals. Most of the attempts were spontaneous, provoked by an individual whose cries spurred the masses to run toward the nearby woods. When the Jews of Rokitno were transported to the railroad station on their way to concentration in the Poleska camp in Sarny, one woman cried out: "Jews, they are killing us." Afterwards other women began to shout, and a mass flight began. Hundreds were shot in the town square. About half of those fleeing (there were 1,638 people present) succeeded in reaching the forests, and of them only some 200 survived.³ The Jews of Rokitno who were taken to Sarny took part in mass flight with the Jews of Sarny, of Berezhnitsa, of Tomashgorod, of Klesov, and of Dubrovitsa — together some

³ For the testimony of Barukh Shahori, see *Rokitno, Volhynia, and the Surroundings*, a book of testimony-Tsuferfein, edited by Eliezer Lioni, Tel Aviv, 1966, pp. 273-274; the testimony of Yakov Saltzman, Yad Vashem Archives (hereafter Y.V.A.), 03/1354; of Shmuel Levin, Y.V.A., 297/141; of Asher Binder, Y.V.A., 03/3364; and of Mordecai Shulner, Y.V.A., 03/1366.

14,000 people. The initiators of the mass flight were members of the underground from Sarny, who actually planned resistance there. The flight took place after the first groups were sent to their death. They cut through the fence, and the Gypsies burned down their shed, creating a smokescreen. Some 2,500 were killed in the area of the break in the fence, and some 1,000 succeeded in running beyond the range of guards' guns. Most of them died on the way to the forests and in the forests, and only a few, about 100 people, 3% of all the Jews in the camp, survived until the liberation.⁴

The flight from the labor camp in Kostopol was somewhat better organized. There were some seven hundred young men who had been concentrated from the surrounding ghettos, and they were employed in the lumber mills and in various other enterprises. On the eve of the destruction of the ghetto in the town those in the camp heard that they too would be liquidated on the same day, and they decided to flee. That day, during roll-call, one of the organizers shouted "Hurray" and all of them started running toward the nearby forests. In the end neither their youth nor their proximity to the forest saved them, for most of them died during the next few months, and only a few survived.

Jews of all ages took part in the mass flight, as we see from the testimony of Assi Silberberg. Small children ran, and babies crawled, and she herself ran while holding a three year old.⁵ First they had to break through the circle of guards and get beyond the range of the Ukrainian and German policemen's guns. At that stage they were assisted by the confusion that reigned and also because the police

⁴ For the testimony of Yitzhak Geller, see *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Sarny*, ed. Yosef Kariv, Tel Aviv, 1961, pp. 294-95; also Y.V.A., 1296/1234; the testimony of Yosef Wolf, Y.V.A., 535/488; Shmuel Levin, Y.V.A., 297/141; and of Paul Ridiger (German, a "TODT" soldier), Y.V.A., 1222/1196. The letter from the Ukrainian woman to Meir Volkon dated June 5, 1944, according to which 5,000 people attempted to flee. (A copy is in the author's possession.)

⁵ Testimony of Assi Zilberberg and others, Y.V.A., 16/109.

were armed only with bolt-action guns, not with automatic rifles, although in the concentration area of Sarny machine-guns were posted, and many people fell in the immediate area of the break in the fence. Afterwards they had to overcome hostile elements on their way to the forests, thugs and peasants who tried to rob the Jews of their property and clothing, or to turn them over to the authorities. But the principal difficulty came in the third stage, in the forests. In their flight, many Jews abandoned their baggage, including outer clothing, boots, etc. During the months of September and October the nights were cold, rain fell, and the conditions were unbearable. For that reason more than a few people, especially women with small children and the elderly, decided to return to the towns and die at the hands of the Germans.⁶

Another improvised response was hiding. Some Jews prepared hiding places before the liquidation, in basements or attics (in general the houses were small, single-storeyed, wooden structures) or with Christian friends. Those who decided to hide at the last minute generally chose inner rooms which they blocked off with heavy furniture, or places improvised behind piles of belongings or vegetables. In both cases they trusted that the searches would be superficial and not repeated. But in fact the sieges of the ghettos lasted for several days, and repeated searches took place. Among the searchers were Ukrainian policemen who knew the layout of local houses and the possibilities for hiding in them. After the siege of the ghettos was lifted, the local Ukrainians began a thorough search for Jewish property, and they did not hesitate to turn over the Jews who had hidden.

One Jew tells: "In the darkness of night I slipped away and climbed up to the attic of Shmarye der Mulyer. I lay there for three days and three nights without any food or water. I sustained myself with hay that I found in the attic On the fourth day I felt that

⁶ *Ibid.*

my strength was running out. I decided to come down from my hiding place, because I was going to die in any case, and it would be better to die with my brothers and sisters.”⁷ The hiding places that had been prepared in advance had to accommodate more than two or three times the number of people for whom they had been planned. They very soon began to suffer from lack of air, food, and water. It is reported that in one bunker of that kind a little girl cried, and she had to be smothered. Her mother left the hiding place: “Conditions in the bunker became worse and worse. The food and water ran out. Our bodies became progressively weaker, and everyone lost hope. Sarah’ke Fuchs, the wife of Chaim Lazer, could not bear it any longer and hanged herself in order to put an end to her sufferings.”⁸

Improvised efforts to survive by means of mass flight or concealment were widespread. According to the information that has been gathered from various testimonies, those who took flight numbered some 22,500, and those who attempted to hide numbered about 15,000. In addition one should reckon some two thousand people from communities which left no testimony, and thus we come to a total estimate of more than 40,000 people, about a quarter of the Jews of Volhynia on the eve of the extermination. We must state once more that these estimates do not indicate the extent of survival, for a great many people were discovered, caught, and killed during the first hours and days.

Examination of the map of the mass flights and the numbers of survivors indicates that survival was relatively greater in northern and eastern Volhynia. For example in the town of Sernik, from which we have detailed data, there were some 1,000 Jews before the liquidation. About half of them attempted to flee, but only 279 people reached the forests. Most of them were men, about three quarters

⁷ For the testimony of Shmuel Widro, see *Korets (Volhynia)*, Memorial Book for the community, edited by Eliezer Lioni-Tsuferfein, Tel Aviv, 1959, p. 422.

⁸ For the testimony of Moshe Gorvitz, see *Korets (Volhynia)*, p. 422.

between the ages of 13 and 40. Some 102 of them died in the woods: 10-12 in battle as partisans, and the rest of hunger, cold, illness, and pursuit.⁹ The comparatively high rate of survival is explained both by their ages and by the fact that in that region a Soviet underground appeared relatively early.

Individual Resistance

This form of rebellion was improvised at the last minute, and it was generally spontaneous in character. It took various forms, some passive, such as refusal to obey orders and speaking out against the persecutors, and some were violent, such as burning the houses in the ghetto and attacking policemen.

Refusal to obey orders, generally at the very edge of the burial pit, was expressed in the refusal to undress or to turn over valuables, or in the destruction of banknotes. Sometimes those who refused to undress also spat in the policemen's faces and slapped them.¹⁰ When they spoke out, they generally addressed violent curses against their Nazi murderers, and sometimes rabbis, functionaries, or simply Jews made short speeches. The survivors of the murder in Kovel report that a teacher from the Hebrew Gymnasium, Joseph Avrekh, spoke out, saying:

Murderers, our miserable blood will not keep silent. You will lose the war. There are enough Jews to revenge our blood. Woe to Jews who have forgotten how to take revenge. For the blood of their brothers and their faith. Revenge!¹¹

⁹ Melech Bakaltshuk-Felin, *Zikhronos fun a yidishn' partizan*, Buenos Aires, 1958, pp. 17, 176.

¹⁰ For the testimony of David Yankoviak, see *Rovno*, Memorial Book, edited by Aryeh Avatihi, Tel Aviv, 1957, p. 547. For the testimony of Shlomo Shreier, Y.V.A., 1619/1500. For that of Yakov Bas from Rafalovka, see Valdimivetz, *Gal'ed le-Zecher Irenu*, edited by Aharon Meyerowitz, Tel Aviv, 1963, p. 411; for the testimony of Menashe Pertshik, see *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Kamen Kashirski ve-ha-Sviva*, edited by A. Stein, Y. Chrost, A.Y. Overzhitzer, Tel Aviv, 1965, p. 696.

¹¹ For the testimony of Ben-Zion Shor, see *Kovel*, Memorial Book, edited by Eliezer Lioni-Tsuferfein, Tel Aviv, p. 417. The testimony of P. Pantorin, Y.V.A., 03/538.

The burning of houses was the act of individuals. As we have said, most of the houses in the ghettos were made of wood, and it was summer. Using some straw or a can of kerosene one house was set alight, and the fire spread to the other houses, creating confusion among the Germans who were besieging the ghetto. Under the cover of smoke many Jews were able to flee, although the one who set the fire generally died in the flames.¹²

Sometimes the police were attacked bare-handed. Young women attacked impulsively with their hands and nails, trying to throttle them or put out their eyes, etc. Young men tried to steal the policeman's weapon as they attacked, in order to use it against him. Sometimes they did not know how to use the weapons or they were killed by other policemen nearby. But sometimes they managed to kill or wound policemen until they themselves were shot. Here are some examples:

In Shumskoye two young women attacked the head of the police, choking him and biting him until they were shot to death. In Turiysk a young man named Berish Segal stole a German submachine gun, opened fire, and killed several policemen until he was killed by others. And Nathan Worik from Ustilug stole a gun, hit a German policeman in the face with it, but was shot by other policemen.¹³

¹² For the testimony of Rachel Kibrik about Boremel community, see *Ha'ita Ayara . . .*, Memorial Book for the community of Berestechko, edited by Mendel Singer, Haifa, 1961, p. 204; for the testimony of Moshe Gildenman, see *Korets (Volhynia)*, p. 407; for the testimony of Boris Geller on the community of Nova Vizhva, see Y.V.A. (without signature); for the testimony of Yaacov Segal on the community of Zdolbunov, see Y.V.A., 2370/2446; Sheine Zholtobrodzka, see Y.V.A., 03/2164.

¹³ For the testimony of Sheindl Binshtok about Shumskoye community, see Y.V.A., 1312/128; for the testimony of Duvshani, see *Pinkas ha-Kehila Trisk*, Memorial Book, edited by Nathan Livne, Tel-Aviv, 1975, p. 339; for the testimony of Aryeh Avinadav, see *Kehilat Ustila be-Binyana ve-Hurbana*, edited by Aryeh Avinadav, Tel-Aviv, 1961, p. 141.

The use of guns or cold steel was generally the result of a last-minute decision, but not a spontaneous one, for it was necessary to prepare the weapon in advance, especially in the case of pistols. The attackers used knives, axes, hoes, etc. One conspicuous example is the slitting of the throat of the *Gebietskommissar* of Kamen-Kashirski, Fritz Michaelis, by a Jewish dentist in the town of Lyubeshov.¹⁴ A second case is connected with a group from the town of Sofiyevka who were taken out to dig burial pits. When one of them (Moshe-Yossel Schwartz) realized what was in store for them, he gave the order to attack. They crushed the head of one of the German policemen and two Ukrainians with their hoes, and then they fled. On the way to the woods Schwartz was shot and killed.¹⁵ We know of many stories of the use of pistols by individuals and small groups in order to break the siege and flee.¹⁶

These manifestations of rebellion on the part of individuals and groups were a natural human reaction to humiliation and murder. These were expressions of individual pride, of human dignity, and of the will to live. In general they were the result of personal decisions and appeared in various sectors of the population. We have knowledge of only a small number of these acts, but in the light of the wide variety of those responses and their wide geographical distribution, it is possible to assume that this was a relatively widespread phenomenon.

¹⁴ For the testimony of Yaffa Plotnik, see Y.V.A., 03/2927; David Epstein, Y.V.A., 1041/55; the story of the Pole, Z. Malyszczycski, *Partyzanci z Polesia*, Warszawa, 1974, p. 12.

¹⁵ There are many testimonies concerning this case. The most important is that of Nathanel Rozenzon, who belonged to the diggers, Y.V.A., 03/3525; see also Gad Rozenblath, *Esh Ahaza ba-Ya'ar*, Tel-Aviv, 1957, pp. 76-77 (according to him five Germans were killed). It is possible that the story of Dr. Boleslav Ratnievski, *Sefer Lutzk*, Memorial Book, Tel-Aviv, 1961, pp. 521-523, in which a Jew crushed the head of Hauptmann Krüger with a hoe, refers to the same case.

¹⁶ For the testimony of Mordecai Slivkin, see *Sefer Vladimiretz*, p. 396; *Pinkas Kremenitz*, edited by A. Stein, Tel-Aviv, 1954, pp. 160, 270; for the testimony of M. Gildenman, see *Rovno*, p. 547.

Organized Rebellion

Organized rebellion was premeditated. In Volhynia, as in other areas, it took two forms: revolt within the ghettos and the organization of groups for the purpose of fleeing to the woods.

That organization began when the mass actions resumed at the end of May, 1942, especially those against the "unproductive" ghettos. Part of the community, especially the young people, saw that as a sign of final extermination. Feverish preparations took place, meetings, plans, the acquisition of weapons. However, the Jews of Volhynia did not have as many months to prepare as did the Jews of Warsaw or Vilna. At the end of July, 1942, the Germans began to liquidate the ghettos of Olyka and Rovno, and in August systematic killing began. Owing to the short time available to the Jews they were generally forced to improvise. In some communities the preparations for rebellion were still in the stages of organization and planning, and they were never carried out.

The uprisings in the ghettos of Volhynia and Byelorussia preceded those of the Warsaw ghetto, of other Polish ghettos, and of the death camps by more than a year. They had a different character, because of the different local conditions. Most of the ghettos of Volhynia were small, containing only tens of single-storey wooden houses, often along a single street. The number of inhabitants seldom exceeded a few thousand. A ghetto of that type did not allow space for fighting and defense over a long period of time. In those small towns there was also a shortage of young people with military training as officers. Therefore the central feature of those rebellions was mass flight: first the ghetto was set on fire on all sides, and those with weapons opened fire, with the aim of creating panic and confusion in the enemy ranks and to allow many people to run away under the cover of the fire and smoke and to seek refuge in the forests. That form of battle was short, lasting only a few hours, and only in some cases did it last for several days.

The best known of the revolts in Volhynia took place in Tuchin. It came to light after the war, but the descriptions recorded at that time were incomplete.¹⁷ Today we can retrace both the preparations and the revolt itself.

The Tuchin ghetto was open, and despite all the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities, the Judenrat used bribery and succeeded in putting off the decree of closure until the end of July, 1942. The fence was put up in desultory fashion, and the ghetto was not closed off until September, 1942. The liquidation of Rovno, some survivors of which reached Tuchin, struck fear in the hearts of the local Jews. In the beginning of September, Getzel Schwartzman, the head of the Judenrat, called for consultations with the participation of young activists, among them his two sons, for the purposes of planning a revolt including setting the ghetto on fire and fighting. The representatives of the youth were given the task of forming fighting units. Incendiary materials and weapons (five rifles, twenty-five pistols, and some hand grenades) were purchased with Judenrat money and stored in the basement of the building where it met. At the same time a group of workers, headed by Nachum Bilinski, was organized. They were engaged in chopping down trees. They bought three rifles and some hand grenades and attempted to make contact with Soviet partisans from the battalion of Colonel Medvedev, which had just reached the eastern bank of the Sluch River, but contact was not established.

On September 19, two days before Yom Kippur, 1942, the 3,000 Jews of Tuchin were finally enclosed within the ghetto, where there were only sixty buildings. During the Yom Kippur prayers, the Judenrat presented its plan for revolt, which was a simple one. Everyone was to set his own house on fire upon an agreed signal, and after the fighting units broke through the fences and started shooting,

¹⁷ Mendl Man, "Spontaniczna samoobrona Żydów w Tuczynie," *Ruch podziemny w gettach i obozach*, edited by Betti Ajzensztajn, Warszawa, 1946, pp. 100-103.

those imprisoned within the ghetto were to break into mass flight. On Tuesday, September 22 (the day after Yom Kippur), Jews from the villages and the young men who had been working on the peasants' farms were brought to the ghetto. They said that Russian prisoners of war were digging pits. That very night the German and Ukrainian police besieged the ghetto. The Judenrat took that as a sign that the end was near. The next day they heard that an SS unit had arrived in the town, which was in fact the SD murder commando from Rovno. One witness tells that the Jews gathered in the synagogue again, and the vice president of the Judenrat, Himmelfarb, explained what was about to happen to the community. Young men went from house to house and gave out cans full of kerosene. The four fighting units, sixty men, took up positions near the two gates of the ghetto, and at the mouth of one of the streets near the Judenrat building.

On Thursday, September 24, at 3:30 a.m. the German and Ukrainian police began approaching the fences of the ghetto, shooting as they advanced. The defenders returned fire and one house was set on fire. That was the signal for the rest of the houses to be set on fire, as well as several synagogues that were being used as storehouses. The young people destroyed the fences at several points, and the heads of the Judenrat called upon the Jews to flee. Because of the shooting, the fire, and the smoke, the police stopped some distance away. The Jews began to flee, especially toward the northeast, to the Pustomaty forests. About two-thirds of the Jews of Tuchin managed to reach the forest. The rest were killed in the blaze or by the policemen's bullets.

The shooting continued on Friday, September 25 as well. Two Ukrainian policemen and several Germans were killed in that battle and the number of wounded is unknown. Most of the Jewish fighters fell, and only a few individuals managed to get out and reach the woods. On Saturday, the first day of Sukkot, two leaders of the uprising left the burning ghetto, Schwarzman and, apparently, Himmelfarb. They presented themselves to the German police comman-

der and announced that they were the organizers. Schwarzman asked to die in the Jewish cemetery. His request was honored, and there he was shot. Thus the story of the revolt of the Tuchin Ghetto ended after a two-day battle.¹⁸

Our knowledge of the revolt in Mizoch is very scanty. To the credit of the German engineer Hermann Friedrich Graebe, the communities of Mizoch, Ostrog and Zdolbunov were among the last to be liquidated. As in Tuchin, the head of the Judenrat was a man (Abba Shtivel) who had served as the Soltis (head of the council) during the Polish period, and was well known as a leader among the Gentile population as well. However Mizoch lies in southern Volhynia, in an area where the forests are sparse, where the Ukrainian population was dense and extremely nationalistic, and it was also some 100 km. distant from the Soviet partisans. The local Jews were aware of the destruction of other communities, both far and near, and they prepared themselves for what was to come. Apparently incendiary materials and weapons were prepared: axes, knives, and the like. When the siege was laid and the enemy began to penetrate the ghetto, the houses were set on fire and the group of young men opposed them, fighting back. Peretz Goldstein of Goshcha wrote in the memoirs he composed while in hiding: "We found that in Mizoch, where the slaughter took place, the Jews put up stiff resistance. For two full days the struggle with the murderers

¹⁸ The description is based on the testimonies of Miriam Schwartzman, Y.V.A., 016/3178; Assi and Yaacov Zilberberg and others, Y.V.A., 016/3178; Assi and Yaacov Zilberberg and others, Y.V.A., 016/109; Nathan Shulman, Moreshet Archives, A. 367; Yaacov Chobuk, Moreshet Archives, A. 275; see also the description of Shalom Holavski, *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Tuchin-Kripa*, Memorial Book, edited by Ben-Zion H. Eilon-Baranik, Tel-Aviv, 1967, pp. 263-264; Miriam Shwartzman-Kuts, *ibid.*, pp. 278-282; the memoirs of Peretz Goldstein, *Sefer Hoshcha*, Memorial Book, edited by Reuven Fink, Tel-Aviv, 1957, pp. 84-85.

continued. Of course they had to surrender.”¹⁹ Under the cover of smoke and battle a mass flight began, and about half of the Jews of Mizoch fled or hid.

The revolt in Luck was different from its predecessors in that it took place in a labor camp for young men with no families. It broke out in December, 1942, when Volhynia was almost completely “Judenrein.” In that camp, which was established by the SS and transferred to civilian control, there were about 500 trained workers. On December 11 a Christian woman told the head of the Jewish workers, Adam Sawicki (Abraham Zigelboim) that she had heard from the Ukrainian mayor’s son that they were about to liquidate the camp. That information was passed on to the inmates of the camp, and feverish preparations for revolt began. The center of those preparations was the carpentry shop, and its organizers were the carpenters Guz and Shulman, and a tinsmith named Moshe, who told those gathered: “Let my soul die with the Philistines! We will not go like sheep to the slaughter. Jews, take axes, knives, whatever you can find, and we shall die with honor.” The rebels equipped themselves with a pistol, with knives, axes, acid, iron bars, and bricks which they removed from the walls. According to the testimony of Sawicki, they also had some sawed-off shotguns. The gates were blocked and barricades were erected.

On Saturday morning, December 12, the Germans attempted to approach the buildings. Bronstein, a carpenter, opened fire with his pistol, acid was scattered, and some Germans were wounded, among them the commander of the force, whose face was burned. The enemy retreated and started shooting from a distance, also putting an armored car or several armored cars into action. According to

¹⁹ For the testimony of Peretz Goldstein, see *Sefer Hoshcha*, p. 85; for the testimony of Max Weltfreint, see *Mizoch*, Memorial Book, edited by Asher Ben-Oni, Tel-Aviv, 1961, p. 40; testimony of Yaacov Mendiuk, *ibid.*, p. 68; testimony of Miriam Kashuk-Shprintz, *ibid.*, p. 96.

some testimony, another German attack took place. It was repulsed after a hand-to-hand battle. The battle continued until the afternoon hours, and, according to some testimony, until the evening. In the end the Germans won. Some of the defenders died and some were shot to death afterwards, and only few individuals managed to escape.²⁰ The fact that this opposition took place is affirmed in a report of the A.K. (the Polish Home Army), whose headquarters in Volhynia was in Luck: When the Germans went to liquidate the Jews in the labor camp in Luck, the Jews organized a revolt that lasted for a few hours, and in the end the Jews all died.²¹

As mentioned, the population in the camp was young. Mass flight was not the main point of the revolt, but the desire to die with honor. Thus that uprising was similar to that of the Warsaw ghetto, but it preceded it by several months.

Opinions are divided concerning the revolt in Kremenets, because there were no survivors. Several days before the liquidation some 1,500 workers were removed from the ghetto and brought to a camp outside the city, seven kilometers distant. That group included the members of the Judenrat and the Jewish police, and the few survivors of the Kremenets ghetto belonged to that group. The only Jewish source close to this event is Peretz Goldstein of Goshcha, who writes: "In Kremenets the same thing happened [that is, an uprising, like those in Tuchin and Mizoch — Sh.S.], as we were told. We had no way of knowing whether all the reports that reached us were correct or not. It is possible that the murderers purposely exaggerate these stories in order to incite the peasants against the Jews, so that

²⁰ For the testimony of Leyzer Tzhirulnik, see *Sefer Lutzk*, p. 411. Testimony of A. Zigelboim (A. Sawicki), *ibid.*, pp. 517–550, who himself was an eyewitness and included the story of Shulman, younger brother of one of the rebellion leaders; of A. Sawicki (A. Zigelbaum), Y.V.A., 03/2224; Meir Rotman, Y.V.A., 339/252.

²¹ The Central Archives of the Polish Communist Party in Warsaw, dep. III/202, file 132, p. 401.

when a Jew comes to a village and wants to hide, the Gentile will turn him over."²² Most of our information comes from Polish inhabitants of Kremenets and from a Jewish witness from the nearby town of Shumskoye who met two members of the ghetto underground. After the liberation she lived in Kremenets for about a year, and Polish acquaintances told her what had happened during the liquidation.²³

Here is her story: in the ghetto there was a house which was used to hide weapons belonging to the Polish underground. Jewish young men organized themselves and worked on a battle plan for the day when the ghetto would be besieged, including flight to the woods and the continuation of the battle there. Two members of the group met the witness in Shumskoye a short time before the liquidation of the Kremenets ghetto. On the ninth of August, 1942, the ghetto was suddenly besieged, and the next day, when the concentration of the Jews was begun, the young men opened fire. On the first day six German and Ukrainian policemen were killed, and ten on the second day. On the third day the houses of the ghetto were set on fire, and they burned for a week. The survivors of Kremenets, when they came to write the memorial book for their community, during the fifties, did not know about this testimony.²⁴ Examination of the testimony concerning the revolt in Kremenets shows, in our opinion, that a revolt did indeed take place.

In addition to the revolts which actually did take place, we know of settlements in which uprisings were planned and then halted at various stages. A conspicuous example is Sarny, in which the action

²² Peretz Goldstein, in *Sefer Hoshcha*, p. 25, doubts the validity of this information, but his reasons are farfetched, for there was no need to inflate stories of this kind to incite the Ukrainians against the Jews. In any case they were either hostile or apathetic.

²³ See testimony of Frida Berenstein (Dr. P. Ucenik), Y.V.A., E/646. See also *Ruch podziemny w ghettach i obozach*, pp. 98-99.

²⁴ Part of this testimony was published in *Sefer Milhemet ha-Geta'ot*, edited by Yitzhak Zukerman and Moshe Basuk. Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Me'uhad, Tel-Aviv, 1954; see also *Kol Yotzei Kremenitz ve-Shumsk*, December 1980, p. 42.

was planned with the full support of the elderly head of the Judenrat, and under the leadership of the head of the Jewish police. There as well the essence of the plan was armed resistance, burning the ghetto houses and mass flight. The uprising was prevented at the last minute by the secretary of the Judenrat, who served as a go-between with the German authorities. He was duped by the Germans' promises and succeeded in convincing the leaders of the revolt not to start fighting.²⁵ The Judenrat, or members of the Judenrat, was also a factor in preventing uprisings in other settlements such as: Vladimiretz, Ludvipol, Gorokhov, Ustilug and perhaps Vladimir-Volynski. In Ostrog, Dubrovitsa, and Vysotsk the plans were never carried out for reasons that have not been clarified.²⁶

All the uprisings described above have a common feature: their organizers were aware of their limitations with regard to fighting under the existing conditions, and in every settlement they came to a similar conclusion in planning the uprisings. The main thrust of their plans was to create confusion and panic in the enemy ranks by firing shots and raising pillars of fire and smoke, followed by mass flight to the forests. Along with the main goal of fleeing and saving lives, the leaders of the revolt also wished to take revenge and to cause losses to the enemy in lives and property.

²⁵ The man who prevented the uprising was a lawyer, Neumann, a refugee who, because of his knowledge of German and his connections with the office of the district commissioner, took control of the Judenrat.

²⁶ See the testimony of Yaacov Dik, *Sefer Vladimiretz*, p. 317; the testimony of Mordecai Wolman, *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Ludvipol*, Memorial Book, edited by N. Eilon, Tel-Aviv, 1965, pp. 91, 96; the testimony of Shmuel Diamant, *Kehilat Ustila be-Binyana ve-Hurbana*, pp. 251-260; the testimony of Sonia Tepler-Zhiroff, *Sefer Horokhov*, Memorial Book, edited by Yosef Karib, Tel-Aviv, 1966, p. 286; the testimony of Yosef Galitzki, *Pinkas Ostra'a*, Memorial Book, edited by Ben-Zion H. Eilon-Baranik, Tel-Aviv, 1960, p. 526; the testimony of Aharon Waldman, Y.V.A., 03/2794; the testimony of Yaacov Feigelstein, *Sefer Dombrovitze*, Memorial Book, edited by L. Lush, Tel-Aviv, 1965, p. 493; the testimony of Ze'ev Yoniel, *Ayaretenu Visotzk*, Memorial Book, edited by Aryeh Fialkov, Haifa, 1964, p. 96.

Jewish Fighting Groups

Fighting groups arose locally, without any central coordinating organization, for Volhynia was isolated from other areas, and the ghettos were also isolated from each other. The Jewish youth movements which had existed in a sort of underground during the Soviet occupation (1939–1941) ceased to do so entirely with the German invasion.²⁷ Organization for the purpose of fighting was the result of the initiative of young people, generally childhood friends, with no party or movement basis. In general the organization was begun close to the time of the liquidation, and it was therefore of a spontaneous and hasty nature. The desire to remain alive by making war with the Nazi enemy was at the root of the decision to organize. The narrow ghetto did not seem to be an appropriate place to make war, as opposed to the nearby forests. In addition, rumors circulated concerning the existence of partisans in the woods. The true situation was otherwise, since the three partisan movements — the Soviet, the Polish, and the Ukrainian — were all in their infancy. The Soviet movement, upon which the Jews could have depended, consisted of a few small local groups who were fighting for their own existence.²⁸ The special battalion of Colonel Medvedev (belonging to the NKVD) and the sabotage units of the Linkov brigade (belonging to the Head Office of Military Intelligence), which had just gone into action in northeastern Volhynia, carried out clearly defined and limited tasks, largely gathering military and civilian intelligence.

²⁷ A single attempt was made by the couriers, Frumka Plotnicka and Tema Schneiderman, who reached Warsaw via Bialystok and Kovel in the middle of 1942 and returned by the same route. See Tzviya Lubetkin, *Be-Yemei Kilayon ve-Mered*, Tel-Aviv, 1979, pp. 58–59.

²⁸ Two other movements, the Polish (A.K.) and the Ukrainian (U.P.A.), were explicitly nationalistic. The A.K. began to take limited action in self-defense in the middle of 1943. Its principal activity was Operation Storm in early 1944. The U.P.A. began to take shape at the end of October, 1942, and it was extremely hostile to Jews.

Once the decision had been made to make off to the forests and fight, it was necessary to obtain arms, to be trained in their use, and to learn the principles of partisan warfare. Moreover there had to be an operational base among the local population in order to receive information and food. That last condition was the most difficult one because of the social isolation in which the Jews had lived for generations and the traditional animosity of considerable segments of the Ukrainian population, which was exacerbated by the influence of Nazi propaganda. The Jewish partisans surmounted the first difficulty with the assistance of individual Jews who lived in the villages, experts in forestry or merchants with connections and who knew the region and its inhabitants well. They attempted to overcome the animosity with the help of connections with the Ukrainian Communists, who were few. To acquire weapons and to be trained in their use was especially difficult. Because of lack of time, the strict German control, and fear of informers, very few weapons were acquired, and those which were acquired could not even be tested under the conditions of that small ghetto, not to mention training in their use or in combat. Instructors were scarce, and those who were at hand had not held a rank above non-commissioned officer. Their military knowledge was not very useful under the conditions of partisan combat.

In all between 35 and 40 combat groups were formed. We have details about their numbers and the quantities of arms in their possession for only thirteen of them. Only five groups numbered twenty or more, and others consisted of only seven or eight members. Very few of them had arms, even though large quantities of arms were in the hands of the non-Jewish population, especially in the villages, as a result of the collapse of the Polish army in September, 1939 and the withdrawal of the Soviet army in June, 1941. One had to pay for arms with gold, jewels, or merchandise, and with regard to informers, Jews could only trust the Poles. There was very little ammunition: in the Gildenman group from Korets, for example,

there were only five bullets per pistol. Most of the arms obtained were obsolete and not very suitable for warfare in the forests, e.g. pistols and sawed-off shotguns. Some groups were prevented from leaving, either by informers (the Zablotie group), or because of opposition on the part of the Judenrat, which still considered them a danger to the whole community.²⁹ Others did not survive their first encounter with the Ukrainian and German police, and they were killed (the groups from Luboml and Vladimir-Volynski). Under those circumstances and because it was impossible to make contact with the partisans, some groups organized but then decided to remain in the ghetto until the very last moment.

When groups reached the forests and underwent their first combat experience, a new period began, one that was filled with difficulties. As we have said, until the beginning of 1943, the Soviet partisan movement was in its infancy. Therefore the Jewish groups had to fight for their very existence, a struggle made more difficult with the beginning of the winter. The first priority was to obtain additional arms so that everyone would be equipped with effective weapons. That was accomplished by attacking forest wardens and Ukrainian police stations in the villages or by ambushing the police. In addition there was the need of taking care of the noncombatants — old people, women, and children — who had to be defended and fed. Food had to be taken at gunpoint, which only deepened the hatred of the Ukrainian villagers and increased the danger from manhunts.

The Soviet partisan movement began to establish itself in the northeast corner of Volhynia. In the course of 1943 it expanded across the whole northern part up to the Bug River in the west, and to the railway line Kovel-Rovno, and Shepetovka in the south. The Jewish groups ultimately joined up with the Soviet partisan units as they expanded into the various sectors.

²⁹ Testimony of Simha Rozenberg, *Sefer Dombrovitzte*, p. 633; Leon Shneider, *ke-Haya Nirdefet*, Tel-Aviv, 1967, pp. 82-85.

The first sector, the northeastern one, extended from the east to the Sluch River: it was covered with thick forests and swampy areas, with very few roads passable for motorized vehicles. At the end of July, 1942 the special battalion of Medvedev reached that area, sent for the purpose of gathering non-military intelligence by the Interior Ministry (the NKVD). Three Jewish groups joined that force to some extent, the outstanding one being that of Korets under the leadership of Moshe Gildenman, known as "Diadia Misha."³⁰ The idea of organizing a group first occurred to his son Simha, but he did not succeed in linking up with the partisans. After the "action" against "inefficient" people in Korets in May, 1942 (in which Gildenman's wife and daughter were killed), the father, Moshe, took the initiative. He organized a group of about eighteen men, and they had two pistols in their possession. On the day of the liquidation only twelve of the group's members appeared at the appointed time, armed with two pistols and a butcher's knife. All of them were young, and some of them relatives of Gildenman. Moshe, the oldest of them and the initiator, was chosen as the commander, although he had not served in the army. They turned northwards, hiding and resting during the day, and marching at night. On the way one man left them with his pistol. After a few days they reached the base of Medvedev, but his chief of staff refused to accept them and sent them northwards to join up with a group of some 100 Jews who had been sent to the partisan area of southeastern Byelorussia, accompanied by armed guards. In the vicinity of the Sarny-Olevsk railway line, Gildenman encountered the remains of that group,³¹ and some of the guards

³⁰ Testimony of Moshe Gildenman, Y.V.A., 033/521-524; Simha Gildenman, Y.V.A., 3679/269; Alexander Kuts, Y.V.A., 03/3268, supplemented by the witness in conversation with the author.

³¹ Upon their first military engagement the guides left the group as well as part of the armed escort. Afterwards most of the citizens scattered. See the testimony of Yissachar Trosman, Y.V.A., 03/3477; that of Moshe Gildenman, Y.V.A., 033/524; and the testimony of Alexander Kuts, spoken to the author.

joined his unit. Thus the group grew at once in manpower and in firepower, and, most importantly, those who joined it had experience as partisans, albeit short experience.

The unit advanced northwards and settled in the area to the north of that railway line. By attacking forest wardens and police stations the partisans succeeded in equipping themselves with more arms. They engaged in sabotage and in the destruction of German storage depots as well as in the punishment of collaborators, pretending to be a reconnaissance unit of a whole brigade. At the end of November they tried to join up with a group of Russian prisoners of war, but the attempt failed, and they separated. At the end of January, 1943 they met up with scouts from General Saburov's partisan brigade. Some members of Gildenman's unit joined various companies of that brigade. Gildenman organized seventeen of his men and a few Jews of the supply unit of the brigade into a company of his own within the framework of one of the battalions (under the command of Major Mirkovski). According to Gildenman, it was called "The Special Jewish Fighting Company" (for short: "the Yevgrupa of Diadia Misha").³² It was active north of the Zhitomir region, and the number of non-Jews in it very quickly exceeded the number of the Jews.³³

³² Gildenman told General Saburov the history of the unit. The General told him that rumor had it that there was a large force of partisans. As for the matter of the name of his company, it is somewhat problematic, because Gildenman's sons, Simha and Alexander Kuts (who was his chief of staff and right-hand man) do not remember that. On the other hand, it is known that Saburov established two Polish units and a Czech one. Perhaps, then, he also gave agreement to the establishment of a Jewish unit until he received other orders from Moscow.

³³ For history and operations of this unit see Moshe Gildenman, *Hurban Korets*, Paris, 1949; *Oyfn veg tsum zig*, Paris, 1946; *Motele der yunger partizan*, Paris, 1950. See also the articles by Gildenman, *Dos Naye Lebn*, Lodz, No. 22 (100), March 1947, p. 5; *ibid.*, No. 30 (108), April 1947, p. 6; *ibid.*, No. 31 (109), April 1947, p. 5; *ibid.*, No. 48 (126), July 1947, p. 4. Also in the Polish newspaper *Opinia*, Lodz-Warsaw, No. 9 (22), December 20, 1946, p. 14; *ibid.*, No. 10 (23), January 15, 1947, p. 13; *ibid.*, No. 14 (27), March 20, 1947, p. 6; *ibid.*, No. 17 (30), May 5, 1947, pp. 7-8.

The two other groups in the sector joined Medvedev's battalion. One of them was made up of Jews from Berezno, village Jews, and Jews from Rovno and Tuchin who had fled during the local uprisings. From November, 1942 onwards, some Poles also became members of the group, and they established liaison with the Polish villagers in the region.

North of the Kovel-Sarny railway line, in the second sector, twelve Jewish groups were active. At the time of the liquidation, there were no Soviet partisan units there, only their emissaries: Ukrainian Communists like Misiura, Samchuk, Mikola Konishchuk (Kruk), and the Pole, Joseph Sobiesiak (Max). They tentatively examined the possibilities of establishing groups like that. "Kruk" and "Max" managed to establish small groups. Intelligence and sabotage units belonging to Linkov that arrived afterwards did not seek out the Jewish groups, and some of them regarded the Jews with animosity. The Jewish partisans were therefore required to fight alone for a month or several months, until they were integrated into a Soviet framework. The first to accept them was Misiura, who established an entirely Jewish unit, eleven members of the Sernik group.³⁴ In the course of time a Jewish civilian camp grew up alongside it. In December, 1942, when Colonel Anton Brinskiy, Linkov's emissary, arrived, he began to organize the partisan movement, and members of the Jewish groups of Dubrovitsa were placed in Misiura's battalion, as well as a group of Jews from Sernik under the command of Captain Alexander Abugov, a Soviet Jew.

Other groups in that region, especially those from Lishnivka, Manevichi, Pavursk, and Kamen-Karshirski, joined "Kruk" and "Max" and became important parts of the two separate battalions

³⁴ For the testimony of Shalom Galetzki, Y.V.A., 2270/2306; David Gavish (Zaltzman), Y.V.A., 03/1138; Alexander Abugov, Y.V.A., 1998/137; M. Bakalshtuk-Felin, *Zikhronos fun a yiddishn partizan*, pp. 34-40, 70, 77, 79, 85. See also Anton Brinskiy, *Po to storonu fronta*, Moskva, 1958 (hereafter — Brinskiy), pp. 371-373.

under their command. Alongside both of them three civilian camps were quickly established, sheltering hundreds of Jews.³⁵ Those battalions and that of Misiura were joined to Brinskiy's division at the end of December, 1942, thus becoming an organic part of the Soviet partisan movement. After a while they became part of the Rovno partisan brigade. Some members of the Sernik and Kamen-Kashirski groups, who had suffered violence at the hands of "wild" groups of partisans, wandered northwards and were integrated into the Pinsk division of Komarov.³⁶

The third sector, the northwestern one (north of the Luboml-Kovel line), did not differ topographically from the other two sectors. But its distance from the partisan centers (in northeastern Volhynia) made it necessary for the Jewish groups there to struggle for existence for seven months, until the Volhynia Brigade reached the nearby region, under the command of General Alexei Fiodorov. Some Jewish partisans joined him, and some went to the east, to the Rovno Brigade. Here were found groups from Shatsk, Luboml and the village of Datin as well as remnants of groups and individuals from Kovel. The Datin group was unusual in its organization, for it included all the Jews of the village, ten families, who lived in two bunkers in the forest, with the noncombatants separated from the fighters. All of them were supplied with weapons and, in collaboration with local non-Jewish groups, they carried out partisan actions and protected the civilian camp. In April, 1943 they joined a group

³⁵ For the testimony of Dov Lorber (Malinka), see Y.V.A., 03/2367; Abraham Lerer, Y.V.A., 033/443; Yaacov Bronstein, Y.V.A., 03/3190; Dov Lanitz, Y.V.A., 03/2711; Ze'ev Verba, Y.V.A. 03/1332; Reuven Slivka, Y.V.A. 033/590; David Breistein, Moreshet Archives, A. 103. In the book *ka-Oranim Gavhu*, Jewish partisans in the forests of Volhynia, edited by Nathan Livne, Tel-Aviv, 1981, pp. 12-14, 55-90, 141-144; Brinskiy, pp. 390-395.

³⁶ The testimony of Ben-Zion Malik, *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Kamen-Kashirski*, pp. 121-126; the testimony of Ze'ev Inberg, *ibid.*, pp. 144-146; the testimony of Dov Amith, *ibid.*, pp. 152-176.

of local Ukrainians and Soviet prisoners of war, and two months later they joined the Rovno Brigade.³⁷

In the fourth sector, the north-central one (between the Kovel-Sarny railway line and the Kovel-Rovno line), conditions were similar, including the distance from the main base of the Soviet partisan movement. Two of the three groups that were active here (Sofiyevka and Kolki) understood, after a short period of independent fighting, that they would not survive very long, so they trekked northeastwards until they met the Kovpak Brigade and joined it as individuals. The Sofiyevka group, the more prominent of the two, began to organize in early August, 1942, when refugees from the liquidation of Rovno and Olyka reached them. Among the leaders of that group was a former corporal of the Polish army, Haim Henryk Rozenson, and he was given the task of obtaining arms and training people in their use. On August 25–27, most of the Jews of Sofiyevka were killed, and after about two weeks 15 members of the group left for the Klopochin forest and set up a base there. With the help of Ukrainian Communists who joined them, they obtained arms and ammunition and began to spread anti-Nazi propaganda. At the end of September they met with one of Linkov's sabotage units, and one of the Ukrainians went with it to establish contact with the headquarters of the brigade, which was in Byelorussia.

After being pursued with tenacity in early December, they decided to head toward those partisan bases. On the way part of the Kolki group joined them, and they met with the Kovpak Brigade and joined it.³⁸ Together with that brigade they took part in combat raids,

³⁷ For the testimony of Mendel Steinberg, see Y.V.A., 1440/1380.

³⁸ Gad Rozenblath, *Esh Ahaza ba-Ya'ar*, pp. 21-62, 89-100; Nathanel Rozenson, *ba-Shvilim u-ve-Ya'arot*, Tel-Aviv, 1968; Brinskiy, pp. 483-490; the testimony of Wolf Erlich, Y.V.A., 2046/1858; Yehuda Rozenblath, Y.V.A., 016/397; Nathanel Rozenson, Y.V.A. 03/3525; the author's conversation with Haim Watchin on February 2, 1981; the testimony of Zosia Haychuk, Y.V.A., 03/1312.

going as far as the Carpathians, and when the Jewish Platoon of refugees from Skalat was established, among its officers were former heads of the Sofiyevka and Kolki groups: Votchin, Rosenblatt, Khaichuk, and others.

The third Jewish group in that sector, members of the Jewish village of Osova, joined the Rovno Brigade in the middle of 1943 after losing many of its members to manhunts.

The topographical and demographical conditions were different in the fifth sector, south-central Volhynia, south of the Rovno-Kovel railway line. There were no thick woods there, it was densely populated, and the Ukrainians had concentrated their forces in the Ukrainian National Partisan Army (or the U.P.A.), and that was where their Volhynia headquarters were. The distance to the Soviet partisan bases was great, and they were unable to take control over the area until the liberation. Therefore the Jewish groups had to fight alone for 15–16 months, suffering heavy losses, and sometimes being wiped out. That happened to the Olyka group: in January, 1943 most of its members were killed, and it ceased to act until the following summer.³⁹ Of the groups that were organized in Dubno and the surrounding areas, one, under the command of Yitshak Wasserman, was wiped out in battle with the Germans, and the others lost most of their members. Only sparse remnants survived to see the liberation. No less cruel was the fate of the Radzivilov-Brody group, which was completely destroyed in battle and by manhunts. Only one of its commanders survived to tell its story.⁴⁰

In addition to the organized Jewish partisan groups, many individual Jews joined Soviet units at a later stage, when they no longer had to have their own weapons, since the partisans were being supplied from the air. Jewish refugees from western Volhynia, especially

³⁹ The diary of Shlomo Zam (reconstructed), YIVO Archives, testimony 5-101, pp. 29–end; the testimony of Devorah Nakoniecznik, Y.V.A., 2236/2215.

⁴⁰ The testimony of Yehiel Prohovnik, Y.V.A., 03/2214; see also *Radzivilov*, Memorial Book, edited by Yaacov Adini, Tel-Aviv, 1966, pp. 237-250.

from Vladimir-Volynski and the vicinity, joined the 27th (Polish) A.K. division when it began Operation Storm (*Burza*) in the region around the Bug River. Others who had found refuge in Polish villages especially in the east and the area of Dubno, joined the Polish self-defense (*Samoobrony*), and they took part in the repelling of the attacks by the members of the U.P.A. against those villages. Moreover, our sources point out that individuals, especially physicians and nurses, served in the ranks of the U.P.A., and almost all of them were killed just before the liberation.⁴¹

According to the numbers in our sources, we can estimate that between 1,500 and 1,600 Jews fought with the Soviet partisan movement. At the end of 1943, that movement contained some 13,710 fighters, thus the Jews comprised more than 10%, more than their share of the population of Volhynia before the Holocaust. Young Jews belonged to all the units, including sabotage, reconnaissance, etc., and they were especially active in the medical area, where some of them reached the level of commander of the brigade medical services (like Dr. Ehrlich from Dubrovitsa in the Rovno Brigade). Because of their lack of military experience, Jews generally reached only lower command positions: platoon commander, and company commander. Only Soviet Jewish officers reached higher command levels, such as Alexander Abugov, the commander of the reconnaissance unit of the Rovno Brigade.

With the development of the partisan movement, the residents of the civilian camps changed from passive participants and millstones around the necks of the fighters to an integral part of the partisan structure. They provided essential services, standing guard and fur-

⁴¹ The testimony of Dr. Yakira Eliahu, Y.V.A., 03/2372. For the testimony of the commander of division Shtumberk-Rikhter, see Stanislaw Wronski and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy-Zydzi 1939-1945*, Warszawa, 1971, pp. 264-266; Józef Czerwinski, *Z wolynskich lasów na berliński trakt*, Warszawa, 1972, pp. 62-64, 84-85; the testimony of Shmuel Diamant, *Kehilat Ustila be-Binyana ve-Hurbana*, pp. 261-266.

nishing medical care. Some 2,500 Jews passed through those camps.

The estimates presented above are drawn from data from different periods, and they do not indicate the number of survivors at the time of the liberation. Many died in battle or of illnesses and epidemics under the difficult conditions prevailing in the forests.