

Dying of a City

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Lida, There was Such a City

Theodore Pupko

Translated by Roslyn Sherman Greenberg

There was a river there,
More beautiful than all rivers.
Rich and poor amused themselves there.
Who was our equal?

There was a forest there,
Thicker than all forests.
Young and old walked there
Over bridges, footpaths, green fields.

There was a castle there,
Stronger than all castles.
So high, so big, without measure.
Have you seen anything bigger?

There was a prayer house there,
Holier than all prayer houses.
It bordered on our house.
I used to hear the shofar blown there.

Lida was such a city
Both from richness and from poverty.
It seems that everything was just so,
In memory everything still lives.

It was, and alas, it's already not there!
I had not noticed
How everything that I loved
The earth covered up for eternity.

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In the Brikha (Flight) Routes

By Israel Solovietchik
[Kibbutz Ein Hacarmel]

ה'אחדון פופקא

לידע, געווען אזא שטאט...

געווען איז דאס א קלויז —
 הייליגער פון אלע קלויזן.
 געגרינדעט זיך מיט אונזער הייזן
 כפאטע הערן דאס שופר בלאזן.

לידע געווען אזא שטאט
 פון רייכקייט, אויך פון דלות.
 געווען דאס זיך אט-אט —
 אין זכרון לעבט נאך אלעס.

געווען, און וויי, שוין נישט!
 אז כ'האט נאך נישט באמערקט
 זיך אלץ וואס כ'האט געליבט
 אויף אייביק די ערד האט פארדעקט.

געווען איז דאס א טיף —
 שטערט פון אלע סימן,
 געפילט זיך דאס ארעם און רייך.
 ווער איז געווען אונזער גלייכן?

געווען איז דאס א וואלד —
 געדיכערט פון אלע וועלדער.
 שפאנדלן געמונטן חתן, יונג און אלט,
 איבער בריקלעך, שטוימעקעס, גרינע
 פעלדער.

געווען איז דאס א שטאט —
 שפארקערט פון אלע שטעטער.
 און הייז, און גרויס און קטנים —
 האט איר געווען עפעס גרעסער?

Translated by Zeev Sharon

The birth of the great Flight the magnificent movement of the Jews from Europe toward the sealed borders of Israel started at the beginning of World War 2, in the years 1939-1940, after the defeat of Poland and its division between the Nazi invaders and the Soviet Union.

Enormous streams of refugees wandered the roads from place to place. Many Jews uprooted from their residences in the Nazi-occupied areas hoped to reach areas of Soviet occupation and ceased wandering when they got there. Members of Hehalutz and Zionist youth movements began looking for ways and means to reach the shores of Eretz Israel. The Soviet authorities watched these activities. Persecution of Zionists and Zionism was a favorite target of the Yevseksia and the Jewish militiamen whose numbers increased.

In many places we tried to break through the borders, particularly in South Poland, but not always successfully.

While we were wondering how to widen the gaps in the Southern border we heard that the Soviets were returning Vilnius and its district to the sovereign Lithuania State.

Before the new borderlines were stabilized, we moved most of our people in Hakhshara (Preparation) Kibbutzim, youth movements and Zionist parties to Vilnius. To our sorrow their number was too small.

We had to care for thousands of members including youth who were scattered in their homes all around Ukraine and Belarus, waiting there anxiously for the opportunity to continue their immigration route to Israel. In addition to that, the pressure of the stream of refugees from German-occupied areas increased.

A large-scale effort was established to widen the transit connections and to search for new ways out that would answer the demand for passage by hundreds and thousands.

After a meeting of the movements activists committee, we decided to focus our main activity on the new Lithuanian border. The Hakhshara Kibbutzim reorganized in Vilnius. The Joint and the Kehila committee established kitchens and managed social activities. The Zionist movements began to develop widespread activities whose main objective was finding ways to immigrate and connections to (Eretz) Israel. I and a group of friends were assigned to organize the activity at the northern border and Lida was chosen as head quarters. From here the activity spread, branching along the northern border and covering [many] towns and villages.

The Jewish community of Lida was faithful; Zionism had made deep inroads in the city. Many among the young ones had already emigrated to Israel and others were scattered in various Hakhshara Kibbutzim. Even here were swarms of Yevseksia and militia people, doing their best to inform on us to the authorities and cause arrests and sabotage to the maximum possible extent.

We were forced to take security measures and go underground in order to prevent the headquarters activity from being betrayed. Lida was set as the reception site and first boarding house for people before moving on in groups to the border crossings.

My parents' apartment was used as an office and the initial reception area for members. My parents were aware of the kind of activity we were involved in and of its danger.

Arrests became common. Nevertheless, here (Jews) could find a warm home, endless devotion, care for their needs and lots of help. As the activity increased and branched out, as tens of dozens of people arrived every day, it was necessary to move the meeting and reception place, in order not to endanger my parents and my family.

Thus we chose a Jewish hotel, which by chance was located close to the border police (station). We believed that in such a place the steady appearance of new people would not attract attention. In the beginning we didn't notify the owner of the hotel and we just placed some of our members to welcome the arrivals. People who were about to go there received a password that changed every two weeks. At first the password was: good morning, can one get hot goat milk here? The group leader or individual had to ask the housekeeper this question. Our comrade, who was always close to the housekeeper, started a conversation with the man and gave him the necessary information. As the demand for goat milk increased we had to reveal our secret to the hotel owner and he too served us with great faithfulness.

Lida served as a transit site and temporary place for thousands of refugees of war. The Jewish population was able to distinguish within this huge stream the pioneer youth-movements and the Hehalutz people, help them and give them hospitality. Despite this, there were also not a few Yevesktsis in town, and (even) some traitors within the movement, who turned their coats and became enthusiastic Communists and collaborators with the Soviet Secret Police.

We felt that we are being traced and we received reliable information that the organizers of the Zionist Flight were being sought. Names, identification and descriptions of some of our members had been given to the detectives.

The situation became worse. It became necessary to change personnel, reduce the activity and maybe even to stop it for some time. The information that spread in cities and towns about our activities in Lida brought us a wave of new people every day and it was difficult to cease our work entirely.

The frequent arrests of our people, the increase in border guards and the seizure of many groups inevitably resulted in a reduction in activity that still went on, despite everything, until the outbreak of the German-Russian war.

The role and place of the city of Lida and its people will forever remain in the memories those active in this troubled era.

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The Russian Occupation

by Sarah Schiff (Rabinowitz)

Translated by Roslyn Sherman Greenberg

It's the first of September in the year 1939. War mobilization. Those two words that day fell over the streets and alleys of Lida like a great windstorm. They passed from mouth to mouth, from house to house.

To me, those two words were completely unfamiliar, and I listened with a certain curiosity. Very often my parents used to recount events that they lived through in the First World War. In my childish mind, those events often sounded like outlandish stories that left me with a feeling of fear. Suddenly, it was no longer fiction, it was reality. On the first day of the war, the German planes were already flying with their death-dealing noise in the skies over Lida. The bombs they dropped left casualties in various parts of the city.

Lida was a very important place for the Germans. In Lida were the fifth Flying Squad and the 77th Squad. Beside that there were also many factories, which employed hundreds of workers.

With each bombardment, people stood looking up at the sky, not understanding that it posed a danger.

I walked around our little street and listened to every group of people, standing and passing their latest news to each other. Each one told a different version. All were extremely frightened, and the panic was great. Masses of people stood by the large placards that were pasted up on the walls of the houses. Some read them with belief and hope. Others read the large black word with doubt and disbelief.

The Polish government had assured their citizens that the enemy would not touch a single button of a Polish uniform. They asked that all stand strong and bold against the German invaders.

In our house, words of consolation didn't help. My brother was at the front. My parents cried day and night, imagining the worst.

Only Berele and I were still not completely engaged with the war. At night, when the streets were covered with a black veil, my brother and I, like thieves, ran to the big Lida synagogue not far from our house. There every evening gathered young people from the Bais-R.

For many years our lives were strongly bound up with the teacher MOYER —above, on the second floor was the Bais-R. There they instilled the love of Zionism deep in our hearts and minds. Each of us waited for the moment when the great dream of travelling to the Land of Yisroel would become a reality. With the start of the war, all the political organizations were closed down, but we learned the news in our meeting place in the Big Synagogue.

Our discussions those evenings turned around the question, what will we do when the Germans occupy Poland. In our young minds there were many scenarios running around. Each one believed in his own reality.

As fast as the war started, and unexpectedly, that fast and unprepared did it end.

When large platoons of Polish soldiers were running in disorganization from the front, when thousands of Jewish young people hand packed their rucksacks and prepared to leave their homes, in order to flee from the dreaded enemy—suddenly a rumor spread that our area was taken by the Russian Army.

Poland fell after 12 days. Warsaw held on for three weeks.

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On the 17th of September early in the morning there were already masses of people standing impatiently on Suvalsky Street waiting for the arrival of the Russian Army. No one paid attention to the rain that was coming down.

Suddenly we heard in the distance resounding cheers. Everyone started pushing closer to the street to see what was happening. "They're coming already," someone shouted over the others. In the distance I saw many mounted soldiers in long dark pelerines on horses.

Thousands of mouths opened wide to welcome our redeemers from the German murderous hands with happy shrieks. There were however also others who stood uneasily and indifferent to everything.

I didn't know to which side I should belong—to those who shouted "Hurrah", or to the uneasy spectators. Not knowing what to do, I started to think about the passing soldiers and looked for Jewish faces among them. Every dark soldier whom I saw, and who also had a long nose, I called out in a loud voice, "There is a Jew," thereby receiving not just one poke in the side from a friend. Very often one of those with a long Jewish nose answered my outcry with a smile.

The Red Army rode on horses, made wet by the first autumn rains. The men, and also the horses, were tired. After them followed columns of foot soldiers. They walked in disorder but happy. They looked with curious glances at all that surrounded them.

The red pennants hung on tall sticks like soaking wet rags. A large slogan that was printed on a military truck assaulted the eyes with its large, fat, red letters: "FREEDOM, EQUALITY, BROTHERHOOD."

3

The streets of Lida were filled with the homeless. Their clothes which they wore one on top of another, were sold each day one at a time, in exchange for food. The synagogues and Bais Midrashes were filled up with the unlucky Jews who left their homes. Every Jewish family that had just a little feeling of compassion and national duty, had taken in refugees.

Our house was always full of strangers. Some of them remained for a longer time while others ate, slept several nights, and then disappeared. The refugees were divided into two categories: One part had run from the Germans and wanted to settle in a Soviet Russian area, the other part were Jews whose entire lives were bound up in Zionism, and they strove to get to the border of Vilna, which at that time was still not under the power of the Soviets. In Vilna, there were committees from every Zionist party that took in the homeless and organized them.

Lida was the meeting place between Vilna for those who wanted to cross the border. Young men and women left their relatives and started on a terrible journey, where they were threatened with Bolshevik imprisonment or Siberia, hoping that in the end they would reach Eretz Yisroel. Everyone knew that if one remained in the territories occupied by the Red Army, one had to give up the Zionist dreams and also not be assured of freedom.

Many refugees who thought they were coming to the Russian paradise were quickly disappointed in the first couple of weeks, and they sought a way to go back, toward Western Poland. They went to the Soviet power and asked for permission to return to their families. The Soviets ordered that whoever wanted to return, had to come to register with them.

Hundreds of Jews stood in the long lines at the N.K.V.D. to receive permission to cross the western border. Not one of them got out of there. Instead of taking them west, they packed them into trucks, and took them to the east, to far off Siberia where many of the unlucky died in need and hunger. Alas and alack also to those who were caught crossing the border. They also met the same fate as the others.

Lida, was at that time, like a big market. The city did not have the strength to take in so many people. Every street and alley cooked and boiled.

4

The young people who had before the war belonged to the Zionist organizations, with the arrival of the Bolsheviks, became dislodged from a strong stream on to the banks of a river. Suddenly they were torn out of their habits and ideas and thrown open to fear of arrest. The N.K.V.D. spread out a net of informers whose task it was to give the Zionist activists from before the war, into their hands. Everyone was afraid of his friend—maybe he is a traitor, and he will tell the N.K.V.D. what one did before the war.

Mainly the ones who were terrified were those who had belonged to the Bais-R school and to the "Shomer HaTsair." The first were afraid of the Soviet followers, and the second those who had the nerve to espouse Marxist ideas.

Day by day young people were arrested as well as older people. The families of those arrested didn't even know where they were. Fate laughed especially at the Communists, who had sat many years in the Polish jails and in the terrible living grave, like "Kartuz Bereze" was. With the arrival of the Soviets they came out in freedom like martyrs. One looked at them as heroes of the day. Not long did their popularity last. One by one they were once again taken from their beds at night and thrown into jail—but this time in the N.K.V.D.'s own prisons.

No one was able to understand what was happening here.

5

For about three months there was daily fear of arrest; exile, wandering and mistrust. These were the main reasons that caused the underground operations of the Bais-R. The striving for freedom, the striving for aliyah to Eretz Yisroel, this brought the approximately ten boys and girls to do the most terrible work that put them under the threat of N.K.V.D. imprisonment with every step.

Other Zionist parties also formed conspiracy groups, which led people over the border to Vilna.

Hundreds of young people flooded the streets and alleys of Lida, and disappeared as quickly as they came.

In our house it became very lively. Boys and girls from various cities and shtetls came to ask for my brothers, Molye and Berele. They took the people in, found places for them to sleep and eat. In a day or two, the people disappeared. I understood that my brothers were occupied with a conspiratorial work, and I was sorry that they were hiding it from me at a time when my friends would be sitting all evening and talking secretly with my brothers.

Time passed quickly and brought new happenings. One day I came home from the street and discovered a great upheaval in my house. My mother was wringing her hands, Molye went around the house like a crazy man, Berele sat and thought, and I understood he was upset.

"What happened?" I asked them. My mother started saying, "They want to make me unlucky. The house is always full of suspected people and Feigele has to suffer because of them."

I felt a stab in my heart. Something happened to my sister! I knew immediately that they came to take Feigele to the N.K.V.D.

"She will be back soon," I consoled my mother. And it was indeed as I had foretold. She came back in the middle of the night, pale and frightened.

They wanted to find out from her what my brothers were doing and asked her if she knew someone named TENACHUM RABINOWITZ—he had crossed the border into Vilna and they caught him. To their great regret, they got no information from my sister.

Very often we could see peddlers through the window of our house. One was a known N.K.V.D. informer. Before the war he belonged to HaShomer Hatzair, but he didn't inform on any of his friends.

Several days after the happening with my sister, suddenly NACHUM ZATSEPITSKY flew into our house and warned Molye and Berele that they were about to be arrested. He urged that they should flee quickly. The whole day everyone in the house was occupied with preparing my brothers for the journey.

In the evening, in a frost of 42 degrees, when people were afraid to stick their noses out of the house, Molye and Berele were ready to leave their home. I cried and asked them to take me along.

And yet I was happy after my brothers left. A few days later, I was sent a "password" from Vilna and I was asked to gather the people who wanted to apply to us with the "password." Today I was already equal with GRISHKE FARMANEN, YOEL GROI, CHANOKH RABINOWITZ and others.

The task that they laid on me, I undertook with earnestness and much conscientiousness. Every day people came asking for me. We already had our wagon drivers who drove the people at night to the border. And I realized that it is not so simple. We had to gather the groups of people behind the city, where the sleds were already waiting to drive them 35 kilometers to the border crossing. They had to cross the border on foot, under the watchful eye of a bribed border guard.

The winter of 1940 was a very cold one. There were frosts up to 40 degrees without end. And it was very bad for those for whom the march was not successful. It happened that the border was heavily guarded then, and the people were forced to go back to Lida with frozen feet, ears, noses... After such an unsuccessful march, more than one lay in bed for weeks at the house of one of our friends, where his wound would be healed.

The danger increased with every day both for us and for those who let themselves be smuggled over the border. If not for the agitators among us, we would have given up our work and have crossed the border ourselves.

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On March 12, 1940, in the evening, we transported 11 friends to the railroad station. They had to go by train to a certain point near the border where one of the crossing leaders was already waiting for them. NACHUM ZATSHEPITSKY, who came several months earlier to tell my brothers to flee, was among the 11. How great was my terror when several hours later a breathless YOEL GROI came to tell me that all 11 were arrested when boarding the train.

The following morning, when I went out to Suvalsky Street, to meet with the "Friends", I suddenly saw on a sled YEHUDA KORELITSKY, MOSHE DOREVSKY, and ISAR LIEBERS. Around them sat N.K.V.D. agents with unholstered guns.

MOSHE DOREVSKY saw me too. We looked each other over. "They are already goners," I thought.

They were caught crossing the border from Vilna to here. Their task was acting as liaison. That very same day I had sent a letter to YEHUDA KORELITSKY's mother in Baranowich about her son's arrest. The next morning she was already at our house. A guard in the jail was bribed to deliver a package of food and clothing. Through the same guard, I received a message from YEHUDA KORELITSKY: "Shalom, Sarah! I am very sorry that because of our falling into the hands of the N.K.V.D., Isaac's letter that he sent with us, didn't reach you. We had to throw the letter into the snow, along with other important documents we had for you. I can only tell you what Isaac said—he wants you to come to Vilna as soon as possible. He also asked us to give you kisses, but for that you'll have to wait until I am released. But the most important thing—you should know that NACHUM ZATSHEPITSKY is a traitor. You have to all leave Lida and continue...."

With shaking hands I tore the letter to pieces. I told my frightened parents, who were sitting and waiting for me, what was in the letter, that I must immediately disappear from the house. "Ssh," my mother calmed me, "It doesn't mean that they are coming to arrest you. No one will inform on you." She didn't forget to add, "And I thought that when your brothers left, that would be the end of our troubles."

I marveled at Yehuda's mother. She sat calmly as if nothing had happened to her son. "You know what," she suddenly said, "Let's go to the movies."

"Maybe this is really a plan," I thought—after all, I mustn't remain in the house.

In the waiting room of the movie house, "Edison" there were two officers sitting opposite us. They didn't take their eyes off me. In the theater, where we took our seats, the two officers sat behind us. It seemed suspicious to me. Quietly I told Mrs. KORELITSKY about my uneasiness because of the two officers. She laughed and assured me that they probably just wanted to make my acquaintance. Her words did not calm me. I sat as if on hot coals and I didn't understand anything happening on the screen. My thoughts were constantly on the officers.

Going home, I was afraid to look around. I felt that they were following me. When Mrs. KORELITSKY turned her head and saw them behind us, she became upset. She warned me not to go home. It was, however, too late to run away. Not going home would not help me at all.

When we reached the door to our house, two men in civilian clothes appeared from behind the porch. I understood that I was already a "goner." Soon the two officers also arrived. I was terribly frightened, but I put on an angry expression and called to them, "What do you want here, in a strange courtyard?"

"Calm yourself," one of them answered. "Go into the house and you'll learn everything." The picture I saw in the house shook me up. An N.K.V.D. agent with a gun in his hand was guarding my five friends who were sitting in the room. My sister was standing, pale and scared, leaning against the oven. My parents sat on the couch as if numbed. Upon seeing me, they jumped up as if on command, and they ran toward me. One of the officers took out a printed order to arrest me.

For the first time, I felt calm because I realized that sitting in the movie house, I had prepared myself. I was ready to go with them, but one of the officers told me, "You can prepare yourself properly. You have to eat and take some clothing with you." I looked at him and saw a concealed sorrow in his eyes. I understood that I wouldn't be returning very soon.

I ate, as I had been told, combed my hair, but I didn't want to take any clothing because I wanted my parents to think that I would soon return.

"Don't worry," I told my parents, and with those words, I left the house. The N.K.V.D. took my friends and Mrs. KORELITSKY with them.

The devil is not as terrible as they describe him, was my first thought when they brought us into the N.K.V.D. headquarters. I had always been afraid even to go near the large building where the N.K.V.D. was located. Now, I saw, that there were people in the N.K.V.D. Going down the corridor, I heard from behind the closed doors, laughter, conversation, and cries.

The rest of our friends were already in the large room where they led us. We were all together. Our guards let us into the room and left, leaving us without supervision.

We were all in a good mood. Our laughter from YOEL GROYS'S jokes sounded quite carefree. Each of us tried to outdo the other in telling how we were arrested. We were only worried about what our parents had lived through because of us.

We sat and talked for several hours quite freely. We thought we would sit here through the night without any interrogations. Suddenly, in the middle of my recounting the story of the two officers who followed me, the door opened and a man ran in wearing an N.K.V.D. uniform. He had a red face and eyes that popped out. His military blouse almost reached his knees. It was not girded by any belt. He was tall and thin. To me, he looked like a dog that had broken its leash.

With his arrival, the room suddenly became silent. No one dared move. His pale eyes measured each one of us. They stopped on PIMKE YABLONSKY who was sitting on a stool and smoking.

"Who gave you permission to sit and smoke?" he screamed at him. PIMKE slowly rose and extinguished his cigarette.

"Everyone, against the wall, on the ground," he ordered us. He himself went to the desk, searched a little in a thick folder and sat down in a leather armchair there.

Again, his eyes flew over us, and this time they stopped on me. He looked at me for a while, and then called with less anger: "You are SARAH ARONOVKA RABINOWITZ?"

"Yes, that is I," I answered him. I wondered how he knew I was RABINOWITZ, since there were two other women beside myself—RIVKA SENZON and MRS. KORELITSKY.

He looked at me with a mocking smile and said, "Such a young girl and already a counter-revolutionary, but we will turn you around."

As his meaning was clear to me, the matter was finished, since right away he took a paper out of the desk and called out each of our names. Each one had to respond to his name. Everything would have been in order, except that there were 13 on the list, and we were 15 in the room. RIVKA SENZON and MRS. KORELITSKY were extras. He ordered them to leave quickly and to keep their mouths shut. 12 boys were left, and I was the only girl.

It was all night before our captors ended their interrogation. They asked every particular about our lives up to the Polish-German war, and what we were doing now. (Most of us were students.) It was light by the time he ordered us removed from the room.

They immediately separated me from the group. An N.K.V.D. agent drove me over the streets to prison. The free pedestrians who hurried to their work, took a couple minutes of their time to stop and look at me with great pity.

On March 14, 1940, when I was 17 years old, the door of the Lida jail closed on me, and my freedom was taken away.

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From Lida To Vilna

By Tziporra Billig

Translated by Roslyn Sherman Greenberg

It was Sabbath (1939), when the shuls were full of people who came to pray. I turn around among the benches and consider each one, how deeply earnest they are in their holy feelings.

Suddenly like a thunder clap everything was marred. A strong noise of cars, tanks and airplanes was heard. The streets became full of people. Everyone went out, filled with great wonderment and with pale, scared faces, trying to see what had happened. One person starts whispering a secret to another: The Russians have come. The Russian soldiers march with great sureness and happiness on the high streets of Lida. Children run and try to drape themselves on the tanks with songs and cries. All hearts beat with joy, not knowing how this happened.

Life in Lida had ended. The stores became even more empty. Long lines formed. One buys and one sells. In order to buy bread, people didn't sleep in order to stand in the line.

The Russian government took over all factories, all workshops, and they became the bosses. My father had to give over his machines and make sure that they worked. My mother went to work in a factory, and then we were able to have bread in the house.

My oldest brother, Reuben, came back from the Chafetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radun. I just finished elementary school. Life became even harder. The young people were supposed to work on Sabbath and to learn Russian.

I left my friends because I wasn't sure if they now thought the same way I did. My only friend remained my brother Reuben. His friends from the Yeshiva had immediately left the shtetl of Radun and gone to Vilna, since Vilna belonged to Lithuania.

Every day refugees streamed in who had remained without a roof over their heads. The stations, the shuls were already full. The great cold penetrated to the bones. Snow covered the roads. We saw no other way out than to leave the house in spite of our parents opposition. And the day came.

It was Sabbath, a light day. The sun showed itself from time to time. People would soon finish praying. My brother left, not arousing any suspicion. We met on the road, and I accompanied him on his way. After several hours we parted on a small hill. My brother looked back at our city of Lida for the last time.

Our separation was difficult. We decided not to tell anyone in the house, and if the evidence came out, then I too would go away on the road to which we both aspired.

I remained standing at the place, and my brother went on his way. I watched him until I could no longer see him. Then I started to go home.

Two difficult days passed in the house, not knowing what happened to my brother. He did not come back from praying. My parents began to search and asked at the police station. No answer came. Bad thoughts ran through our minds. Tears and groans met everyone in the house.

Suddenly my mother had a thought: Maybe her son went to Radun to meet his friends in the Yeshiva in order to reach Vilna. Mother left everything over, and traveled to Radun. She happened to get there a few minutes before they left to cross the border. They parted with each other, and she remained in Radun until news came that they had all crossed the border safely.

Day after day, and in Lida a strong Communist discipline was imposed. Over every factory the Russian flag flew. In every school they began to learn Russian. The soldiers walk around the streets watching everyone's movements.

From time to time I took bread in my pockets and doled it out to the refugees who lay on the cold ground, hungry and faint. Their joy can't be described when they saw the small piece of bread. And thus among the refugees I found friends from my Movement, who think the way I do, and who were looking for a way to get to Vilna. I immediately took them home, gave them food and a warm bed. I started to perform an illegal task.

When they were ready to go to Vilna, I sought farmers who were willing to help them cross the border. Then I search through the refugees for other friends, brought them to our house, and sent them on to Vilna.

My work increased. Our house was an underground railway stop. My mother helped me a lot. But the border crossing was more strongly guarded, and I became suspect. Then I had to leave Lida with the last group of friends.

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