

David Davidsohn As A Forced Laborer



This is my father, David Davidsohn. He brought this photograph with him when he returned from forced labor, but I don't know where it was taken. He probably didn't have anything to wear, and he found this coat or it was given to him.

And this was during the period of the autumn holidays, the first few days of the holidays were over, then the Sukkot holiday arrived - which is at the end of the holidays. The holidays last around 4 weeks, and this was at the end. And we prepared food, as we usually did. My father went to the synagogue in the morning; my mother attended as well, together with all the grown-ups, and usually they were supposed to return home at one o'clock. And around half past ten, eleven in the morning, our parents returned from the synagogue together with our aunts and uncle. 'They are deporting us, and we have to be at the train station at three o'clock.' During that very same day. So the racial law was passed in September 1940, and this was happening around October 1941. Of course, everyone packed in their suitcases whatever they could. And it wasn't three o'clock yet, it was half past one, two o'clock, and they came with the carts. There were pre-military units back then - youth that had probably been recruited -, and they came with the bayonets: 'Get out of the house, get out, get out!' There was a German or two among them. And we loaded that cart with everything we could, and we set off towards the train station.

The train in the Vatra Dornei train station had 8-10-12 cars - I won't tell you how many, for I don't know. And they started loading us in the train cars. They were stock cars, we boarded the train, we were 150-200 in one car, it was very crowded. There were old men, children, and some sat on their luggage, others were standing up.

We arrived in Moghilev. This whole adventure lasted 2-3 weeks. But this was the beginning, it continued there afterwards. We arrived at a village called Kopaygorod [today the region of

Vinnytsya, Ukraine]. It was a stable for cattle - there were no cattle, there was nothing there - of huge dimensions, very large, what do I know, as large as a block of flats with 2-3 entrances. My father scouted the area. At a certain point, there was an epidemic of exanthematic typhus because of the filth. And father used to go to the village with objects - earrings, for instance, a ring, wedding rings -, and he gave them to peasants in exchange for spirit, alcohol, brandy, which he used for massages. This is what saved me. Well now, did this save me? Or perhaps my time hadn't come yet.

We ran away from there one night: my father and my mother, my aunts, and another cousin of ours. But we didn't manage to get too far, they caught us and they took us to another concentration camp, in Shargorod [Shargorod, today in the Vinnytsya region, Ukraine]. We decided to run away again. There were some guards and we gave them something, and they let us run away. We ran away, but, unfortunately, to our misfortune, they caught us this time as well, and they took us to the concentration camp in Piciora [Pechora].

And we set out again one night. And we arrived in a grove, and a couple of soldiers came in that grove, they caught my mother, they beat her until she couldn't get up. They stripped her of her coat, pulled the teeth out of her mouth - she had gold teeth. Father was shouting at my cousin and me: 'Run! Run! Run!' Father was shouting at us to run and hide in the woods. Well, we didn't run to the end of the woods, there was a clearing at the skirt of the woods, we ran there, remained crouched, and then father came holding my mother in his arms - they had beaten her to death. It was in 1943.

I was hospitalized when we arrived in Moghilev. And father stayed in Moghilev, so that he could visit me and my cousin. Meanwhile, they caught my father in Moghilev and took him to a labor camp. And, starting from that day, I had no news of my father anymore. It was the end of 1943 by then. I stayed in the hospital for approximately 2 months, and in January 1944 I left the hospital and was transferred to the orphanage. I stayed in the orphanage until March 1944. I asked to be sent to Botosani. I arrived there in March 1944. 6-8 more months later I received a postcard from my father saying that he was in Iasi, that he has returned. When the Russian army came here, he arrived at a later time with other people who had been taken to perform forced labor. And he arrived in Botosani. And that's when we saw each other again. It was already 1945.