

image 31

Things in general went from bad to worse. We asked Bojarski in for a talk. He began to complain. "I thought this would last a short time; I figured on a few weeks, and here there's no end to it."

We asked him to return our clothing and to let us out at night. He replied that if he let us out now, we might be caught by unfriendly partisans and he could be betrayed. "If I had known this would last so long," he repeated, "I'd never have let you in." We gave him some more gold and asked for more food.

image 32

Just before Christmas, He came, overjoyed. "Boys, I'm with you all the way. I'll keep you until the Russians get here. They've started their offensive. If everything goes well, they'll be here in two weeks."

He then voiced his uncertainty of our promised gift of a house, since he had neglected us. We assured him that we didn't hold this against him; we knew how much he and his family sacrificed in helping us and little things he neglected to do didn't matter. He left full of good humor and hope, and we felt the better for it, too.

image 33

After this talk, our meals came in regularly three times a day. Soon, however, came another setback; the Russian offensive didn't develop, fighting had stopped, and our treatment went back to "normal". In general, throughout the entire hiding period, food became our political barometer. When it was good and plentiful, we knew that the situation on the front was favorable; when meager, the contrary.

One day, Bojarski appeared, crying that he could stand it no longer. The Russians just weren't coming and he was afraid.

"God," he said, "what shame and disgrace would descend upon my family if people knew I'm sheltering Jews." We knew he wanted more gold and gave it to him without another word. We were glad he extracted it in this manner, rather than simply taking it and killing us to boot as so many peasants did in similar situations.

Irony and vilification of the Poles. If anything, Bojarski would be worried about being caught. But Blatt's goal is to defame the Poles with irony like this.

image 34

And so, the weeks went by. Our youth, and the desire to survive produced miracles — for in spite of the unnatural, cramped existence, we never became ill. Five months had passed since we last stood upright, went outside, or had seen daylight. Again the time came when, tired of this endless waiting and

image 35

Blatt during WWII: I couldn't join the partisans and use my fortune to support their cause because I was imprisoned by a farmer who stole my pants.

inactivity, we asked Bojarski to return some of our clothing, to let us have a shave in his house; to give us some arms and let us go. He promised everything except arms, but the next day broke his promise.

The following day he again changed his mind. "Boys," said he, "I won't let you down. If we perish, we'll go down together. But I'm so worried. The Germans are looking for partisans in our district; they are searching in all the farms close to the woods. I am afraid they will search mine as well. And so I am going to put you into a different shelter which I am now preparing." Within a few days he let us out.

He let us out of this prison. This prison with a wall made of hay.

image 36

#### 4. A NEW HIDING PLACE

It was dark as we crawled out from under the table, and went behind the barn to a patio-roofed storage area. He held us each by the armpits and lowered us into the ground, through an opening about one-and-a-half feet in diameter. We asked for some light so that we could arrange ourselves in our new quarters. He brought it and then closed the opening after us. We looked around.

We were in a large dug-out, about four-and-a-half feet long, three feet wide, and three feet high. Along the "ceiling" there was a strong pole; across it some pine boards — all of it covered with straw and branches. The hole in the corner of the roof was now, we noticed, tightly packed with straw. While wondering where the air vent must be, we heard dim foot-steps, then the sound of something heavy being rolled. In a moment, a weighty object fell with a great thud against our "ceiling", and the main pole began to

→ crack; then it broke in the center and formed a "V". Kostman, who was the strongest, rushed to support the ceiling with his shoulders, so that it shouldn't collapse upon us, while I tried to push out the straw in the opening, in order to call the landlord. It was impossible.

I began to pull out big clumps and found that something else was blocking the entry. The oil lamp which had burned these few minutes, began to flicker and waver and went out. I tried to light it again, but it was no go. The matches, on being lit, went out almost immediately.

We commenced to be short of breath; the air was very close and perspiration began to pour down our faces. The entry was blocked. →

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