

# The Extermination of the Jews in the Villages

## KOPACHIVKE

### By Moshe Rabin and a lady survivor

**Moshe Rabin** — The small Jewish community of Kopachivke consisted of some eighty families; merchants, storekeepers, small craftsmen, and even some landowners. They had a Rabbi, a shochet, and a local synagogue. The relations between the Jews and the local Gentile population, which was mostly Polish, had been very good until the outbreak of the war. In the days of the Soviets, the shops were all expropriated and the Jews became civil servants on a monthly salary.

**Lady survivor** — On the first day that the Germans came to our village, they came to our home, took my father and two other men and killed them beside the windmill. Later, we learned that before being shot they had been forced to dig themselves a pit with their own hands. All the Jews of Kopachivke ran away from their homes into the forest nearby.

The Ukrainians, who had been promised independence by the Germans, surrounded the forest, and started shooting in all directions, killing most of the Jews. Those who remained alive were afterwards sent to work by the village's Judenrat felling trees, digging pits and doing other physical labour. Their supervisors, the Volksdeutsche and the Ukrainians, tortured them and beat them mercilessly.

My sister had left all her property with a rich Pole who had been friendly with our family. When she came out of hiding to ask him for bread, he did give her and her two children shelter in his cowshed for about ten days. Then he went to the Gestapo telling them that Jews had hidden at his farm and were refusing to leave. Ukrainians came and killed them.

## CHETVERTNIA

### Fanya Rosenblatt

Our village was not far from Rozhishch. When the Germans came, they rounded up the Jews from a number of villages in the area and set up a ghetto there. The ghetto was destroyed on October 10, 1942. I am the only survivor of the Chetvertnia ghetto.

On the morning of October 10th, 1942, when my mother woke up, she noticed that policemen were stationed at the entrance to all the houses. The meaning of this was clear to her, and she woke

The fate of the Jews who had lived in the villages near Rozhishch differed only in details from that of the Rozhishch Jews.



us all up. My parents decided to hide me, and convinced me to get inside the sofa which they covered with some cushions. A few moments later, the police entered the house and took everyone out.

Four policemen then combed the house, and of course they found me. The older man among them, convinced the three young policemen to let me go. He told me where the Germans were and advised me to go in the opposite direction.

When I reached the fields, I saw two small girls leading cows to pasture. I picked up a stick and joined them. In this way I crossed the village to the pastures where there were bushes. I sat under the bushes immersed in thought. I was alone, aged 18, with no means of support, and I would have to hide out like a hunted animal. This was the longest day of my life.

As I was sitting, sunk in thought, a Ukrainian Seventh Day Adventist came by, gave me a slice of bread and his hand-woven blanket, and immediately left me. Seventh Day Adventists, too, were not particularly kosher in the eyes of the Germans, because of their reputation of being sympathetic to the Jews.

Previously, in the ghetto, one of the guards had told me that if ever anything should happen, I could turn to him, and perhaps he would be able to help me. As he was known as a drunkard and a brute, and because he had been given the job of guarding the Jews, I had not taken his offer very seriously. But in this moment of despair, I thought of him. Then I knew exactly what I was going to do. I would go to him at nightfall. He would surely turn me over to the Germans, and that was exactly what I wanted at that point. I saw no other way out.

When night came, I put the blanket I had been given over my head, peasant style, and started towards Korney's (his name). Suddenly, I saw a figure advancing towards me. It was Korney. He had been given the task of guarding the property left behind by the Jews. He told me to sit in the bushes until his watch was over when he would come to take me. He took off his fur coat and gave it to me to wear. When he came to fetch me he told me that no one must know that I was with him, and that although he would hide me in his home, he would not even tell his wife and children about me.

He put me in his attic and brought me food and drink every day. He used various pretexts to obtain the food from his neighbours and friends so that he need not take it from his home thus arousing his family's suspicions. As he was a type people feared, he always got what he wanted. I, therefore, had an abundance of food.

One day, he told me he had a good plan for me. He had learned that someone in the neighbouring village had found a girl's passport. The man had agreed to sell it to Korney. As my family had owned a large store, Korney felt that they must have cached something away with someone. We decided to restore some of my family's property in order to pay for the passport.



Fanya Rosenblat.

We waited until night, and left together, I, with my blanket on my head. I went to the village priest, who was very surprised to see me, and who ordered that everything be returned to me. Only in one place did I meet with an absolute refusal. But Korney dealt with that, and my property was restored.

I didn't sleep all that night, wondering whether Korney would succeed in obtaining my document for me. The following morning he brought me the passport. My new name was Nina Fumin. The document bore no photograph and was signed with a thumb impression.

Then Korney unfolded his plan for me. He had an uncle who was a village elder for the Germans in a village some twenty kilometers from Rozhishch. As I didn't look Jewish, he would take me to his uncle, tell him that I was the daughter of his brother who lived in Russia. He would say that I had escaped from a train bringing Russian youth to forced labour in Germany, and that I had made my way to him. As he felt it was unsafe to keep me, for fear that the Germans would question him, he had brought me to his uncle.

To this day, I still wonder why Korney undertook the tremendous risk to help me. I think he regarded it as a challenge which only he was capable of carrying out.

On the way to the village, Korney boned me up on all the family details. My new "aunt and uncle" received me gladly. They were pleased to have a niece, and they needed help on their farm. They congratulated Korney on his good sense at having brought me to them.

Although I knew nothing about farm work, I learned quickly, and when there were things I didn't know, I explained this away by claiming that in Russia we had done things differently.

I continued living with them as their niece, going to church, following all their customs, and being well regarded as a dilligent worker.

The summer of 1943 marked a change in the relations between the Germans and the Ukrainians. The latter having organized into nationalistic bands, which acted against both the Germans and the Soviets, with the aim of establishing an independent Ukraine. The Germans enlisted the Poles in an effort to stop the nationalists, and indescribable chaos ensued, with the Ukrainian bands attacking the Poles at night, butchering entire families with knives and axes. The Poles retaliated by burning Ukrainian villages, killing all who chanced in their paths.

And so again I found myself in hiding in the forest. This time, as a Ukrainian. Shortly thereafter, I went to work as a housemaid for the locally born German, Julius, who was a good friend of my "uncle's." This Julius had been appointed by the Nazis to a high ranking position, and was infamous for his attitude to the Jews. When the Julius family moved to Rovno, they took me with them.



In December, 1943, the Germans were on the verge of defeat at the hands of the advancing Red Army. However, the Germans launched a massive counter-attack. That entire winter battles raged in the region. Everything in sight burned, the woods, the villages. The whole district was like a volcano. It was not until the end of March that the Russians finally took over.

I lost no time in leaving for Rozhishch in search of Jewish survivors. I found a number in one house. Most of them had managed to get to Rozhishch back in December when the Russians had taken control of the eastern banks of the Styr. Many were suffering from typhus. When they heard my story and that I had stayed so long working for the dreaded Julius, they found it hard to believe me, for he had been responsible for terrorizing all the Jews of the area.

Although I survived the war, fate was cruel to Korney on my account. Two Jews had met the Seventh Day Adventist who had given me his blanket on my first day alone. He told them that he had seen Korney with that blanket and had concluded that Korney had killed me. After the German retreat, the two Jews charged Korney with my death. Korney assured them that I was alive, but would not tell them of my whereabouts. The men refused to believe him and threatened to avenge my supposed death. Korney, fearing for his life, joined the Red Army. He was killed on the front during the heavy fighting.

The common grave on the road to Kopachivke for the six thousand Jews of Rozhishch and area murdered by the Nazis in 1942. The memorial was laid in 1945 by a group of survivors.



## BEREZOLUP

### Pnina Koren (Torchiniuk)

I was studying at high school in Lutsk when the Germans came. On the morning of June 22, 1941, I was awakened by a thunderous noise. The town was being bombed. My room-mate and I quickly left our rooms. Our teachers, who were all Soviets, told us to wait to be evacuated, but we preferred to return to our families. I went to my sister Hadassah's home. She lived on the other side of the town. The town was being continually bombed and we were under the impression that the Russians had abandoned the local populace, not even having supplied aerial defence.

My sister, who then was in the later stages of pregnancy, and I decided to make our way to our parents' home in Berezolup. There the Ukrainian nationalists were impatiently awaiting the Germans. Immediately after the conquest, they brought the Germans to our home, and all our valuables were confiscated.

The situation worsened from day to day. We were given all sorts of humiliating work to do. The militia men would say, "Up to now we have worked for you. Now we'll see how you work for us." We were forced to wear yellow patches on our backs and chests.

It was in this period that my sister, Hadassah, moved to her sister-in-law's home in Rozhishch, where she gave birth to a son. Unfortunately, the baby was circumcised.

A forced labour camp was soon set up by the Germans to which they brought Jews from a few surrounding villages. The people were housed in small decrepit huts, five families to a hut. The camp was run by Germans, Volksdeutsche and Jew-hating Ukrainians. Impossible to achieve work norms were established in order to provide an excuse for bestial beatings. The food consisted of 80 grams of bread and potato peel soup daily. After long hours of work, we were made to clean the camp in the evenings. When the commandant felt like a little amusement, he would order one of the prisoners to play the accordion, and we were forced to dance with the tools in our hands. This was a degrading, shocking and most painful experience. Particularly since there was no way whatsoever to stand up against it.

From time to time the camp lieutenant would issue a demand for valuables. Once, when all our sources of valuables had run out, he made a further demand for cloth and gold rings. My uncle, Shmuel Oxman, a very likable man with a lot of influence, went to the Lutsk ghetto to ask for help there. Taking our difficult circumstances into consideration, they gave him the things. My uncle was sure that now the Germans would stop harrassing us so much.

This matter of the demands, apparently reached the lieutenant's superiors, and he was reprimanded. Smarting at the rebuke, he called for my uncle and another man, ordered them to dig a hole, and when they had finished, he shot and killed them.



We existed with no connection with the outside world. From the time of my uncle's death, even the trips to the ghetto stopped. We lived in fear and anguish. Some Ukrainians who had known us previously provided us with a little encouragement in the form of food which they sneaked into the camp.

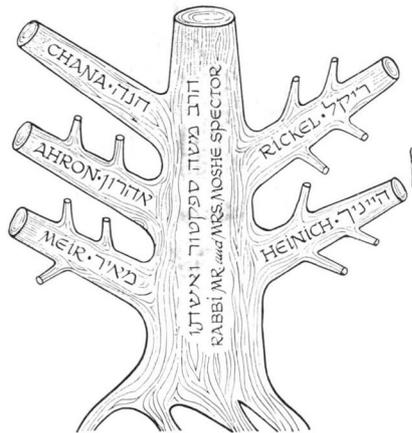
One day, I saw a truck loaded with women and children come from the camp and thought that I recognized my sisters in it. These were the most difficult moments of my life. I started towards the camp. Half-way there, I met my father. He said that my sisters Shoshana and Hadassah had probably hidden in the camp with a Seventh Day Adventist family. That night we found shelter in a stable and at dawn, I went to look for my mother who had the baby and my younger sister Shulamith. After many hours of searching I managed to find them. Afterwards I met my two other sisters on their way to the forest to look for a hide-out.

On my way back to father, I passed by our house, which was a shambles. I took some cloth and rings which mother had cached away, and continued to where my grandparents were living. Because their house was at some distance from the main road, the murderers had not found them. I begged them to come with me to the forest. They refused to move. They didn't want to start a new life of wandering without a future at their advanced age. Grandfather said, "You are a young girl and can be saved. Run away from here quickly." I left them with a broken heart. The following morning from the field where I was hiding I saw a truck approach the house and take my grandparents away.

I returned to father, and we went into hiding in bunkers which had remained in the forest from the First World War. My father had always been a proud man, with hopes, dreams and visions. Now he felt himself degraded, oppressed and desparate. On the other hand, he often tried to awaken the faith in us that the enlightened world and the Jews in Eretz Israel would not abandon us.

Throughout the time we were in hiding in the forest, we were given help in the form of food or clothing by a few Gentiles, sometimes at great risk to themselves. One day while foraging for food, we met a boy from Rozhishch. He was very depressed, a stranger in the area, and he had no place to hide. We brought him back to the granary where we were hiding at the time. When the farmer's wife brought us our food, and saw the boy, she started crying that we had brought her a stranger and another man, and that if she were to be caught, she would pay with her life. The youth left the attic, and started wandering around the village in the light of day. He said that he no longer had anything to lose. And, indeed, two days after this he was killed by the militia.

Slowly, we were overtaken by disasters. In one search, the militia found ten Jews, including my uncle, aunt and their two children and killed them. We started looking for other places of shelter after this. It was bitter cold, and Hadassah's baby never stopped crying. We were afraid he would give us away. We had



The Family Tree of Rabbi Moshe'le Spector. None survived, a fate common to most Jewish families.

no alternative but to return to the forest. On the very day of our return, the militia raided the forest. They found the opening to our bunker and ordered us to come outside. On hearing our name, they told us that they had heard that we were "good Jews" and that they would let us go. We were told to go far from the forest because searches were made there from time to time. Apparently the local peasant girls had mentioned our name favourably to the militia men, begging them not to hurt us.

It was clear to us that we would have to find another hiding place. Mother and Shula went to the village until things calmed down. In the meanwhile we were joined by the Spiegel family and three men from Rozhishch. It was decided that until we could organize properly for the winter, we would remain in the forest. My sister, Shoshana and I went out to the village to scavenge food. Because of a snowstorm we could not return to the forest. We separated and agreed to meet in the evening and then to return to the forest.

When I reached Shoshana with the food, she broke into tears and said that we no longer had anywhere to go back to. She had just been informed that there had been another raid in the forest and that everyone had been killed. I begged her to return with me to the forest to bury them, but she insisted that the Germans were surely in ambush awaiting the return of the other members of the family. She insisted we had better go to tell mother what had happened.

We had great trouble with Hadassah's baby. His fingers and toes froze. He cried a lot. We wandered from place to place, looking for shelter. No one would help us because they were afraid the baby's crying would give them away. After wandering around in this manner for about a month, Mother and Shoshana left the beautiful baby boy, aged one year and two months, asleep on the doorstep of a farm. A short time later, he was taken inside. But neighbours started gossiping about the baby and the matter reached the militia. The woman, on being interrogated, insisted the baby was the son of relatives and that she wanted to adopt him. They were not convinced, and finding the baby had been circumcised, snatched him out of her arms. He was shot just outside the farmhouse.

Of our entire family, only mother, Shula and I survived the holocaust.

