

I shall not die but live

By David Bergelson

Play no. 72

Opening show: 06/05/1944

Hebrew by: A. Shlonsky

Produced by : Zvi Friedland

Setting by: A. El-Hanani

Music by: A. Boskovich

Dances by: F. Lubitch

Conductor: Fordhaus Ben-Tcissy

The Cast

Avraham-Ber, an elderly Jew: A. Meskin / A. Baratz

Freda, his daughter: F. Lubitch

Galina, his son's wife: F. Lubitch / Bat-Ami/ N. Shein

Yshka, her son: H. Hendler

Panasenko, director of the Research Stations: M. Benyamini

Pavlo, his son, a pilot: L. Shulman

Haya Granat, manageress of the station: T. Yudelevitch

Misha, his son, a pilot: N. Buchman

Baruch, instructor of fusiliers: A. Kutai

Vania, a soldier of the Red Army: S. Bruk

Prof. Kronblueth, a Jewish refugee from Germany: M. Gnessin/ A. Baratz

Fishel Brodsky, Jewish citizen: A. Meskin

Reb Yona, Jewish citizen: David Vardi

Nastia, a laundress: Bat-Ami / N. Shein

Comissar of the Red Army: I. Rubinstein

Hunchback, a postman: A, Ninio

First Girl: R. Goldin

Second Girl: G. Abrevaya

A blind man, a refugee from the Carpathian Mountains: H. Amital

His son: E. Treibman

Brandke, Nazi military commander: A. Warshaver

Fraulein Gunther, his secretary: E. Berglas

Feldfelbel, a Nazi: I. Rubinstein

Nizabodka, a local Quisling: R. Klatzkin

Villagers, Jewish citizens: Pupils of the studio

Act 1

An agricultural research station in a Russian town. One of its scientists, a Jewish refugee from Germany, Professor Kronblueth, has perfected an important method to combat the effects of drought, in recognition of which awards have been conferred upon him.

Many of the townsmen are serving on the front, and their fathers and sons, wives and sisters, await news from them. Among those who wait is an elderly Jew, Avraham-Ber, who has been summoned to the Holincom where he is informed that his son has been killed in action, leaving a wife, Galina, a Ukrainian woman, and their child Yashka.

The battle front rolls nearer, and the enemy approaches the gates of the town. It is decided to save the secret method and all the documents of the research station from falling into the hands of the Germans. The citizens begin to prepare for guerilla warfare. The Jews of the town are particularly anxious, yet not only Freda, Avraham-Ber's daughter, but also the old man himself, vows to support the Partisans. "I shall not die but live", Avraham-Ber takes the Biblical for his watchword.

Act 2

The Germans have captured the research station and have brought the former owner of one of the large estates of the town, Nizabodka to act as the local Quisling. It is his task to secure for the Germans the secret method and to persuade the townsmen to go out and cultivate the fields. But he does not succeed. The German commander interrogates all the personnel of the research station, the Gestapo applies torture, but in vain. Special pressure is put on Avraham-Ber, but he withstands all efforts to extract information from him. Even when he is informed that the women of the town are to be delivered to the German soldiers "to satisfy their natural lust", but that his daughter Freda would be spared if he betrays the secret, he remains firm.

A number of the townsmen form themselves into a Partisan unit and operate in the enemy's rear. Day after day more German soldiers are killed. Day after day retaliations take place. The German commander intensifies the reign of terror.

Act 3

The local Quisling, Nizabodka, is called upon by the German commander to compel the townsmen, by whatever means, to go out into the fields and till the soil, but to no avail. He is ordered to obtain the documents of the research station, but he cannot. The commander's threats and blandishments to wrest the secret from Avraham-Ber having failed of their object, he plays his last card: 18 Jews are taken hostage and condemned to death unless Avraham-Ber will divulge the secret. Still Avraham-Ber withstands the test.

To persuade them to go out into the fields, Nizabodka assembles the village girls at the school. He invites them to dance, with the object of marching them out afterwards to the fields. But the tactics of the Nazis fail. Not one of them goes out to work. Nothing can destroy the solidarity of the citizens.

The Nazi commander orders the Jews who had refused to betray the leader of the Partisans, (also a Jew) to be killed. The first victim selected is Avraham-Ber. The sound is heard of the marching feet of the Partisans coming to liberate the town and to save its Jews.