THE PARTISAN SONG SWILL OUTLINE

Vilna, Lithuania, 1928.

Shmerke Katcherginski gives a tour of Vilna to visiting Jews from New York. He shares with them the great cultural heritage of the city of Vilna. He shows them the synagogue, the vilna library, the YIVO building, and ends the tour at the famous Jewish café, Velfke’s. We meet Hirsh Glik who tells Shmerke that he wants to write too. Hirsh gives Shmerke his journal then runs away before he has a chance to respond. Shmerke introduces various characters throughout the tour. Smerke tells the tourists about their writing group, Young Vilna.

Germany, 1933.

We hear a speech given by Hitler. Quotes from Mein Kampf: hatred, burning hatred- that is what we want to pour into the souls of our millions of fellow Germans until the flame of rage ignites our Germany and avenges the corupters of our nation.

Germany 1937

Degenerate Art Exhibit, Munich, Germany.

Bruno Kittel, a German musician and actor, gives a tour of the Degenerate Art Exhibit. We see the degenerate art displayed against an exhibit of great German art. We hear about Wagner and his anti semtic writings and national compositions (maybe a speech hitler gives before the exhibit is mentioned?) And we hear about German marches vs. Jazz, how Jazz music makes Germans blood less pure. We also hear about the Nazi initiative to destroy all Jewish culture, and about the beginning of the Reich Chamber of culture. The dismissal of Jewish conductors, musicians, etc.

1937, Vilna.

Hirsh Glick approaches Shermke and tells him that he wants to write too. He begins wining literary awards, his poetry is published. His father tells him he must drop out of school to help the family in their poverty. Father/Hirsh tension about writing and creating.

June 22, 1941 Germany Occupies Vilna

Germans begin mistreating Jews and looting books and cultural treasures. We met Herman Kruk, the librarian who begins writing his diary. Radios and newspapers are outlawed. Germans/SS kidnap 60 of the most prominent Jews in Vilna, rabbis, professors, entertainers, politticians,…hundreds of other men vanished. Germans said they were being resettled in the east (snathchings.) the germans steal hirsh glick’s family piano. His father tells him that writing poetry and music is too dangerous in these times.

Sept 6, 1941 Vilna Ghetto is established.

We see the Jews being rounded up for life in the ghetto. Kruk writes in his Journal. A library is started in the Ghetto. Jewish police force is created and Gens is named chief of police. Gens had a chance to save himself…but he decided that he belonged with his people. He went to the ghetto by choice.

The Young Guard creates a resistance ghetto population to keep Jews clothed and fed. Bruno keeps coming to Gens and demanding more Jews for work camps. Ruzka tries to dye vitkas hair blonde to make her look like she isn’t a Jew…so vitka can serve as a courier, brining information and supplies into the ghetto. They accidentally dye it red.

We hear a story of Ponar, of Jews that are being murdered in mass outside of the city. The Jews don’t believe the story initially.

Hirsh works during this time in a forced labor camp outside of the city. He writes poems all day long as he works. We works at the camp with his father and shares a bed with him, he writes his poems down at night. Hirsh and his father have a fight when he father wakes up and sees him writing. He writes a song at the camp about the freedom and survival of the Jewish people called “Turf Song.”

December 1941: Youth Movement Meeting at the Monastary

Vitka goes to Abba Kempner, a youth movement leader to tell him about Ponar. Abbner had been hiding at the Monastery, dressed as a nun to hide from the Germans. Abba meets with the girl who told the story and calls a meeting of the Young Guard. A dozen young leaders meet in a secret cellar. Abba sees the situation clearly “The only reply to murder is resistance, Brothers it is better to die as free fighters than to live at the mercy of killers. Resist. Resist. To our last breath. Abba calls the young guard to resist the Germans, he sees clearly what is happening, as a prophet. Abba tells a story of what a nazi soldier did to a young baby…to convince them of the Germans intentions.

December 31, 1941

A group of 50 Jews gather in the secret cellar and Abba gives his speech to inspire the Jews to resist. He calls for acts of defiance and sabatoge against the Germans. Calls for self defense. Four stories above, the Germans are getting drunk celebrating new years eve, we hear them singing the Horst Wessel Song, a song about Jewish ruin. The Jews in the cellar spontaneously start singing as well, and we hear both songs run together.

January 22, 1942

The FPO is formed by Abba, an organization that will resist and arms Jews. The new leaders of the FPO meet and toast their new organization and a gun is revealed. Their first task is to smuggle in guns. They smuggle in guns in a variety of ways, a nun even brings them some guns. Hirsh is paired up with Vitka to train her how to use a weapon. He is nervous and awkward around her, he is in love with her. The Jewish population in the Ghetto sees the FPO as a threat to their existence. If they anger the Germans, they will all be killed. Shmerke meets a man who will smuggle guns in for them. A German soldier who helped smuggle guns. Every man must die once…I choose to Die helping other men.

Period of Stability Jan 1942-July 1942

Gens preaches a working ghetto doctrine. IF they are productive they will survive. Cultural and social activity burst forth. Kruk writes about the power of reading, music schools are created for children. The library becomes a symbol of hope, a cry of life in the midst of murder and death. We hear other stories of Jews throughout Germany that are creating in powerful ways.

We hear stories of Jews creating in the chaos. A theatre is created and music and theatre performances happen, some are not happy about the theatre, including Abba who says “concerts should not be held in graveyards.” Speech: “All of life is now a graveyard. We must remain strong in body and soul.”

Paper Brigade

A group of Jews are chosen to work in the Library outside the ghetto to determine what the Germans should keep and what should be burned. A group of them start smuggling valuable books into the ghetto. Story of smereke smuggling in books to the ghetto. Ponar for books. The book smuggling is another form of moral resistance. Sutzkever writes a poem called “grains of wheat.

July 8, 1942

Vitka blows up a train, Hirsh writes her a song.

They find literature in the YIVO building on how to make a bomb. Vitka leaves for the dangerous mission. When she returns triumphant, hirsh writes a song for her and shares it with her. She is so moved by the song that she kisses Hirsh.

Feb 1943

German army surrenders at Stalingrad. Abba and some of the leaders listen to a smuggled radio in the cellar, they hear Winston Churchhill’s famous speech: “Everyone thinks if they

Feed the crocodile, they crocodile will eat them last.” Abba danced with Vitka

And Ruzka in the cellar. Vitka felt a sweet, pure joy. To find happiness in such a place filled her at once with guilt and with a belief in the holiness of life.

April 19, 1943, Warsaw Uprising

Hirsh, Abba and other leaders hear news on a radio of the Warsaw Uprising…that night there is a celebration of Yiddish Writers. \*”We visualized the soldiers of the warsaw ghetto and the jews battling…uplifted us And strengthened us.” Hirsh and the leaders are greatly encrouaged by the uprising, hoping the same thing might happen in Vilna. We hear a speech given in Warsaw:

“The proportions of life and death have radically changed. Times were when life occupied the primary place, when it was the main and central concern, while death was a side phenomenon, secondary to life, its termination. Nowadays, death rules in all its majesty: while life hardly glows under a thick layer of ashes…Yet, we wish to live on, to continue as free and creative men. This shall be our test. If, under the thick layers of ashes our life is not extinguished, this will prove the triumph of the human over the inhuman and that our will to live is mightier than the will to destruction; that we are capable of overcoming all evil forces which attempt to engulf us.” Warsaw Ghetto Diarist Abraham Lewin, Fall 1941.

May 1, 1943

Celebration of writing. Hirsh approaches Shmerke during the event to say he has written a new song. Shmerke asks him to share it at the event, Hirsh declines, but tells him he will play it for him the next morning. A small group gathers to hear his song. The song inspires the Jews to continue resisting. It spreads like wildfire through the surrounding towns and villages and gives the Jewish partisans new hope and inspiration to continue fighting the Germans.

July 15, 1943

Wittenberg, the leader of the FPO is arrested by Gens and the Germans. The FPO steal Wittenberg back away from the German soldiers and try to hide him. The Jewish people revolt against the FPO and demand that they give Wittenberg over to the Germans. The FPO and Abba were hoping that the Jews would rise up and fight the Germans, but not it is clear that their dreams have been crushed. The Jews will not stand up to the Germans, and armed resistance will not happen in this ghetto the FPO realizes. Shmerke writes a song about Wittenberg after his death.

Ruzka was devastated “everything is up In smoke.” Vitka: the look you saw in the eyes of those who have given up…I said It cannot end this way. Vitka inspires Abba and Ruzka to go on!!! (AV 92). Ruska did not weep. She kept everything inside. It is how she survived. (AV 93)

Abba says goodbye to his mother. One of his most painful memories/experiences.

July 27, 1943

The FPO soldiers begin to leave the ghetto to fight with the partisans in the forest. Thousands of Jews are sent to labor camps in Estonia. Hirsh and his Father are sent to Estonia. Herman Kruk goes to Estonia as well. Those too weak to sneak away to the forest go to Estonia. Hirsh goes to Estonia to stay with his father, who is too weak to escape. Kruk continues writing in his diary, despite his health faltering.

Sept 23, 1943

Liquidation of the Vilna Getto. Gens is executed. Bruno Kittel is playing the piano at the gates as the Jews are marched out and a young boy falls at his feet to beg for mercy. Bruno continues playing the piano with his left hand and pulls out his pistol and shoots the boy with his other hand. The last of the FPO escapes through the sewers. Abba leads the last of the partisans out of the ghetto.

Fall, 1943, Life in the Forrest

The Jewish partisans attack germans so the Jews know people are still fighting. They try to shake the confidence of the Germans. “The biggest resistance is to survive.”

Abba hears hitler talking on the radio: “one Jew left to ride thru automobile.”

The partisans begin blowing up buildings in Vilna, destroyed trains, trucks, bridges, during the peak of the fighting, germans lost close to a thousand trains per month to the partisans, millions of dollars worth of equipment. Partisans suffer greatly in the forrest. Abba writes in the forest: Abba wrote: “It was not just that the were killed. It is that they were dead even before They were killed. They had given up on the morality of life, and they forgot the holiness

Of simply being alive. The horror is not in the executions. It is in the life that came Before the executions.”

As the Red Army advances from the east, partisans are ordered from Moscow to attack German trucks, trains, roads, bridges…making it impossible for Germans to resupply their troops ro call up reserves. That summer, the Red Army reached Rudnicki Forrest. A Russian officer stood before the partisans, giving a speech: “by harassing the enemy and tying up German reserves, the partisans had made the advance possible. “You have done the most dangerous work of the War,” he said, “We are grateful to you.” The partisans hugged and the soldiers wept. Abba looked at them shook his head, saying “Too late, too late.”

July 1944 Vilna Liberated

The partisans return to Vilna to see their city, now destroyed by the Germans. Kruk’s journal from Estonia is brought to Abba, He reads Kruks final entry the day before his execution. Kruk is killed the day before the red army liberates the camp. “Read journal entry.” July 12th shmerke enters vilna and sees the destruction. Ruzka travels to Budapest to tell the people of Palestine about what has happened.

Hirsh tries to escape the work camp and is shot.

July 26, 1944: The Jewish Museum of Culture and Art

Sutzkever, Shmerke, Kovner meet to establish the Jewish museum of culture and art. This is the continuation of the FPO and paper brigade. It becomes a community for the suvivors. On Augst 2nd, there is a gathering of Jewish partisans at the museum. “We must be creative while sitting on top of the ruins.” Ruzkha arrives in Israel . Written copies of glik’s poems were discovered beneath the vilna ghetto. CANNOT FORGET POEM?