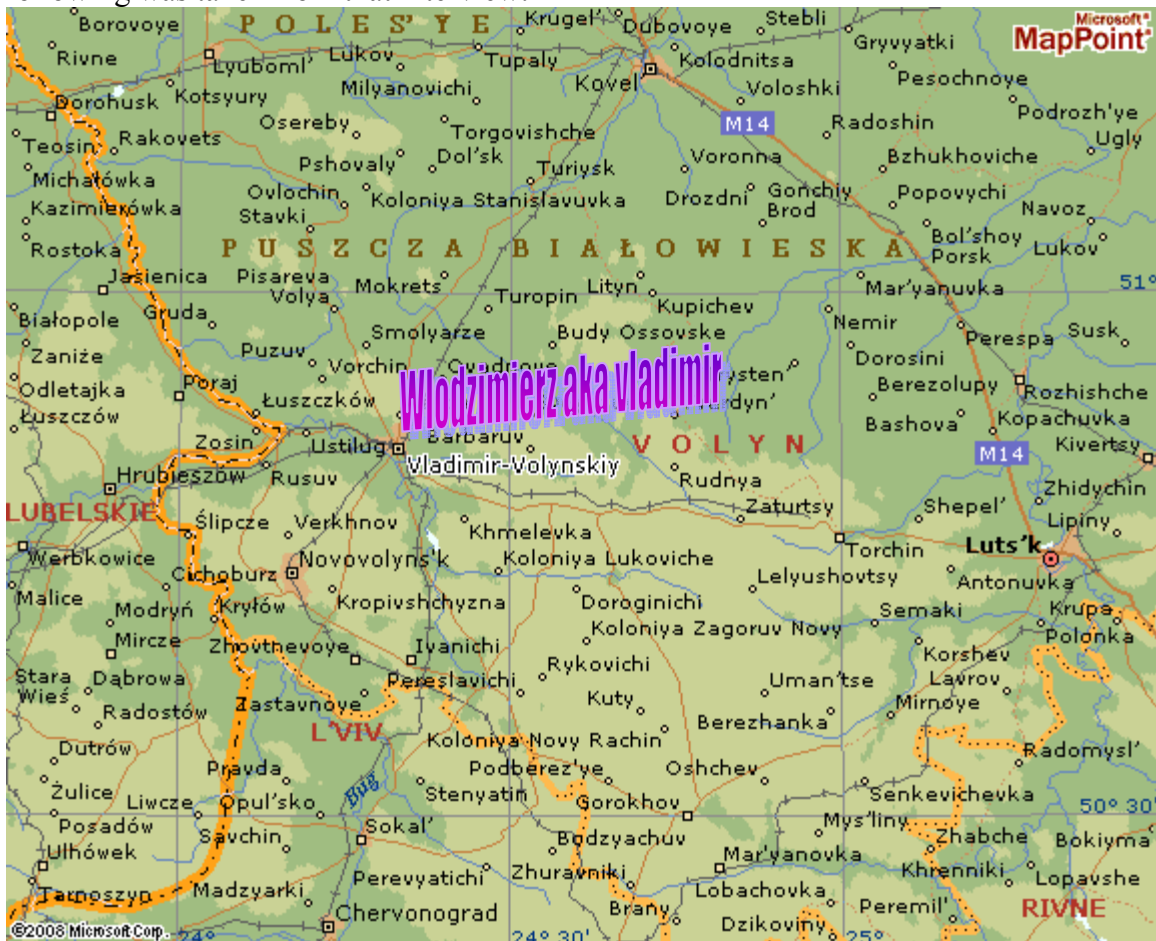




Our friend and my father's countryman Yacob Harari was born in Volynsk in a town the Ukrainians called **Włodzimierz**. **On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a surprise attack on the Soviet Union and the Nazis began rounding up and murdering the country's Jews.**

One of the main east-west invasion routes was the highway that ran from Hrubieszow, the last town on the Polish side of the bug river (the ethnic divide) to Lutsk the province capital. The thoroughfare ran through ustilug (ostilla) the birth place of Kuni Bermi, my mothers father, and traversed a town the Russians called Vladimir-Volynsk. A few miles later the Germans shot down the middle of Torczyn, the shtetl that was the home of my father and his family.

in 1997 Jacob told his story to an interviewer from the Spielberg project. The following was taken from that interview:





My name is Jacob, in Hebrew Yakov Harari born June 20 1932 in **Wlodzimierz** Volynsk

Our original last name was Berger. My father's first name was Itzhak.

And my mothers name was Esther. She was born in a small town called Poryck and her maiden name was Mondsheim.

My father was born in Wlodzimierz I had one brother Raphel or Ralph. He goes by the name of Schwartz. Which is another story. He was born in 1934.

My Parents had a grocery store which was adjacent to the house.

#### AT THE TARBUT

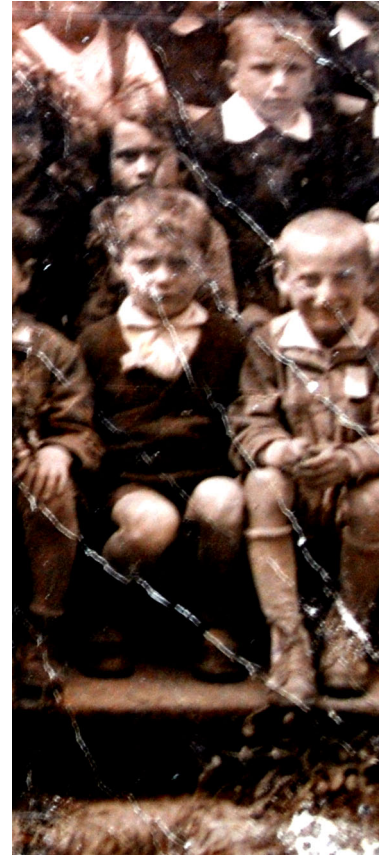
The house consisted of a kitchen and a large large room which was kind of divided by a closet and a tile stove to heat the house. Behind it was a bed room. There was no toilet in the house. It was an out house. The community was mostly Jewish. We lived in an all Jewish area.

We had a Tarbut which was a Hebrew school. And most of the children did go to that school. The house wasn't separate. There were about probably like a square and all around there were about 8 homes.

My grandfather on my father's side and his second wife and a daughter lived adjacent to us. My father's sister and family lived in that town. My mother's sister and husband and child lived in the same city.

Sruel Monsheim's father came from Krylov. Sruel and Ratzl had 5 daughters and a son Moshe. Moshe is on one side in the back row. His wife is on the other side. Chia went to Palestine in the early 1930s and

Chana joined her before the Second World War. Itka is the daughter on the left and Chana on the right.



BELLA AND CHIA



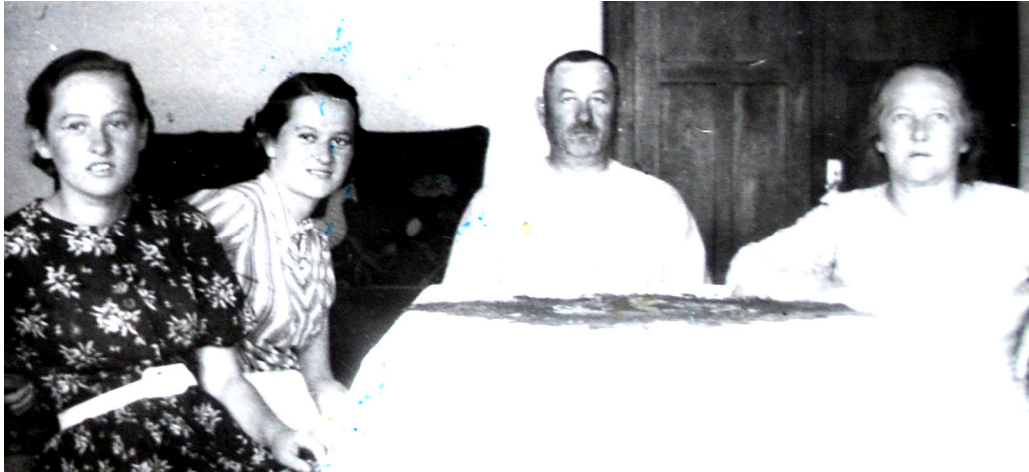
My grandparents on my mother's side lived in Porytz.

ITKA

CHANA

SRUEL

RATZI MONSHEIM (Poryztz)



I used to go to see them almost every summer. It was a nice little small town. Lots of friends. Very warm. We used to go out to the river and play with the kids in the back yard. My grandparents were religious and observant. My parents weren't except we were observing the holidays; everybody did and we would occasionally go to synagogue. It was democratic Poland between the wars.

There was a lot of activities by the Zionist movement and the Bund movement. That was prior to World War 2. I can just remember when there were elections all over the city there were posters and signs and letters. Each letter representing a different party.

The elections were very heated. People felt very strongly about their positions and beliefs. Like there was the Betar that was Jabotinski's party. Then there were of course the Bund and the Communists. They (the Communists) were illegal in Poland; still there were presentations.

(CHIA AND BELLA?)

SISTER CHIA WITH MOTHER BEFORE CHIA LEFT FOR PALESTINE 1936



I remember Pesach of course and Chanukah. In school there was a carnival. The children used to dress up and have a party. On Pesach there was a family Seder. The immediate family. My mother, father, brother, and me.

Chanukah wasn't such a big deal.

We had Children my age all the way in the neighborhood used to play together, play ball or run around. We used to take the rings from a herring barrel and we used to run it with a stick.

We used to go down to the river which wasn't far from town, the Lug River and we would hike around swim do some fishing.



During the (2<sup>nd</sup> world) war there were more people that came in from across the border with children my age.



Really there was no danger. Except In the later years the Polish government and the people became very anti Semitic. However as a child in a Jewish environment I didn't feel much of it. I could remember some incidents with the store where Polish people would stand on the steps of the store and tell non Jews not to shop. I remember it because there was an incident where my father went into a fight with one of them, and I remember that. Most of the customers were non Jews. Ukrainian peasants and Polish peasants from villages surrounding the town. I was in the first grade at the Tarbut which was the Hebrew school. They started to teach us Hebrew because at home we spoke Yiddish.

We had uniforms, special uniforms that we wore. The school was in a nice building not too far away. I could walk to it. It was safe.

Our house: You went up a few steps then you came into the kitchen. It was a elongated room. Electricity was in the house.

We had a Wood stove and Running water.

From there you went into the living room that had a table and chairs and a couch and then we had a place where we kept the clothes that separated it from the bedroom. Behind that was a big bed and small beds where my brother and I slept.

Underneath the house there was a cellar.

Until the war it was pretty safe in the house. The only incident that took place was outside sometime, like I mentioned with the store. I remember people talking, if they went to the movies and if they had nice clothes on or something, Polish anti-Semites would use razors to cut it behind your back. Otherwise I didn't feel anything personally. I didn't know any non Jewish friends at that time.

(The anti Semitism I heard of) When they started to have people at the store door telling others not to go in and almost physically stopping them and the police not intervening.

Until 1939 again I was only seven years old so I don't recall much, we knew that the war started and the Germans were coming into town. However they never made it to our town. This was the result of The Germans stopped 8 miles from our town. (as a result of a pact between the Germans and Soviets) This became the border between occupied Poland and the Soviet Union. When the Soviets came in the town name was changed to Vladimer Volynsk.

[On September 17, 1939 the Red Army entered Polish territory](#), acting on the basis of a secret clause of the [Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact](#) between the Soviet Union and [Nazi Germany](#). Soviet Union would later deny the existence of this secret protocol, claiming that it was never allied with Nazi Germany, and acted independently to "protect" the Ukrainian and Belorusan minorities in the desintegrating Polish state.<sup>[3]</sup> Composed of mostly ethnic Ukrainian Soviet troops under the command of Marshal [Semyon Timoshenko](#), the Soviet forces occupied Western Ukraine within 12 days, capturing the regions of [Galicia](#) and [Volhynia](#) with little Polish opposition and occupying the



principal city, [Lviv](#), on September 22 of that year.

The concern was that the Germans would come in. When the Polish soldiers retreated from the Germans there was concern there would be a pogrom by the Polish soldiers that retreated from the Germans. They didn't have a chance to do anything because the Soviet Union soldiers came in.

There were news papers. I can't recall what they said.

In '39 the first thing we knew was bombing of the city by German planes. We were home. And when the bombing took place on the second or third day we left town to a village to be away from the center of the city. We stayed with a Ukrainian family we knew from the shop.

It was pretty frightening. We dug a zig zag trench to lie on so when the bombs fall the sharpness would not hit us.

#### A YOUNG ITZHAK AND ESTHER BERGER



The bombing took place for about 6 or 7 days. The family we stayed with were very nice at this time.

When the Soviets came in and we went back into town

When we went back: My father, mother, brother, everything was ok. The house was intact. There were casualties from the bombing, but I didn't know any.

There was a decree that all private business was forbidden. The Soviets eliminated all private enterprise so our store was closed up. My parents got jobs. My mother was manager of a restaurant. My father worked for the

housing authority in town. We went to a Yiddish school. Hebrew was forbidden. So they opened a Yiddish school where the teaching language was in Yiddish.

My grandfather on my mother's side's sister and her daughter and her son ran away from the Poles and Germans and they came in and lived in what was the store. A one room store.

It was a very good time during the Soviets.. We had freedom; parents were working. Income was sufficient; we went to school. That went on for 2 years, until June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941.

In 1941 the Germans attacked the Soviet Union.

At that time I was with my grandparents in their little town. I remember At 4 in the morning we were sleeping, and we heard like thunder, and we couldn't figure out what's going on. We looked out and there was no rain. And this was the artillery shells. The Germans attacked that morning.

By evening they were in our town. They came in and they burned our town, going from home to home with flame throwers. The town was 80% Jewish.

Only a few homes survived. Most of the people settled in those few homes.

Most of the people were on the river bank during the fire.

Germans were shooting artillery shells above the heads not to kill. Just to frighten.

I can remember that the young women put some dirt on their face to look ugly because they were afraid of rape or whatever. Though I didn't see any.

My grandfather was dealing in wholesale wheat and my grandmother was running a material store.

About three days later my mother who was not with us left their town, which was occupied by the Germans and walked some 20 miles to see what happened to us. They found us. Then all of us, my brother, my grand parents and my self, went back with them to our town and they moved in with us. To our house. Our house wasn't burned. All the Jewish people left that town because there was no town left.

I was a 9 year old boy. WE didn't know what's going to happened. Life was never the same. There was no more school to go to. They had to do work whatever the Germans told them to do. My father did some gardening. Dugged some potatoes outside the town.



#### GRANDFATHER SRUEL MONSHEIM

My uncle was caught and a few months later my grandfather was picked up in front of the house by the German police. They were all taken to the prison of the town. No body knew. No one came out of that.

In the first roundup there were 200. in the second one there were 350. We were an area that was heavily Jewish until they made it into a designated ghetto area and brought in people from outside the city and we had to double up.

We played in the street. No school or anything like that.

The ghetto encompassed the major central Jewish area. They put barbed wire around it. One was not far from our house. All the people from outside the ghetto area that were Jewish, they brought them into the ghetto.

In our case we had already living in our house 4 my grandmother my grandfather and my mother's younger sister, Chana

Moshe and Sara lived in

the store. The ghetto was those streets.

Congestion was very big. The men used to go out in the morning and do some work for the Germans. Whatever was available. When they came back you could bring some potatoes or what not. And at the barbed wire some bartering went on between the Jews and non Jews. Bread. Vegetables. What not. At one time they set up a Jewish Judenrat which was a Jewish community that overlooked things and did what the Germans told them to do.

#### ***Ibica Jewish workers returning to ghetto***

One morning they came in and demanded 250 people to be sent to Kiev. My father was among them.

They went to the train. And the train took off. This was in the evening



The next morning somebody came in and said the train came back with the people. I remember my mother went down to the railroad; this was before the ghetto, and they came back. Nobody knows what happened. There were rumors that the railroad had been bombed and they couldn't take them.

We had some coal and some wood that we used to heat the house with.

Nobody went out of the ghetto except those who had a pass to work. There was no organized Jewish life. Before the war there was a Jewish theatre. There were synagogues.

In addition to the three roundups, people were taken to work every day. And there was one incident when people came in to work at the railroad. They took twenty men. Told them to dig ditches. And they covered them live.

### *barbed wire fence Krakow ghetto*



We used to go to the wire and exchange things and get some foods. The guards were only at the gates. People managed this way. It wasn't plentiful.

All the way around you could pass things out and pass things in.

There was rationing. Each person got a card for bread. I don't remember how much.

It wasn't too bad, the amount of bread we did get into the ghetto. But in addition to the bread there was nothing else. You had to manage for yourself. We bartered clothes, shoes, money. Whatever you had.

The ghetto was formed until 1 Sept 1942

At that time the Germans took a thousand Jewish men and took them to Piatydni and they told them to dig a big hole. They told them they were going to put an airfield there and they needed a place for hangers to hide the planes. People were pretty suspicious about it. And the work went on for four days. Each day they took out a thousand people and brought them back.

On the first of September we were suspicious because a lot of Ukrainian police and Germans came into town. At that time my father told me to leave the ghetto

My younger brother was sent out to one of the villages to a farmer we knew five days before. And he was there. And I had a place about a mile and a half out of town with a Ukrainian woman who had two children, where I had a pair of boots and some clothes and some other things with her in case we had to run away to go to her.

The evening before the first of September I sneaked out through the wires and I went to her place. You could get through the wires. You pulled them apart and just went through them. The wires were a foot apart. I came to her, and I was there for the night.

In the morning she came in and told me my parents are in the ghetto and they were waiting for me to come back. She took me and we walked back together all the way from her house to the front of the ghetto.

When I came to the front of the ghetto there used to be a Polish family living just across the street from the ghetto wire. Most of the bartering was done through them too.

When she (the Polish woman) saw me she said "**What are you doing here?**"

And I looked into the ghetto, and I could see there was action going on. A lot of Police rounding up people. And there were a lot of feathers from torn pillows and covers.

And she told me I should run away.



So I ran away from that place, from the ghetto. And I didn't know where to go. I didn't go back to that woman because she lied to me.

I decided to walk to where my brother was. That was about 7-8 kilometers from the town. When I got there it was a Ukrainian family, and he had some Polish people working for him on the farm. On the land. I saw my brother there. It was late in the afternoon.

Everybody knew the Germans had started the pogrom and were executing the people.

So that Ukrainian peasant he stepped out. He was going to tell the police.

One of the Polish workers actually was beating us up and chasing us over the fields.

And it was right in September a while after the harvest of the wheat. They usually leave a stem which is hard. We had no shoes on. He was chasing us through those fields. We ran away my brother and I. Everybody in those villages knew us because they used to shop at my fathers store. So we walked from home to home for about two weeks in those villages. We would come in and they would give us some food but they would not hold us. Then they would tell us...just go into the barn and stay over night, don't tell the neighbors. That night my brother and I stayed in his barn without him knowing it. In that same village was a Ukrainian family; their son belonged to the German police. And he came to town and he said that he saw my parents being shipped to Piatydni.

What they did in the pogrom? They rounded up the people. They put them on trucks. And they trucked them to Piatydni They undressed. And they shot them by machine gun. One on top of the other. I have a friend who was shot through the neck and the leg. But she wasn't dead. And at night. Of course the peasants came to cover the pit. And they saw her and took her out. She survived. And today she is in Israel.



Coming back to my story. So he (the Ukrainian policeman) told everybody that he saw my parents being killed. And at that same time somebody told him that we were in the village. So he came and he caught us. He took us to the edge of town. There was a farmer which had a cellar. He put us in the cellar. Locked the cellar overnight.

Next morning he took my brother and I and marched us back into the city. We didn't leave (for Vladimir) till noon. It took a while to walk those seven or eight kilometers. He took us into the German headquarters. (By the time we arrived) It was late in the afternoon already. We were sitting there.

About five in the evening another Ukrainian police officer came and took us out. And he brought us to the wires of the ghetto and let us in to the ghetto.

The first pogrom lasted two weeks. During those two weeks my brother and I were walking from village to village. The pogrom, the organized killing, ended the afternoon we were returned to the ghetto.

First thing we did (after we were released into the ghetto) was we went to our parents' house, to our house. Before we left our parents had prepared a hiding place inside the house. The hiding place was in the little cellar where we kept potatoes and other things for the winter. Inside that cellar they dug out a hole to the side and put in some boards so you couldn't see it. And I knew that they will be there. So we came over. The cellar was open. The place was discovered. You could see that there had been people there because there were signs of people being there. But nobody was alive

At that time they concentrated all the people that survived. And there must have been 4000 people that did survive the first pogrom out of 25,000. So I imagine the third pogrom must have had 18



to 19 thousand people killed. So they concentrated us in another area and from all the people that I found there was one great uncle. My mother's father's brother. He lost all the family, but he himself survived. So we knew him.

And then my mother's brother, wife, and daughter were killed.

My mother's other sister and the son. The son was actually outside the ghetto with the woman that raised him. Because they were well off. They used to have a flour mill. And that woman was with them for many many years. So she had the boy. ***Mother's sister and family: Moshe, Bunya, Dadish***

A day or two later what they made us do was collect all the belongings in the houses and store them in a certain school where they sorted them and the better things the Germans took and the other things they gave to the peasants. 2 days later I came back to the house. My parents had some money and a fur coat and we had some silver in the house and other valuables.

### **Grandmother Razi**



There was dirt in the kitchen under the floor. And I came in and I saw that the floor had been tampered with. And my brother was outside. This was two days after they brought us into the ghetto. So I called out to him and said Rafi come in and see something. Something is going on here. So we went into the living room and my father came out from that hiding place. He heard me calling my brother. Then I found out that when the pogrom started that night they ran into the hiding place. It was very small but it ended up to be my father, my mother, her younger sister, my mother's aunt and the two kids, and my grandmother, Razi. It was really crowded. They

stayed there for 7 days. When they heard that the Germans and the Ukrainian police come in the house, knock on the walls, search. Feel around. But they couldn't detect them. And on the seventh night my father said: Listen. We can't stay here. They'll discover us. They ran out of food and everything else.

And he and my mother and her younger sister Itka decided to run out out at night. Next to our house was a kind of creek. It was more of a sewer than a creek. They went to that creek. They got to the back of the ghetto. Got out through the wire.

They went to the place where I was supposed to be. When they knocked on her door. It was probably 4 to 5 in the morning. She started to scream. She thought they came to kill her or whatever. And my father asked where am I?(where is Yakov).

She didn't know.



They realized what's going on. So they ran away, and there was a river right by them. They ran away all three of them. There was a Polish husband and wife. His house was right by the river. So he took them in. and in his attic he had a place that had a double wall kind of. So if you come up in the attic you couldn't see the side from the outside, and you didn't realize there was a wall. He had another Jewish man hiding there. And he put them in that hiding place. And he closed the wall. And in no time the Ukrainian police was there, looking for my father by name because that woman told them. That Polish man put on a show. "that Communist I wouldn't...."

And he kept them there for 10 days. But the idea was he wanted money.

They didn't know that the pogrom was over at that point. My father said the way I got out I'll go back in. I'll take out the stuff that we have. The silver... with this we can pay him for it. And so he did it. He came back. He started to fool around with the floor. To take out the things he had hidden. And he heard something and he went back in the hole. And that's how we found our parents.

At that time he took back to that man with the few things we could get out.

He kept us September, November.

Meanwhile the second ghetto was set up and they passed out passes for the people in that ghetto. There were two kinds of passes. Those that had a trade got one kind of pass and the others had the other kind of a pass.

And we were hiding there my mother, my father, my brother, and my mother's sister. And this other Jewish man. However after two months we didn't have the money, and he had enough he didn't want to keep us. And my father and I decided to go to those villages and try to talk to some of the Ukrainians they will hide us. We had clothes. It was winter. It was already snowing. Most of what we ate was potatoes. We got enough.

## **ITKA MOTHERS SISTER**

So we came to this one Ukrainian family at night. He knew my parents real well. He had a positive inclination. Most of the Ukrainians welcomed the Germans. He had a big haystack next to his barn. We opened some of the boards of the barn so we could get in and out and we dug out a hole inside the haystack, prepared that place to stay there. My father and I went back. We took my mother. My mother's sister said no. She's not going to the haystack. She'll go back to the ghetto. So she went back into the ghetto. We were lying with that peasant for 2 ½ months. Everybody had a hope: the Russians will come back tomorrow. The Russians will come back tomorrow. But meanwhile the front kept moving farther away towards Moscow.

Then he didn't want us to stay anymore. So my father and I again started to walk to the other villages. All the way around. During the night we will come to a village. Knock on a door. People will take us in. they'll keep us for the day but then

I remember one night we were in another village in an attic and it was so cold that the only way we could keep warm was my father put his feet in my chest and I put my feet in his chest and we were lying there. After walking around like this for a week or ten days we came back, and we didn't know what to do.

So my mother got an idea to go back to this woman that I was supposed to be with her in the beginning. It sounded very ridiculous to do, but we had no choice. So my father and my mother left us.



And they walked back to the town. She lived in the outskirts of town. And somehow she agreed. I don't know why.

She needed some support, because she was her self with the children. Her name was libia krakakuv. She was a tall woman. She had no nose.

So my mother stayed there. And my father and I one night started to walk to that town.

It was after a heavy snow. Everything was blank white. We left at dark. We walked for 3 to four hours and got to almost the same spot. We walked in a circle. We couldn't know where to go. So we had to stay another day. The next day we walked and got back to her place. When we got to her place she had in her apartment a cellar. So we made a place inside the cellar to hide. It was possible to open a sack of potatoes to cover the entrance after you were inside.

At that time the second pogrom took place. They killed the remaining people with the exception of 1500 people. The trades people they left. My mother's sister survived that pogrom.

We were there with this woman January February. Then she had to move to another place. It had to be a place where she could keep us hiding. She found a place. It was centrally located. It was actually a three story building with many tenants. But she got the basement apartment. We got there by walking at night. (It was in the city of Vladimir but outside the ghetto.)

The window was level with the ground on the outside.

It included a kitchen, a living room and a bed room for her. And adjacent to it was a like a barn that they used to keep a goat or something like that.

Inside that barn next to her we dug a hiding place. The size of which would be 8 to 9 feet wide. You could only sit. You couldn't stand up. And it must have been in length maybe 15 or 16 feet.

And we dug a hole. And we put beams and planks on top of it.

And we made a little entrance that was enough for a person to squeeze in and squeeze out. We made from metal a cover which opens into it. In the middle was a little open that you could put out a hand to smoothe it out a little and put some straw on top of it. And we got down into that. It took a long time. Some of the soil we set in the same place on top. And some she took out at night. It took 3 to 4 weeks. The time came that we needed money to exist and we didn't have it. At that point we didn't have any money to support that woman anymore.

The third ghetto was still in existence. And my mother's sister was in that ghetto. My father went into that ghetto illegally, because you had to have a pass. He got into that ghetto and they found people who lived in the ghetto who wanted to have a place to run in case they have to. So there were two sisters, their fiancé and the fiancé's sister who gave us money to support ourself. In order to have a place (to run to).

That third ghetto lasted for 9 – 10 months. Occasionally my father would sneak in. they had the Judenrat, and they had the Jewish police. It wasn't easy for illegal people to get into the ghetto.

We spent our time not doing much. We had carbide lamps. You put powder in it with little wicks. We played cards but not much. We prepared a place for us four and for my mother's sister to come and in case we needed it for the other four people. It would be pretty crowded. Touching one to another just sitting down. We also built a little stove inside there because it was just under the chimney of the building. We had to be very quiet because there were people in the yard from the three stores all the time outside. Because it was an apartment building. We built a little stove and the smoke went into the chimney from underneath the ground. At that time we knew the Germans were retreating from Russia already. And there were rumors that they might evacuate the Christian population. We also had two sacks of wheat and potatoes with us down below. We never talked to this woman all those years. To add to the story she took a lover which spent nights in the house. She said she never knew we were



there. So we had to be extra extra quiet. Of course she had children and the children knew we were there.

One morning we got up and we heard shooting from the outside. This was the beginning of the third pogrom. It was probably in December of 1943. The next night my mother's sister didn't make it. One of the 2 sisters that was supposed to come, came with her sister's fiancé and a third man who was not from them. They succeeded to run out and they came over. So we were in hiding there, all seven of us until the Russians came which was in July 1944.

Waste: while she was there we would go in a pail, and she would dump it out.

We also had a place where we lied all together. However we were concerned that if a bomb fell on the building. This was inside the building and it would collapse and kill us. So we backed up a little tunnel that went under her living room into the back yard. This must have taken about 20 – 25 feet. And at the end of that little tunnel we made another bigger area so you could sit in case bombing takes place so you would be away from that building. And from that tunnel we made two little side tunnels. One on the left side we dug for water. It was very shallow to get to the water. So we had a little well. One on the right side where we dumped the waste. One day a family on top were making moonshine for themselves and the batch didn't succeed. So they tried to pour it out.

And they found a place where they kept pouring it and it disappeared. It consisted of water and yeast. It came into us. Into the waste thing. It started growing. Fortunately at night we took care of that. But we did have water from right inside.

We were 10 twelve feet under ground. The water was brackish. But drinkable. The only contact we had was the woman who was taking care of us. She didn't have much of her own possessions. Those things were kept with us mostly. I still couldn't figure out what her motivation was. She needed help for her family? She was afraid what would happen if we survive?

We were there for more than a year.

After the the third pogrom and the other people joined us, the front grew much closer.

In February we could start hearing the shelling. Also at that time there were rumors that the Germans are going to evacuate the population. So she left us, and she went to the village to hide with her kids. We remained by ourselves and we had about two sacks of wheat. We had some potatoes.

When that woman left us because the Russians were coming back, we had very little food and we rationed it very slowly and we used to look out from the cracks in the cellar. There was a big orchard just a few hundred feet away. I could see all the fruit, the apple growing every day, but we couldn't even go close to it or touch anything.

The only time we could do the stove was..

I had a mirror below the chimney, and when the people in the other apartments would cook, we could make our own little fire. We couldn't do it when no body else was cooking. We were afraid someone would recognize it.

The Germans came and decided to dig in just at the door of that cellar where we were. They used to dig a hole and put the tanks in. I used to go up. At that time they were reading a German newspaper, and I found out about the Normandy landing from that newspaper.

For some reason the Russians decided to stop 30 kilometers from our town. And they stood there for 5 months. During those five months she came back several times.

Then we heard shelling. We didn't know what was going on. One day we went up, and we heard Russian spoken on the yard. But we weren't sure it was Russian or what it was.

So the next morning my brother, who was the youngest, we sent him out. He went out from the hiding place to see what was going on. He was 8. He was gone for a few minutes. Then he came in and said the Russians are in town. The Soviets came in.

So we got out from there, From the hiding. We were liberated. And within a few days our feet got swollen. People warned us not to eat suddenly. Of course we were on a starvation diet.



The [Lvov-Sandomierz Offensive](#) or the L'vov-Sandomierz Strategic Offensive Operation ([Russian](#): Львовско-Сандомирская стратегическая наступательная операция) was a major [Red Army](#) operation to force the [German](#) troops from [Ukraine](#) and Eastern [Poland](#). Launched in mid July 1944, in just under one month of fighting, the Red Army achieved their objective as part of three smaller sub-operations:

The woman came back to town. We got a house at that time. Life started again back to normal at that point. The front moved to Poland. My father

started to work. They made him the head of the housing authority. My mother became head of a restaurant.

We started going to a Russian school with the Russian language.

That was 1944 to 1945.

And at that time we tried to see if we could get some mail over to Israel because my mother had two sisters living in Israel.

People looked all over. From the town about 70 Jewish people survived. Some of them were liberated five months before us because they ran to the Soviets when the Russians got close. Some of them were with the partisans, with the Poles, but then the Poles didn't want to have any part of them.

*(In the western Ukraine three opposing armed resistance forces operated:*

*The UPA whose goals included liquidation of the Jews*

*The Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa) generally anti-Semitic*

*The Soviet partisans. It was only there that the Jewish fighters were accepted. Jews made up about 5 % of the Soviet partisans. The partisan brigades arrived in the western Ukraine in 1943, too late to prevent murder (even if their commanders had wished to do so) but still available to take in survivors.)*

We lived there (in Vladimir) for a full year from 44 to 45

There were a lot of homes that the Germans left. They all belonged to the government. My father knew every big shot in town. Because whoever came in from the Mayor to the chief of police needed a place. We had a big house, and we shared it with a Russian officer. When the Soviets came back, one day I was going back from school I came across that Ukrainian policeman that caught my brother and I and took us into the city to be killed.

But it was the last day of the pogrom and they didn't kill us that day.

And I lost all of my composure and started to scream at him and throw some stones. And I went to my father's office which wasn't far away and I told him about it. And I guess the police found out who he was, and I understand they arrested him, and they did what they did after that, because he cooperated with the Germans.

You couldn't apply to go to Israel. Ex Polish citizens could leave for Poland. The Soviets annexed the Ukraine. So we had permission to leave for Poland. However to make a living wasn't so easy. My father used to cross the border to Poland to do some business from time to time. At that same time we started to prepare to leave for Poland with the idea to get to Palestine, to be with the only

relatives we had. So we bought a wagon and a horse ready to go. I remember one evening my parents went to the movies. And my brother and I were next to the house. And some policeman came over and said he wanted the horse and the wagon for the night.

I said what do you mean? I can't let you have it. I'll drive it myself if you let me for the night.

There was an exchange of population at that time between all the Ukrainians that were on Polish soil to go into Russia, and all the Poles that were in the Soviet side went into Poland. And they all settled in our town because they wanted to be close to the border, hoping they could go back home. But that night they decided to ship them back to the hinterland of the Ukraine. So they needed horses and wagons to take them to the railroads. So I was driving the horse. We just gave people half an hour to take what they can. We took them to the train and shipped them away.

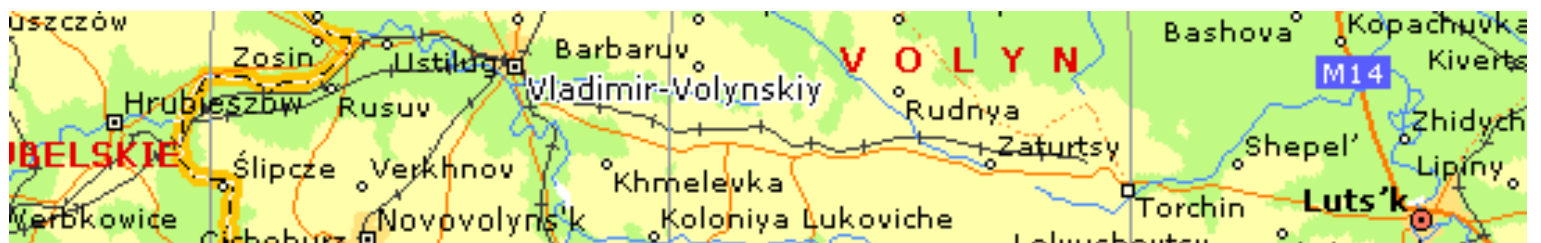
In (1945) we left for Poland. My father could travel, because the area was occupied by the Soviets on both sides. There were a lot of Soviet Jews and other Jews that wanted to leave the Soviet Union, but if you weren't a Polish citizens you couldn't. So he knew some Soviet officials that for money you could bribe them. So he helped a lot of people to leave at that time. This became known.

One night we took a horse and a wagon and we went across the border. We settled in Hrubiesow on the Polish side. I spent a full year in that town.

RAFI AND YAKOV IN HRUBIESOW



*Hrubiesow market day pre war*



In 1946 we moved to Warsaw. We changed our name to a Polish name Biernatzki. The reason for this was, at that time my father was dealing in whole sale wheat.



My father went to the villages to buy wheat and brought it to Warsaw. The Polish underground, which was against the Soviet Union, was sympathetic to the Polish Government in London. But they killed the Jewish people if they found them on the road. We didn't look Jewish. No one in our family did. So we took a Polish name. We settled in Warsaw under the name of Biernatzki. I entered the school at that point, which was equivalent to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The Polish gymnasium. There was a Jewish community center at that time. After I went to school I used to have my Jewish friends there and have activities. But during the day I was at the Polish holy school. We were there until 1947. The Poles didn't know I was Jewish. Anti-Semitism was pretty prevailing at that time. This was the time that there was a pogrom at Kielce also.

**The Kielce pogrom** refers to the events that occurred on July 4, 1946, in the [Polish](#) town of [Kielce](#). The outbreak of [anti-Jewish](#) violence, sparked by allegations of [blood libel](#), resulted in 37 [Polish Jews](#) being murdered out of about 200 [Holocaust](#) survivors who had returned home after [World War II](#). Two more Jews in trains passing through Kielce also lost their lives. Two or three [Gentile Poles](#) were killed by the Jews defending themselves, while nine were later sentenced to death. While far from the deadliest [pogrom](#) against the Jews, the incident was especially significant in post-war [Jewish history](#), as the attack took place more than a year after the end of [World War II in Europe](#), shocking both the Jews in Poland and the international community.

After I went to school I joined the Polish boy scouts associated with the air force.

After the pogrom in Kielce I went to Kielce with that group, because they had a tower for jumping for parachute training. I went to train there. They didn't know I was Jewish.

One day they took the whole class to church for communion. I went with them. I had no idea what it was all about. We were kneeling in a line in front of the altar. And the Priest had a vessel in his hands. And he took out something and put it in the mouth of each one.

I couldn't figure out what's going on. I had a notion that it must be holy water that he dripped on your tongue with a chip. He came to me and put it on, and I gave it back to him twice. It could easily have given me away. My excuse was that I came from the Ukraine and we didn't practice that kind of religion.

In 1947 there was a Jewish organization that had a camp in western Poland. After being there for 2 weeks I got a telegram from my parents that they got the papers to go to Palestine. So we left right away from Warsaw. We took a train to Paris. When we got into Paris the Jewish organization met us at the train. Kept us for a day or two. Then we went down to Marseille and took a small Greek ship that could carry about 200 people.

The papers were bought by my mother's two sisters with some money from relatives in New York. It was papers of a Rumanian family which left Palestine in 1939 for Rumania. They got caught by the Nazis and got killed. So the papers were still around. So we came under their name. This is when our name became Schwarz.

All of us got a different name. My father's name became Yosef from Yitzhak. My mother became Bertha. I was still Yakov. We got this little ship. We were all sick on the ship. We were afraid if the British discovered (we were traveling under false papers) they would send us back. Fortunately they didn't. We got in there. We didn't speak Rumanian but they didn't either so fortunately nobody



questioned us. We got into Palestine and lived with my mother's sister outside Tel Aviv in Gat Ramon. My parents started to do all kinds of work. My father was working in construction. Even I was working. I started to go back to school. I had a very hard time with school. I went in for the last two years of school. I didn't know any Hebrew. I didn't know any of the Jewish bible in Hebrew, of Jewish history. They gave me one year to learn, to catch up on the language. Then they wanted me to take tests for foreigners like Hebrew grammar and everything else. I had some private tutoring. At that time there weren't too many immigrants. The teacher put me next to a student who came from Iraq. We are friends until today.

I joined the Gatna, the youth movement before the Hagannah. We used to pass out leaflets and carry ammunitions and hide it. Through the school there were small cells of people. You went to a place we didn't even know which building we went to. they blindfolded us. Then somebody would give us instructions. Would give us the leaflets and we would go out. It was all done through the school.

Then the British left. When the war broke out in 1948 we were 16, 17 years old. They took us into the army. They signed that we will not go on the fighting line but just be support. During the war I was in the communications corps. Then I joined the air force.



Then the third cease fire and the war stopped. We went back to school to finish up our studies. Of all our class, 3 perished.

We took another year to finish up high school which gave me a break, because during the years in the army I picked up on the language and did some extra studying. After I finished school I went back into the army. I was in pilot's school. But I never finished the school.

I always wanted to be a water engineer. So I came to the United States and studied at NYU two years there; and I came to Detroit and studied two years there and met my wife.

My parents settled in Jafo and opened a grocery store again. They gave me some support, but when I got the states I

got a job and I supported myself through 4 years of school.

In New York I was working for the JNF as a messenger. I taught Hebrew in New York.

My wife was a librarian in the Hebrew school, and she went to Wayne State. We met there in the Hebrew school and started to date. And we got married in 59. She was born in Poland and at the end of the war she was In the Soviet Union with her parents.

I went to Israel twice to look for a job as a water engineer but I couldn't find a suitable job.



My brother moved the Detroit in 64.

In America I stayed with my great aunt. My grandfather's sister lived in Brooklyn. I stayed with them until I got into NYU; then I rented a room from a German Jewish couple in their apartment in the Bronx. My intention was to become a hydraulic engineer.

I worked for the Corps of Engineer. Rena Kron. We got married in 62. I became a citizen. We moved to Seattle. My daughter Arlana Rachel was born in Seattle. I worked on the construction of dams. I always liked the San Francisco area. There was an opening here in 1964. We moved to the bay area in 1964. My son Amir was born here. We bought this house in Berkeley in 65. And I worked for the corps of engineers until I retired in 1996. I have a granddaughter Sabrina.

When I joined the air force they like to Hebricize names. So I changed my name to Harari which means mountain, and our original name Berger meant mountain.

My parents and brother were always Schwartz.

My parents had a grocery store in Jafo.





CHANA BEFORE LEAVING  
FOR PALESTINE



ESTHER AND ITZHAK SCHWARTZ BERGER



YACOB AND RAFI



Rena Kron was the daughter of Moonish, a tailor, and his wife Leah. Moonish was from Warsaw, Leah from Lodz Poland, a city Southwest of Warsaw. When the Germans invaded in 1939, Moonish, Leah, and their three daughters, one of whom was 3 year old Rena, walked East and crossed the Bug River into Russian territory. They spent the war in the Uzbekistan towns of Tashkent and Samargand.

### ***JEWES IN ANCIENT UZBEKISTAN***



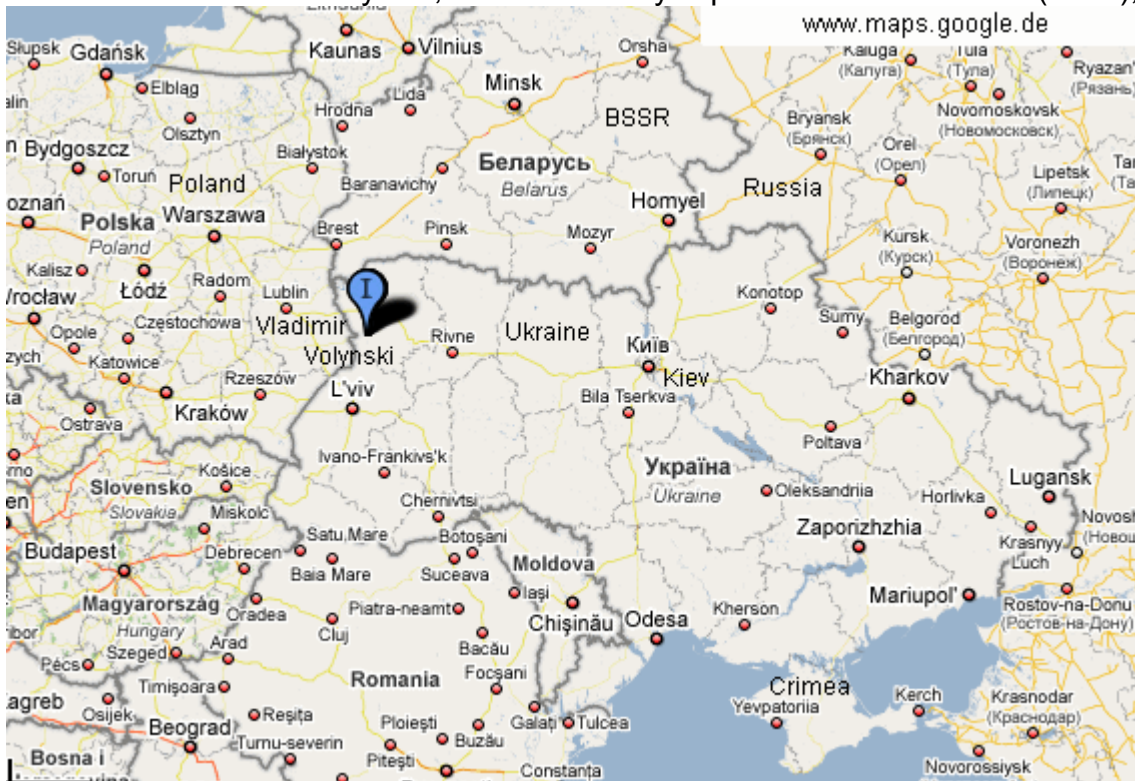
Samarkand is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, prospering from its location on the (Silk Road) trade route between China and Europe. At one time Samarkand was the greatest city of Central Asia. For much of its history it has been under Persian rule. Tashkent, the capitol of Uzbekistan was destroyed by Ghengis Kahn in 1219. It grew rapidly in the 1940s when the Soviets moved factories there to escape the invading Nazis

During WWII, more than one million Jews from the former Soviet Union were evacuated or managed to escape on their own into the Soviet interior before German troops marched into their towns and villages. A significant group arrived in Central Asia in 1941-1942. Uzbekistan was only one of several Central Asian Soviet Republics to which persons fled or were deported. During WWII as many as 300,000 perished due to diseases and starvation, while others died as Soviet soldiers.

Years later Moonish told Rena about his days in Russia. He was tortured, spent time in the Russian the army, and he worked as a tailor. His tale was painful and his hand written Yiddish account of those days was never translated. Rena grew up speaking Russian. After the war the Krons crossed Poland and spent five years in a German DP camp where they spoke Yiddish. When Rena was 14 the family moved to Detroit. That's where she was living when she met Yaakov.

Vladimir Volynski (Lodomira, Włodzimierz, Lodmer, Ladmir, Ludmir)

from: Vladimir Volynski; In: Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), Vol. 16



Map of Ukraine with the position of Vladimir Volynski [6]

Jews from \*Kiev, \*Khazaria, and other eastern communities settled in the city in the 12th century. They established an important station there on the trade route between eastern and western Europe. The Jewish community was destroyed by Tatars in the 1240s but it was renewed on a small scale in the early 15th century under Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania. An organized community was founded in the early 16th century

In the charter of privileges given to the city in 1570 by King Sigismund II Augustus, the Jews were granted equal rights with gentile citizens. During the 16th century the Jews of Vladimir Volynski traded at the fairs in Lublin, Poznan, and Cracow, where they sold furs, woolen cloth, and wax. The richer Jews engaged in estate-leasing and tax-farming. From the middle of the 16th century several famous rabbis lived in Vladimir Volynski, e.g., \*Isaac b. Isaac (known as Menahem-Mendel R. Avigdors; 1591), who later became rabbi of Cracow (d. 1599), and the talmudist \*Isaac ben Samuel ha-Levi (1580-1646), who was born in Vladimir Volynski.



The community suffered greatly during the [\\*Chmielnicki massacres](#) (1648-49) in which many Jews were murdered. After repeated attacks in 1653 and 1658, the heads of the community were forced to borrow large sums to save the Jews from impoverishment. Their economic situation improved in the late 17th century. In 1700 Augustus II awarded Fishel Lewkowicz of Vladimir Volynski the title of "royal agent and purveyor and official secretary for the Council of the Four Lands". The economic crisis which befell the Polish kingdom in its last years affected the Jewish population in Vladimir Volynski. By 1784 there were only 340 Jews in the city. In 1795 it was annexed by Russia. In the 19th century the Jewish population increased, numbering 3,930 in 1847 and 5,854 (66% of the total) in 1897: They traded in grain and lumber, and engaged in shop keeping, tailoring, hat making, and shoemaking. The Hasidic movement became influential in the community, especially under the direction of Moses Solomon \*Karlner and the Maid of \*Ludomir.

There were 5,917 Jews there in 1921 comprising 51% of the population, and by 1931, 10,665 (44%). In 1926, 84% of the businesses were in Jewish hands. There were \*Tarbut, Beth Jacob, and Yavneh schools. The Jews of Vladimir Volynski organized \*self-defense against the attacks of May 1923, and in the 1930s the protested vigorously against anti-Semitic boycott. There was a declared "Polish-Jewish war" since 1912 and anti-Jewish boycott movement in Poland because of perpetual economic crisis after 1921 because of the loss of the Russian market and because of new national frontiers in Eastern Europe,

When the war broke out between Germany and Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, thousands of Jews from western Poland sought refuge in the city, bringing the number of Jews in the city to 25,000. When the city passed to Soviet rule (1939-41), a unique effort was made by the Jews of the city to guarantee a Hebrew education for the children. The Tarbut leaders successfully acquired the local authorities' agreement to run a Hebrew language school, on condition that all religious studies be removed from the program. However, the school only functioned for two months for in November 1939 the regional Soviet authorities in Rovno intervened and the language of instruction became Yiddish.

The Germans entered on June 25, 1941. On July 5, 150 Jews were rounded up by the Germans and Ukrainians and murdered in the prison courtyard. A \*Judenrat was established in 1941, headed by Rabbi Morgenstern. When he died two months later, his post was filled by a lawyer, Weiler. Weiler refused to hand over the victims to the Germans and committed suicide together with his family.

In August-December 1941 the Germans [[and their collaborators]] continued to murder the Jews, disposing of their victims in mass graves in the prison courtyard. On Feb. 24, 1942, 250 Jews were taken for forced labor to the Kiev area. On April 13, 1942 a ghetto of 22,000 Jews was set up in two sections: one for skilled craftsmen, nicknamed by the Jews "the ghetto of life", and a second ghetto for the non-productive, called the "ghetto of the dead".

In the summer of 1942 some young people made attempts to contact the partisans operating in the vicinity. On Sept. 1, 1942, an *Aktion* ("action") began, lasting two weeks, in which 18,000 Jews were murdered. Four thousand Jews were killed in the prison courtyard and 14,000 in pits prepared in the Piatydni area. Following this *Aktion*, the area of the ghetto, now reduced in size, contained only 4,000 persons. Leib Kudish, who collaborated fully with

the Germans [[and their collaborators]] , was placed at the head of the Judenrat.

On Nov. 13, 1942 another Aktion began, lasting several weeks, following which only 1,500 Jews were left alive and registered while a group of "illegals" continued to exist. During the last *Aktion* an armed group of young Jews took up a fortified position in a bunker near Cygielnia, but they were discovered by the Germans. Thirteen died. In 1943 the Germans [[and their collaborators]] continued in their hunt-down of "illegals" i.e., those who did not possess work permits. The victims were shot in prison. On Dec. 13, 1943 the last of the Jewish community was liquidated, and many of those who tried to escape were killed by Ukrainian peasants or members of the Polish underground Armia Krajowa.

The city was freed from the Germans [[and occupied by Red Army]] on July 22, 1944,