

Alexandr Nepomniaschy's Savior Yan Bystran



My savior Yan Bystran, Slovakian. Photo made in Bratislava in 1960.

A Slovakian regiment was located in Ovruch. After they occupied Czechoslovakia the Germans made Slovaks fight on their side. We were left under this Slovakian regiment supervision. The Slovaks gave us food and asked us what our profession was. I began to work as a locksmith and mechanic. Soon our group consisting of about 30 people was sent to Byelorussia via Kiev. I was the only Jew left in this group. In Kiev another Jew that ran away from the crowd that was taken to the Babi Yar joined us and the guard didn't notice it. He came to Byelorussia with us. There is a military town of Kodynki near Mozyr and we were taken there. I made a closer acquaintance with the Slovaks and found out that there were anti-fascists among them. We were accommodated in the barracks and were fed well. I worked as a locksmith fixing locks, etc. One Slovakian - Yan Bystran - became my friend. I decided to form a group to arrange an escape from the camp. The camp was guarded by Slovaks. Germans came every week to check whether all of us were there. We were lucky that the Slovaks were our guards. But I still decided that we had to escape.

There were about 15 of us in the group, including one Slovakian. In September 1942 I got the information that there was a big partisan unit near Mozyr that was moving at night. I decided it was time to escape to the partisans. Bystran helped us to pass the guard at the gate. We were moving at night and hiding in the woods during the day. Bystran supplied us with food, clothes and

weapons - rifles and few grenades. Bystran also showed the Germans the opposite direction of our escape - this helped us, too.

After the war I met with Yan Bystran that helped me to escape from captivity. I invited him to Chernovtsy and he came with his family. He spoke at the meeting in our college. He invited me to come to Slovakia and my wife and I visited him there. Regretfully, Yan died.