

MIRIAM BIGANOV SHARES:

*„Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, O God,
till I declare your power to the next
generation, your might to all
who are to come.“ Psalm 71:18*



Katrin Lauter with Miriam

„Every survivor has his own history and everyone’s is different. But all of us had a very difficult way.“ That’s how Miriam started to share a part of her story. She was born in the Ukraine and was only 14 years old when the Germans occupied the region around Vinica. It was July 26, 1941. Shortly afterwards white posters were put up commanding the people to hand over all their valuables. Later these posters were used to write down prohibitions for Jews. Even the prohibition to enter a hospital! While we listened to Miriam we could see how difficult it was for her to share, nevertheless she says: „I have to tell it to you, because I am already old!“ Miriam’s father was ill, having been wounded in WWI. Her mother was a dressmaker. Her sister was much older and was a dentist and her brother was called to the army when he was only 17 years old. Right from the start it became very difficult for them. She had to work in the fields and was guarded by Ukrainian men. „The Ukrainians even welcomed the Germans with bread and salt“, Miriam remembers. „Then we heard of the first killings in the nearby town of Uman, where approximately 30,000 Jews were living. The winter was very hard; we were always hungry and had to carry heavy stones. During the nights we kept our clothes on, because every new day we expected to be killed. Then the command came that we were only allowed to take clothes for one more day and food for two days with us, and we were transported by a truck to Reigarod to work in a stone pit. There were so many people on the truck that we could not sit, but only stand close side by side. The Jewish houses were already empty and we slept on the floor and were beaten. I was in this labor camp about one month until I was driven to compulsory labor in another village. There were three German guards, who didn’t beat us.

Deeply touched Miriam tells us, that she experienced real miracles. „After one week, I met my mother there again. It was so good to be together with her and we even had bunk beds. But then there was the registration: All women from 16 to 45 had to register and were about to be deported on a truck of the SS. A German commander came and said pointing at Miriam: „She stays!“ Nevertheless Miriam tightly holding hands with her mother also went to the truck. „I also wanted to get into the truck, but somebody pulled me back by my long braids. I can’t even remember when the truck left. „That was the first miracle, and I stayed alive!“ But Miriam’s mother was shot on June 27, 1942.

In May the Nazis shot and killed about 1500 Jews in Miriam’s hometown, Teplic. „Actually I could have also been killed there,“ Miriam replied. Afterwards she was taken to the third labor camp – Tarosovka – and she was forced to do terribly hard work: Road construction! This camp was only 30 km away from her hometown. A Ukrainian worker asked her: „Who are you?“ Miriam told him her name and found out, that her father was still alive. „Your father lives, I know him,“ replied this worker. Miriam’s father was a carpenter and the Nazis left alive 20 skilled workers, one of them Miriam’s father. „In the first camp I slept on the floor, in the second camp on bunk beds, but in the third one, we all slept in a stable on the floor, totally in mud and dirt. We could not wash ourselves, so we got illnesses and lice. My legs became weak and I could hardly walk anymore! Constantly we were in fear of being killed! Also in the same camp was an old friend of mine and I said to her: „They will kill us here anyway! So let’s try to escape -- we have to try!“



Miriam and
her parents