INTRODUCTION TO THE TESTIMONY OF

Liubov' Naumovna Krasilovskaia

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HVT-3280

Introduction

Born in 1921 to an impoverished Jewish family in a provincial city in central Ukraine, Liubov' Krasilovskaia eloquently represents a generation of Soviet Jews born shortly before or after the Bolshevik Revolution. In some senses, they are the most "Soviet" of Soviet Jews. Nevertheless, many of this generation retained a substantive Jewish identity that wasn't necessarily defined by the Holocaust, by late-Stalinist antisemitism, or by Soviet anti-Zionism. Instead, their Jewishness was primarily rooted in familial and hometown bonds, which continued to shape their lives long after the catastrophic Nazi occupation of 1941-1944.

Liubov' and her contemporaries grew up in the midst of sweeping economic transformations, rapid Soviet industrialization, and the purges of the 1930s. As a child, Liubov's daily life was profoundly shaped by Soviet modernization projects. Although her father was an artisan, not a peasant, Soviet farm collectivization and the resulting food shortages had a deep impact on her family. During the Holodomor famine of 1932-1933, many families, Jewish and Ukrainian alike, decided to hand over their children to state orphanages until they could provide for them again. As Liubov' recalls, "…the director of our school took me and my two brothers into the orphanage, and we stayed there until I finished seventh grade. Then I returned home." The school that Liubov' attended through the ninth grade was one of over 800 secular Yiddish-language schools in Soviet Ukraine.[1] These schools, along with other Soviet minority-language schools, were designed to supplant religious educational institutions and educate Soviet youth in socialist values.

[1] See Jeffrey Veidlinger, In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 79-87; Anna Shternshis, Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 14-20.

Even as Soviet economic and educational programs propelled the former Pale of Settlement into a new era, many elements of traditional life remained. In her testimony, Liubov' recalls accompanying her parents to synagogue, celebrating religious Jewish holidays, and learning traditional prayers from her uncle. Other, non-religious aspects of traditional shtetl life also lingered, including economic and social patterns that had existed for centuries. For example, most Jews in Zvenigorodka, including Liubov's father, maintained their traditional artisanal trades as cobblers, tailors, tinsmiths, etc. In an effort to build a socialist economy, the Soviet state drove the collectivization of such artisans into "artels." However, within the highly concentrated Jewish population of the former Pale of Settlement, these artels reinforced Jewish social circles and, by extension, traditional Jewish life. Furthermore, in its effort to rally popular support for the development of a socialist economy, the Soviet state pursued a policy of "indigenization" in the 1920s, producing popular culture that was "national in form, socialist in content." Yiddish language theater troupes and newspapers promulgated a linguistic and cultural Jewishness that appealed to secular and religious Jews alike. These cultural institutions, like the Yiddish schools, were largely shuttered in the mid-late 1930s as the Stalinist state asserted a more homogeneous Soviet culture. Nevertheless, their brief existence produced a generation of Soviet Jews whose Jewish identity was substantively Jewish and profoundly Soviet. Far from forced assimilation, Soviet modernization in provincial Ukraine reinforced Jewish identities and communities, even as these identities and communities assumed a distinctly Soviet flavor.

As much as Liubov's testimony complicates familiar narratives of Soviet Jews' wholesale assimilation, it also challenges common assumptions regarding the creation of the "Final Solution" and familiar narratives regarding Jewish-Ukrainian relations during the German occupation. After the German Wehrmacht launched its invasion into Soviet territory on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany rapidly seized control of vast new territories inhabited by populations it deemed racially inferior—Slavs, Roma, and above all, Jews. In the initial months of the occupation, German operatives focused on eliminating potential sources of resistance, particularly Communist party officials and other "radical" elements. While Nazi propaganda frequently employed the words "communist" and "Jew" interchangeably, there was no policy yet for the annihilation of Jews. Instead, the German occupiers initially confined Jews to ghettos in or near their hometowns. According to Christopher Browning, between September 18 and October 25, 1941, the Third Reich developed a comprehensive vision for the Final Solution, which was later codified at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942.[2] This new vision called for the construction of industrialized extermination centers in Poland to which Jews would be deported from across Europe. Yet, even as this official policy was still being formulated, mass killing had already begun in the occupied Soviet territories. As Browning argues, the shift toward

[2] Christopher Browning, The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 424.

mass murder in the East was not initiated by a direct order from Berlin, but instead by local German commanders, as a matter of administrative practicality.[3] Thus, in September 1941, German Einsatzgruppen and police, with the assistance of local collaborators, began to conduct mass shootings in which hundreds, sometimes thousands of Jews were murdered in ravines and forests near their hometowns. After a reprieve during the winter of 1941-1942, mass shootings resumed as ghettos were liquidated throughout 1942 and early 1943.

The widespread participation of local non-Jews in the ghettoization and murder of Jews in the occupied Soviet Union speaks to the intimacy of much of the violence perpetrated during the Holocaust. In wrenching detail, Liubov' Krasilovskaia describes how her mother was ruthlessly beaten and shot by a former next-door neighbor in Zvenigorodka, Ukraine. As Martin Dean observes, such violence was neither impersonal nor mechanized, as it is sometimes described in histories of the Holocaust, particularly when the victims were killed by those known to them.[4] Omer Bartov also challenges the assumption that mass murder was only possible because Germans and local collaborators had first dehumanized their victims:

Genocide, even one organized by a sophisticated bureaucratic state, is ultimately about some people killing other people. There is... always a point at which the killer encounters his victim; there is, even if only for a fraction of a second, eye contact, or at least some fleeting recognition of the other as a fellow human being, just as the victims cannot avoid recognizing the humanity of their killers, however inhuman their actions may be. Assigning the victims to the category of the 'dehumanized,' or assigning the perpetrators to the category of the 'inhuman,' is an easy way out. The horror and tragedy of genocide is that it is an event in which human beings, who under other circumstances could and sometimes did befriend or even love each other, are transformed into hunters and their prey.[5]

In her testimony, Liubov' poignantly describes the sense of betrayal she experienced as she watched her former neighbor, Grishka [Grisha], torture and kill her mother: "We [had] rented our apartment from his uncle since we didn't have our own home. They knew all about us, everything, from the inside out. They had known us all our lives. But he didn't take that into consideration." For local collaborators like Grisha, the knowledge of their victims as human beings was glaring, and yet they chose to murder nonetheless. How was this possible? For some,

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[3] Ibid, 283-4. See also, Yitzhak Arad, The Holocaust in the Soviet Union (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 125-40.

[4] Martin Dean, Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-1944 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 163-4.

[5] Omer Bartov, Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), xii.

it appears that careerist ambition prompted collaboration. However, in Grisha's case, anti-Soviet sentiments seem to have played a decisive role. Just before killing Liubov's mother, he bursts out, "You [Jews] tortured us for 23 years"—thereby attributing the oppression he and his family had apparently suffered under Soviet rule to the Jews collectively and, specifically, to a helpless Jewish woman whom he had known for years as a neighbor. For Grisha and many other local volunteers, collaboration offered myriad opportunities to settle old scores and vent accumulated resentments, regardless of any longstanding personal bonds.

Despite this and many other abuses she suffered at the hands local Ukrainian collaborators, Liubov' provides a remarkably evenhanded perspective on Jewish and non-Jewish relations during the Nazi occupation, and violent collaboration is only one of many Ukrainian responses that Liubov' details. On the continuum between anti-Jewish violence and anti-Nazi resistance, non-Jews across occupied Europe exhibited a broad range of morally ambiguous reactions to the German persecution of Jews. For example, Liubov' describes the economic opportunism of some local Zvenigorodka residents following the ghettoization of their former Jewish neighbors. Desperate to supplement meager food rations, Jews were forced to sell off their household possessions. The "buyers" were local non-Jews who illegally snuck into the ghetto in order to capitalize on desperation. According to Liubov,' many of the "buyers" promised to bring money or food in exchange for the furniture they took, but few returned with the promised payment. Such transactions did occasionally provide Jews with extra sustenance and, technically, transactions between Jews and non-Jews defied German regulations. Thus, it is difficult to classify these interactions as simple collaboration. At the same time, asymmetrical trade contributed significantly toward the dispossession of Jews – a primary objective of German occupation policy.

In addition to collaboration and complicity, Liubov' acknowledges local Ukrainians who altruistically provided her and her fellow camp inmates with food and, ultimately, saved her life. In the Budyshche camp, Liubov' describes how meager the food rations were and recalls,

the people in the two neighboring villages, Shesteryntsi and Budyshche, did a lot to help us. They were wonderful people. [….] They would come to the camp; they would persuade the politsai, bring us half liters, bring us pieces of bread, a potato here and there, and if they lived nearby, something hot to eat. They really supported us. And we also got a little creative. The politsai had been with us so long they knew that we wouldn't run away, so on the way home from work, either on the road or right near the camp, we managed to run in pairs to the village to ask for something to eat. If only one person came up to the door, they would even ask, "Why didn't you bring a friend? We would have fed both of you." They fed us, gave us pieces of bread, gave us potatoes, gave us a little salt. That's how they supported us. If it weren't for them, we would likely have died from hunger. [Our bellies] would have swollen up.

The generosity of these Ukrainian villagers toward the Jewish camp prisoners is especially remarkable given that neither Shesteryntsi nor Budyshche had a significant Jewish population before the war.

If prewar proximity was no guarantee of neighborly wartime relations, unfamiliarity was no barrier to compassion, either. Indeed, it was unfamiliarity that proved crucial to Liubov's survival. During the liquidation of the Nemorozh labor camp in May 1943, Liubov' and another young woman, Raya, miraculously escaped the mass shooting. Knowing they might be recognized and betrayed if they returned to their hometowns of Zvenigorodka and Ol'shana, the two young women fled south – entrusting their fate to the kindness of strangers. At the border of the Kiev and Kirovograd Provinces, they met Yarina, a woman from the village of Kozachany who took them in. Liubov' and Raya initially impersonated Ukrainian workers who had escaped from labor conscription in Germany. After Yarina overheard Liubov' speaking Yiddish in her sleep though, she confronted the two women. Rather than handing them over, however, Yarina hid the two young refugees until after the Red Army liberated Kozachany.

Not many escapees were so fortunate, especially earlier in the war – when the German occupation seemed permanent. Liubov' emphasizes that, up until the camp liquidations, she and her fellow inmates didn't bother trying to run away "because there was nowhere [safe] to run – meaning that none of the local non-Jews were willing to shelter runaway Jews. She relates the story of Etinzon, an inmate in the first Nemorozh camp. On November 2, 1942, he managed to escape the camp's first liquidation. Suddenly a fugitive, he sought shelter in a nearby peasant hut. The woman there provided him a generous meal, but when she stepped out under the pretext of going to visit a neighbor, he grew suspicious and left the premises immediately. Etinzon's instincts proved correct as the peasant woman had gone to fetch a politsai member, who no doubt would have shot Etinzon on the spot. Discouraged from seeking further assistance from non-Jews, Etinzon wound up in the Smel'chintsy camp.

While one cannot underestimate the moral courage required to aid Jews at any point during the war, the contrasting outcomes of Etinzon and Liubov's escapes suggests that time was a factor in many aid givers' decisions of whether to shelter Jewish refugees. As the German Army retreated and liberation drew closer, the relative risks of taking in fugitives decreased. Liubov's identification of Ukrainian collaborators and grateful acknowledgement of Ukrainian aid-givers makes her testimony a particularly valuable record of the complexity of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations during the German occupation. Liubov' challenges common generalizations and stereotypes while highlighting the incredible risks that both Jews and non-Jewish aid-givers took at a time when neighbors could become executioners and strangers unlikely saviors.

Liubov's testimony also broadens familiar Holocaust iconographies of colossal concentration camps, gas chambers, and industrial crematoria in German-occupied Poland. In contrast, the

Holocaust in the Soviet Union offers a different iconography—one far more improvised, even makeshift, but no less deadly. In many locales, elderly adults and young children fell victim to mass shootings early in the German occupation. Surviving adults were condemned to forced labor in the ghettoes or in small labor camps, living in constant fear of the ongoing mass shootings. This history of forced labor in occupied Soviet territory is one of the more under-researched aspects of the Holocaust. Liubov's testimony recounts the experience of grueling labor, appalling living conditions, and the constant threat of death. While Jewish forced laborers were valuable for the German war effort, high rates of malnutrition, disease, injury, and "accidental" death claimed many lives.[6] As the tide of the war shifted and the German Army began its long westward retreat, 1943 and early 1944 brought a final round of liquidations to these labor camps. In Ukraine, the Nemorozh camp where Liubov' was a prisoner, was one of the last camps to be liquidated.[7] Understood in this light, Liubov's survival and escape are truly extraordinary.

During her imprisonment in a series of labor camps north of Zvenigorodka, Liubov' and her fellow prisoners collectively composed several songs inspired by their experiences in the Nemorozh, Smel'chintsy, and Budyshche labor camps. As Liubov' explains, "Everyone [wrote the songs], all together. This one would give a word, that one would give two. This one a line, and the next would add another. That's how it came together for us." The process of composing and performing these songs boosted morale and camaraderie among inmates, who were experiencing daily hardships and losses, giving voice to feelings of hope and despair. For example, the first song that Liubov' shares with the interviewers expresses the anguish that she and other Zvenigorodka Jews experienced as they left their relatives in the ghetto and turned to face an uncertain future in the Nemorozh camp:

Farewell, our native city.

Farewell, family so dear.

Farewell, precious mothers.

Farewell, to all our friends.

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[6] See Donald Bloxham, "Jewish Slave Labour and its Relationship to the 'Final Solution,'" in Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide, eds. John Rother et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 163-86. See also Gustavo Corni, "Work as Salvation," in his Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939-1944 (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 227-61.

[7] Arad, Holocaust in the Soviet Union, 340.

Blindly, we walk down the road,

Not knowing what lies ahead.

The ominous thought is growing,

That awaiting us is death.

Several months later, Liubov' and several other inmates snuck out of the labor camp during a roll call to beg for food in the neighboring village. While many of the politsai guards turned a blind eye to this practice, on this particular occasion the prisoners were confronted upon their return by Stepan Sikolo – the blonde, self-important camp overseer. Rather than punishing the "escapees" immediately, Stepan waited two days before sentencing each of them to 25 lashes with a ramrod – leaving the prisoners to agonize over their fate and then crippling their bodies with pain. To immortalize this experience of mental and physical torture, the prisoners wrote a song describing the brutality of handsome, heartless Stepan:

The ramrod whipped, and the moans wheezed.

And our gang went down in tears and terror.

To the side the Blond was sitting, smiling, satisfied,

Having taught these naughty Ten such a tidy lesson.

While the lyrics describe the episode in unflinchingly factual terms, in a certain sense, the song allowed its creators to have the last laugh at Stepan's expense. He tried to break their will, and yet they could still compose a song about their blonde tormentor. Furthermore, because songs like these were not committed to paper and could be easily memorized, if even one of the camp inmates survived their collective history would survive as well. Liubov's recollection of these songs in her testimony is the fulfillment of this hope.

Long before Liubov gave her testimony interview, however, she and other Soviet Jewish survivors found other, more conventional ways to immortalize their relatives and friends who had been murdered during the German occupation. Toward the end of her testimony, Liubov' describes how she initiated the construction of several monuments at the mass graves where the Jews of Zvenigorodka, Ol'shana, and other neighboring towns had been executed *en masse*. Beginning immediately after liberation, survivors across the Soviet Union raised funds among

themselves for the construction of such monuments in their hometowns.[8] As organizer of the commemorative efforts in and around Zvenigorodka, Liubov' describes how she:

corresponded with people, many relatives [of those who died], they would give each other my address and send me money. I used this money to order three monuments, [and to pay] for the labor; I went to Tal'noe.[9] They brought them there from Korostyshev[10] where there's very good polished granite. [….] They brought it here to Tal'noe. And there some guys engraved [the monuments] for me. I paid them, and they transported and erected them for me.

In the process of obtaining and erecting monuments at mass graves, survivors like Liubov' encountered varying degrees of opposition, support, and indifference from local Soviet officials. In the Soviet Union, the history of the "Great Patriotic War," i.e. the Second World War, held deep political significance as a unifying, legitimizing myth. From the earliest months of the war, state propaganda emphasized the struggle of the Soviet people against fascism. This narrative was intended to foster unity among the Soviet Union's ethnically diverse population and to avoid fanning separatist sentiments.[11] Yet, the myth of the "Great Patriotic War" also erased the distinct suffering of Jews under German occupation. After the war, Soviet officials avoided referencing the ethnic (much less religious) identities of civilian victims. Instead, euphemistic, generic phrases such as "Soviet citizens" and "peaceful residents" became ubiquitous in speeches and on state-sponsored monuments. When individual citizens like Liubov' approached local authorities for permission to erect privately-funded monuments at mass shooting sites, disagreements frequently arose over the wording of the inscription or the exact number of victims. Liubov' recalls her encounter with the Zvenigorodka city council:

I needed to engrave the monuments, but I didn't have the right to do it myself without permission. So I went to the city council and told them how many people are buried there. They didn't give me permission to write the inscription. It was Pavlenok, the head of the city council. He said, "We don't have those statistics. We show that in total, with the Ukrainians, there were 2000 people shot there." I told him, "That's impossible. That's not true. It can't be." So I was forced to write on the large monument "More than 2000 people." "More" is an elastic term.

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[8] See Mordechai Altshuler, Religion and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union, 1941-1964 (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 219-23.

[9] "Tal'noe": Rus: Tal'noe, Ukr: Tal'ne. A town approximately 30 km southwest from Zvenigorodka.

[10] "Korostyshev": Rus: Korostyshev, Ukr: Korostyshiv. A city in the Zhytomyr Province of Ukraine, approximately 200 km northwest of Tal'noe. The Zhytomyr Province is known for its granite.

[11] Arad, Holocaust in the Soviet Union, 534-44.

In some towns, survivors avoided contact with the local authorities altogether and boldly erected monuments that directly mentioned the Jewish identity of the victims or included Stars of David and Yiddish or Hebrew inscriptions. However, such brazen action came with the risk that the local authorities would demolish the monuments as unauthorized or that antisemitic vandals would deliberately target the monuments.[12] Liubov' and her fellow Zvenigorodka survivors took a more pragmatic approach. Their monuments prudently omitted any verbiage indicating that the overwhelming majority of the victims at these mass graves had been Jews. Otherwise, as Liubov' explains, "the monuments would have been knocked down long ago." In the late 1980s or early 1990s, a visiting rabbi suggested adding a Star of David to the Zvenigorodka monuments, but Liubov' and other local survivors "talked it over and decided not to. We have to remember where we live."

Liubov's restrained approach to commemoration reflects her pragmatic approach toward Jewish identity and expression in general. As Liubov' explains, for the same reason that she chose not to affix a Star of David to the monuments, she also chose not to identify herself as Jewish in her passport: "In my diplomas, everywhere, I'm Ukrainian. But in my heart, I'm a Jew." This dual identity, with a public and a private face, reflects the postwar experiences of Liubov' and of many other Soviet Jews. After the Second World War, many of the conditions that had allowed for the flowering of a Jewish-Soviet public identity during the 1920s and 30s evaporated – both as a result of the Nazi genocide and due to rapid postwar changes in Soviet society. After the war, the Soviet state viewed its citizens who had survived under occupation, even Jews, with deep suspicion. Furthermore, due to the hardening of Soviet anti-Zionism after the creation of the State of Israel, the Soviet state increasingly viewed its Jewish citizens as an untrustworthy, foreign element. Unofficially, Soviet educational institutions and employers began to discriminate against Jews, denying them access to the types of social mobility they had enjoyed in the 1920s and 30s. The shuttering of the few remaining secular Jewish institutions in the late 1940s compounded the devastation that the Nazi occupation had exacted on Jewish cultural and communal life.

In response to these transformations, Soviet Jews confined their Jewishness to the private sphere.[13] Jews like Liubov', who had grown up in the former Pale of Settlement and benefitted from the Soviet state's promotion of secular Yiddish culture, often maintained a deep sense of pride in being Jewish and a rich knowledge of Jewish customs that they could neither practice

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[12] For a recent, in-depth study of the obstacles that Soviet survivors faced in their efforts to erect monuments at the sites of mass shootings, see Arkadii Zeltser, Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018).

[13] For a more comprehensive discussion of the impact that these postwar shifts had on Soviet Jews' mentalities and identities, see Anna Shternshis, When Sonia Met Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

openly nor pass on to their children. Having experienced a time when it was possible to be both Jewish and Soviet, they maintained a dual self-image as Jewish and fully Soviet, doggedly navigating Soviet society to the best of their abilities despite growing discrimination. In contrast, younger Soviet Jews, who came of age after the war, had few positive memories of being Jewish and experienced their Jewishness primarily as a source of shame. Some later rebelled against this stigma by embracing Zionism and fighting for the right to emigrate. However, a more common tendency among both the older and the younger generation was to confine their Jewishness to the private sphere – to the family and the home, or even to the secrecy of their personal memories.

Throughout, Liubov's testimony reflects the resilience and courage of Soviet Jews who survived numerous and unprecedented economic, political, and social transformations over the course of the twentieth century. With candor and delicate humor, Liubov's testimony reshapes common narratives regarding Soviet Jewish identity, Jewish/non-Jewish relations, and the commemorative possibilities available to Soviet Jewish survivors.

Segment 1

[00:00:00]

>> Five, four, three, two, one, start.

>> My name is Liubov' Naumovna Krasilovskaia.[1] I was born in the town of Zvenigorodka[2] (formerly in the former Kiev Province, now the Cherkassy Province) on November 27, 1921 to a simple Jewish family. My father was a tailor before he got married; he used a treadle sewing machine. But after the Civil War,[3] after the Revolution,[4] he began to suffer from trophic ulcers on both of his feet and, therefore, was unable to work.

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[1] "Liubov' Naumovna Krasilovskaia": In place of a middle name, Russian names include a patronymic – a name based on the given name of one's father. Thus, Liubov's father's name was Naum Krasilovskii. It is considered polite to address adults formally by using their first name and patronymic; thus the interviewer uses "Liubov' Naumovna" throughout the interview.

[2] "Zvenigorodka": Rus: Zvenigorodka, Ukr: Zvenyhorodka, Yid: Zvinogorodke. A town in central Ukraine. Before 1941 and after 1944, a district center in the Kiev Province, Ukrainian SSR. In 1954, it became a district center in the newly formed Cherkassy Province, Ukrainian SSSR. Prior to the Russian Revolution, there were 6,400 Jews living in Zvenigorodka. The number held fairly steady over the next decade; in 1926, there were 6,584 Jews (36.5 percent of the total population). However, due to Soviet industrialization and urbanization efforts throughout the 1920s and 30s, many young Jews migrated from their hometowns into big cities. As a result, Jewish communities like Zvenigorodka's began to decline. By 1939, the number of Jews in Zvenigorodka had declined to 1,957 (14 percent of the total population). See *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945 [USHMM ECG]*, eds. Geoffrey P. Megargee, Martin Dean, Christopher R. Browning (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1611 and *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust [YV EGH]*, eds. Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 992.

[3] "Civil War": The Russian Civil War erupted in the immediate aftermath of the February and October Revolutions of 1917 and lasted until October 1922. Caught between the Red Army (Bolsheviks) and a dizzying variety of competing ideological and militant groups, Jews in the territories of the former Russian Empire suffered displacement and unprecedented losses of property and human life. The estimated death toll ranges from 50,000 to 200,000. Until recently, this wave of violence remained under-studied because it was quickly eclipsed by the far more numerous losses of the Holocaust. However, Oleg Budnitskii's *Russian Jews between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) opened a new era of scholarship on this interwar violence against Jews, and several recent and forthcoming works continue in Budnitskii's footsteps, including Jeffrey Veidlinger, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021).

[4] "the Revolution": In 1917, the Russian Empire experienced two revolutions. The first occurred in February and overthrew the Romanov dynasty. It was soon followed by a second revolution in October

[00:00:58]

In 1921, during the famine,[5] he sold the sewing machine. Since we were very poor, he was unable to buy another machine [later]. There was the "Second Five Year Plan"[6] tailors' cooperative here, and they had a sewing workshop, but they only accepted those who had their own sewing machines.[7] Since we did not have a machine, they could not take my father.

[00:01:21]

He worked by hand on the small articles that were brought to him at home. My mother was orphaned when she was four years old; she lost both parents. Since there were no orphanages or boarding schools

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(November according to the Gregorian calendar), in which the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government.

[5] "the famine": The 1921 famine (1921-1922) resulted from severe drought in the agriculturally productive Volga River basin. It was also precipitated by Bolshevik grain requisitioning from peasants and the cumulative effects of wartime infrastructural damage and population displacement. See chapter 4 in Nikolai M. Dronin and Edward G. Gellinger, *Climate Dependence and Food Problems in Russia, 1900-1990: The Interaction of Climate and Agricultural Policy and Their Effect on Food Problems* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005). The 1921 famine primarily impacted southern and southeastern Russia. However, as Liubov' suggests, its impact was felt also in a larger swath of Soviet territory.

[6] "The Second Five Year Plan": The First Five Year Plan (1928-1932) and the Second Five Year Plan (1933-1937) endeavored to rapidly industrialize the Soviet Union, transforming it from a largely agrarian society into an industrial superpower. Although the plans emphasized heavy industry, they were accompanied by the collectivization of agriculture and light industrial production. The plans also included the purge of "backward" individuals who failed to conform to the new collectivized, planned economy. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Oleg Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

[7] "tailor's cooperative": Both before and after the revolution, Jews represented the overwhelming majority of artisans in most shtetls. As Jeffrey Veidlinger notes, "the Jews were almost as much a socioeconomic class as they were followers of a religious faith" (Veidlinger, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl*, 60). The criminalization of private trade and the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932) forced artisans into collective "artels," impoverishing many in the process. In response, many Jews fled their traditional trades for factory work and moved to bigger cities. Those that managed to remain independent continued to work out of the family home and frequently fared better than their artel counterparts. See Ibid., 62-3, 74-5.

during tsarist times, she was hired out as a servant when she was six years old.[8] She survived the best she could, and she married a poor man. She had no vocational qualifications.

[00:01:53]

There were three of us children in the family. Mother provided for us by going to people's houses and carrying water for them, applying make-up for them, or washing their clothes. Obviously, we lived very poorly. I studied in a Yiddish-language school.[9] I completed ninth grade in 1938. At that point, the Jewish school was closed and all the children were transferred to a Ukrainian school. I completed tenth grade in the Ukrainian school.

[00:02:26]

Then I completed year-long courses for teachers of Russian language and literature in the city of Tul'chin[10] in the Vinnytsia Province. I returned to my native town of Zvenigorodka and began work in a school as a teacher of Yiddish… oy, I apologize, of Russian and German. I knew German. After two years of working, the war started.

Segment 2

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[8] "No orphanages": there were, in fact, many orphanages in the Russian Empire prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, including a number of Jewish orphanages. See Natan Meir, "From Communal Charity to National Welfare: Jewish Orphanages in Eastern Europe Before and After World War I," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no. 1 (Apr 2009): 19-34. However, there may not have been any orphanages in the district where Liubov's mother grew up.

[9] "Yiddish-language school": In the 1920s and 30s, the Soviet state sought to supplant traditional ethnic and religious institutions by encouraging the development of secular, socialist institutions (including theater troupes and schools) that catered to the Soviet Union's wide range of ethnic groups in their vernacular languages. Thus, even as the Soviet state aggressively curtailed the use of Hebrew and sought to shutter traditional heders and yeshivas, beginning in the mid-1920 it energetically fostered the growth of secular Yiddish schools. By 1930, in Soviet Ukraine alone, there were over 800 Yiddish-language schools with nearly 95,000 children enrolled. See Veidlinger, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl*, 79-87; Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 14-20. On the development of Sovietized Yiddish, see Gennadii Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[10] "Tul'chin": Rus: Tul'chin, Ukr: Tul'chyn, Yid: Tultchin. A city approximately 190 km southwest of Zvenigorodka located in the Vinnytsia Province of Ukraine.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, what was it like in Zvenigorodka at that time? What was Jewish life like? There were many Jews here, weren't there?

>> What was Jewish life like? This was a small Jewish shtetl. There were a lot of artisans: tinsmiths, glass-cutters, tailors, cobblers. Some worked in the cooperative, some worked from home. There were three synagogues here. There was one big synagogue, called a *kloyz*,[11] which had separate sections for men and women, and there were two smaller ones called *shilekhl*.[12]

[00:03:31]

All the Jews went there to pray to God. My parents went there too. When I was little, my father took me along with him. When I got older, my mother took me with her. When I was five years old, my uncle started to teach me to *dovenen*[13] in Hebrew. But he only taught me until I started school. As soon as I started school, he decided… he was afraid that I would tell someone at school what he was teaching me.[14] So he stopped.

[00:03:57]

So, I knew a little, and now I've completely forgotten what I knew.

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[11] "*kloyz*": A Yiddish term for a synagogue or house of study, often for Jews who share a particular social or occupational profile. See Elchanan Reiner, "Kloyz," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kloyz.

[12] "*shilekhl*": A Yiddish word for a small synagogue. A diminutive of "*shul*" [synagogue].

[13] "*dovenen*": A Yiddish word meaning "to pray."

[14] "he was afraid": In the Soviet Union, schoolchildren were encouraged to denounce their relatives for ideologically deviant behavior. According to Soviet mythology, Pavlik Morozov, a teenage boy from the Urals, denounced his father for resisting farm collectivization. In revenge, Pavlik was supposedly murdered by his grandfather and other enraged relatives. New evidence has cast doubt on the authenticity of the story, but for decades Pavlik was celebrated as a Soviet folk hero, and Soviet school children were encouraged to emulate him. See Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta, 2005). In some Jewish families, this climate of mistrust between the adults and children severely impeded the transmission of Jewish history and practice. See Emil Draitser, *Shush! Growing up Jewish under Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 222. In other Jewish families, denunciation of parents by children was viewed by both parents and children as an essential stepping-stone for social mobility in the new Soviet society (Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 60-2).

Segment 3

>> What was the Yiddish school like then?

>> The Yiddish school was typical. They taught us according to the curriculum for Yiddish schools. The teachers were Jewish. It was a very good school, well disciplined. Everything was fine. It was a wonderful school. But then…[15]

>> Was there any kind of cultural life here?

[00:04:22]

>>There was a cultural life. We received Yiddish newspapers. There was *Der Shtern*, a Yiddish newspaper, there was *Der Emes*—those were Moscow newspapers, it seems.[16] We received them. There was a Yiddish theater, which was recognized as a "People's Theater."[17] The performers were amateurs from Zvenigorodka, but they acted very well and, hence, received an honorary title. In the city park, which was fenced at the time, there was a stage. Performers came from other cities, and our artists performed there.

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[15] As David Shneer explains, "By the late 1930s, all Yiddish schools closed, fewer publications appeared, the theater system shrank, and many of the leaders of this cultural movement were killed in the Great Purges" (David Shneer*, Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004),13). However, these Yiddish institutions had raised a generation of Jews on a Yiddish culture that was "national in form, socialist in content," and many took pride in both their Soviet and their secular Jewish identities (Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 185).

[16] "*Der Shtern*," "*Der Emes*": Published from 1918-1938, *Der Emes* was the leading social and political Yiddish newspaper in the Soviet Union. It disseminated vigorously antireligious and anti-Zionist views to Yiddish readers across the Soviet Union. *Der Shtern* could be a reference to a number of different Soviet Yiddish newspapers in circulation at the time, including *Der Birobidzhaner Shtern*. However, since Liubov' lived in Ukraine, she is likely referring to the Kharkov-based daily Yiddish newspaper, *Shtern*, which was published 1925-1941. See David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture,* 94; Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 61-2.

[17] "a Yiddish theater": The Soviet state encouraged Yiddish schools, newspapers, and the development of Yiddish theaters that performed adaptations of pre-revolutionary works and contemporary Soviet Yiddish plays. The Moscow State Yiddish Theater served as the hub of Yiddish theatrical activity. It was affiliated with regional state Yiddish theaters in Kharkov and Minsk, as well as smaller local theaters in Kiev, Odessa, Vinnitsa, and Zhitomir. Across the former Pale of Settlement, amateur Yiddish theater troupes like the one in Zvenigorodka sprung up. See Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 71-3.

[00:04:57]

Tickets were free. It was clean and beautiful, not like it is now, of course. Besides this, there wasn't any other Jewish culture, except…

Segment 4

>> So here was a normal, peaceful life?

>> Yes, a normal, peaceful life. Jews lived very harmoniously, very harmoniously. In hard times, they helped one another. If there was a poor person that needed help, there were people who would go door-to-door to ask for a *nedove*.[18] No one even asked who the money was for.

[00:05:27]

This was Jewish custom. Everyone gave as much as he was able, and no one asked who the money was for. We celebrated all the Jewish holidays, every single one of them.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, I see how the locals have such love for you now. But at that time, what was the relationship between Jews and…?

>> Before the war?

[00:05:46]

>> Before the war, yes.

---

[18] "a *nedove*": A Yiddish/Hebrew word for "donation." The continuation of such traditional forms of mutual aid among Soviet ethnic and religious communities has received little attention in scholarly literature. Altshuler's *Religion and Jewish Identity* offers a brief chapter on shifting Soviet policies toward religious charitable organizations while providing insight into the activities of Soviet Jewish charitable organizations both before and after the Second World War (pp. 192-7).

>> You know, we didn't sense any difference before the war. We didn't sense any difference. That changed during the war. But before the war, I tell you, everyone lived very harmoniously.

>> And then the war started?

>>And then started the war, and our lives were destroyed.

>> You know… I'm sorry [to interrupt], there's something else I want to ask you.

[00:06:06]

Before the start of the Great Patriotic War, that is, before June 22, 1941, what did you know about fascist Germany, or just generally about Germany?[19]

>> We knew very little. We heard, or maybe there were some short articles in newspapers about pogroms in Poland and Jews were killed. But you know, we didn't believe it.

[00:06:29]

Why didn't we believe? Because in 1919 there were Germans here, and they were very friendly toward the Jews. Very friendly. So when we read the newspapers… the elderly Jews who had lived through 1919

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[19] "June 22, 1941": On June 22, 1941, the German Army invaded Soviet territory in Operation Barbarossa, thereby nullifying the German-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939. In the Soviet Union and in many post-Soviet countries, the Nazi-Soviet war of 1941-1945 is referred to as "The Great Patriotic War," evoking the heroic defense of the Soviet homeland against fascism. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Great Patriotic War gradually came to serve as the primary legitimizing myth of the Soviet Union. See Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

said, "It's [just] Soviet propaganda. It can't be. We know the Germans."[20] Maybe this—the fact that people didn't believe—maybe that was the reason why the majority [of Jews] did not evacuate.

[00:06:55]

Or maybe for a different reason. The war started on June 22, and by July 29, the Germans were already here.[21] It was impossible to evacuate in just six weeks. There was no transportation. Some managed to get carts from somewhere. Whoever was higher up could obtain cars for their families. But poor folks, how would they evacuate? On foot you would get nowhere. Besides that, evacuees were arriving from Western Ukraine, from Belorussia.[22] They headed east via Zvenigorodka.

[00:07:31]

When we approached those evacuees (they were called refugees), when we asked them, "What should we do? You are fleeing. [Perhaps we should too]." They said, "Are you crazy? You are living in heaven; if only it were that way for us. Have you been bombed?" We replied, "No." "Why should you leave then?" They told us that a glass of water [on the road] cost one hundred rubles.

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[20] "We know the Germans": In reality, Jews in the borderlands of Eastern Europe suffered persecution and discrimination by both Germans and Russians during the First World War. However, Russian suspicion of Jews as a potential fifth column led to expulsions and devastating violence, all of which dominated Jewish memories of the war. See Mordecai Altshuler, "Russia and Her Jews – The Impact of the 1914 War," *Wiener Library Bulletin* 27 (1973/4): 12-16; Abraham G. Duker, *Jews in World War I: A Brief Historical Sketch* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1939), 4-11. In the early days of Operation Barbarossa, popular faith in German decency cost many Jews their lives.

[21] "the Germans were already here": The *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* (p. 1611) confirms that the German Army reached Zvenigorodka on July 29, 1941. Between 1941 and 1944, the city was known in German as Swenigorodka. It served as a Rayon [district] and Gebiet center in Generalkommissariat Kiew, Reichskommissariat Ukraine. The Gebeit Swenigorodka included the Rayons of Shpola, Ekaterinopol', Mokraia Kaligorka, and Ol'shana."

[22] "evacuees": According to the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* (Ibid.), "a few hundred Jews [from Zvenigorodka] were able to evacuate to the east, and a number of Jewish men were called up to the Red Army. Others stayed behind, believing they had nothing to fear from the Germans as they were not members of the Communist Party. Approximately 1,300 Jews remained in Zvenigorodka at the start of the German occupation, including some refugees from western Ukraine who became trapped in the town as they tried to flee eastward." While individuals in the westernmost regions of the Soviet Union had little time to evacuate, citizens further to the east had more time to flee. Indeed, the Soviet state made a concerted effort to safeguard its industrial resources by moving entire factories, personnel, and their families eastward to Siberia and Central Asia, inadvertently saving the lives of many Jews. For a comprehensive study of the Soviet evacuation of more than 16 million of its citizens, see Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[00:07:50]

You see there was all kinds of misinformation. And so we stayed put. And, besides, I think the main reason [we stayed] was that there was so little time; there was no chance to evacuate, and no means of transportation.

Segment 5

>> Liubov' Naumovna, where was your home?

>> There was a Jewish orphanage. During the famine of 1933,[23] the director of our school took me and my two brothers into the orphanage, and we stayed there until I finished seventh grade.[24] Then I returned home.

[00:08:17]

>> And the war started

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[23] "the famine of 1933": The Great Famine of 1932-1933, known in Ukrainian as the "Holodomor," resulted from the combination of drought and aggressive state grain procurement policies that devastated peasants in the most fertile regions of the Soviet Union. The resulting famine claimed the lives of between 2.3 to 3.5 million Soviet citizens – primarily ethnic Ukrainians. See Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 26-7. The exact death toll is highly politicized, and Ukrainian nationalists strive to position the Holodomor as the Ukrainian Holocaust. See John-Paul Himka, "How Many Perished in the Famine and Why Does it Matter?" *Brama*, 2 Feb 2008. The degree to which the famine was perpetrated as an intentional genocide to punish Ukrainians for resisting collectivization and harboring hopes of independence has also become the subject of significant popular and scholarly debate. See Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Michael Ellman, "The Role of Leadership Perceptions and of Intent in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1934," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 6 (September 2005): 823-41.

[24] "into the orphanage": During the 1932-1933 famine, many families, Jewish and Ukrainian alike, decided to hand over their children to an orphanage until they could provide for them again. See Veidlinger, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl*, 51-2.

>> And the war started, and misfortune began to rain down on our heads. On [July] 29, the Germans occupied Zvenigorodka. They launched the attack toward evening. The sun was already setting. We were standing in line for bread; the majority of us were women. It was summer; [the Ukrainian women] were wearing white kerchiefs. And then the planes came flying very low over our heads. People started to say, "Oy, let's run for it; they're going to bomb us."

[00:08:43]

Apparently, these were German scouts flying. We dispersed quickly, and the shop clerk said, "I'm closing the store. [Everyone] disperse." We were walking, and I see some [Soviet] soldiers running, and I shouted, "Soldiers, come stay with us. You can sit out the air raid." They said, "No, we have to stick together." By evening, the Germans had already entered the city.

[00:09:06]

The Germans came over the bridge, across our river, that's where they came from. Of course, the first evening, nothing happened. We closed up the shutters, the windows. Everyone was afraid. The first evening, nothing happened; the first few days were calm. Then the pillaging started, they went house to house to steal and beat up people.

Segment 6

We [Jews] still lived in our own apartments until sometime in September.

[00:09:32]

In September, they created the ghetto.[25]

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[25] "they created the ghetto": In total, the Germans created more than 1,000 ghettos of varying sizes across occupied Eastern Europe. According to the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* (p. 1611), in Zvenigorodka, "in September 1941, an open ghetto ('Jewish residential district') was established on the orders of the German military commandant, on Komintern Street, Gul'kina Street, and several other small streets in the northern part of town." An "open" ghetto meant that the ghetto was not fenced or walled off. "Open" does not mean that the inmates had the freedom to leave the ghetto at will.

>> How was that done?

>> [Before the ghetto,] Jews lived on every street—on the prospect, on Lenin Street, on Karl Liebknecht Street,[26] on every street. But the ghettoization herded us onto two street, two streets and one alley. They drove everyone out, and wherever there was one family already living, they forced in yet another one. So two or three families lived in each house.[27]

[00:10:01]

On both corners of the street, there were policemen with rifles. We didn't have the right to leave [the ghetto] to go to stores, or to the market, or to Ukrainian streets [outside the ghetto].[28] We went to the

[26] "on Lenin Street, on Karl Liebknecht Street": In the Soviet Union, it was common to name streets after famous communists, various Soviet organizations, Soviet holidays, and groups of workers.

[27] "two or three families lived in each house": Living conditions in the ghettos were severely cramped and unsanitary. Food rationing and regular pillaging by Germans and local police eroded any sense of stability and security for ghetto inmates. See Eric J. Sterling, ed. *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*.

[28] "We didn't have the right": According to the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* (p. 1585): "Life in the ghettos was strictly regulated by numerous restrictions and prohibitions. Entering and leaving the premises was forbidden without a special permit. The Ukrainian police set up checkpoints, and those who avoided ghettoization or were apprehended outside the ghetto were shot as a deterrent for others. Maintaining contact with non-Jews was also prohibited, although in Zvenigorodka ghetto inmates were occasionally allowed to go to the local market to buy food."

corner of Komintern Street, where we lived, and the prospect, to the Jewish Council.[29] We had the right to go there. The Germans and the politsai[30] went there to take us for day labor.[31]

[00:10:31]

Of course, we worked under guard and not freely. There were politsai guarding us. At the end of the work day we were brought back to our street where we went our separate ways to our homes. That's how we lived….

>> Liubov' Naumovna, was the ghetto enclosed by barbed wires?

>> No, no.

>> It wasn't?

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[29] "Jewish Council": also known as the Judenrat. In each ghetto in Nazi-occupied territory, a group of prominent local Jews, usually rabbis and secular Jewish leaders and professionals, were appointed to serve as communal representatives. These councils had no autonomous authority but, instead, served to enforce anti-Jewish regulations and coordinate forced labor assignments and deportations. See Yad Vashem, "Judenrat," http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206389.pdf; Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). In the Zvenigorodka ghetto, "The head of the Jewish Council was a man named Lazurik. Among the tasks of the Jewish Council was the organization of daily Jewish labor details, including the repair of roads and cleaning latrines" (*USHMM ECG*, 1611).

[30] "politsai": Auxiliary police that the Germans recruited from among the local non-Jewish populace across Eastern Europe. These individuals worked alongside Germany Security and Order Police to conduct day-to-day tasks in guarding and overseeing Jewish ghetto inmates, and were key participants in mass shootings. Their "motives for joining included revenge against the Soviets and the desire for a regular wage. The nature of the work attracted nationalist activists, ambitious individuals, local hooligans and anti-Semites, even some former criminals. Others were simple peasants who preferred the routine guard duties to hard labour on the land." See Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 162.

[31] "day labor": In camps and ghettos across occupied Eastern Europe, Nazi officials and local collaborators sought to exploit Jewish labor. While many initial labor projects seem to have been designed primarily for humiliation (e.g. cleaning latrines), labor camps like the ones Liubov' later encounters harnessed Jewish labor to further the German war effort and expand military infrastructure as the Germans reconciled themselves to a protracted war. Within the ghettos, Judenrat officials were frequently forced to decide which Jews were "fit for work," thereby condemning those "unfit" to deportation or immediate execution. However, a work assignment was no guarantee of survival. Harsh labor conditions in many locales resulted in high rates of illness, injury, and "accidental" death. See Gustavo Corni, "Work as Salvation," 227-61. See also Donald Bloxham, "Jewish Slave Labour," 163-86.

>>There wasn't.

>> So, in theory, you could leave the territory of the ghetto if you wanted?

>> Where would we go? It wasn't allowed.

>> Not allowed.

>> Plus, the police stood guard at the street corners.

>> Did your former neighbors or other local [non-Jews] visit you to bring you something to eat?[32]

>> They sometimes came to visit, but with the goal of taking and not returning.

>> What does that mean?

>> I'll explain. They came to us and asked, "Oy, perhaps you have some furniture you'd like to sell?

[00:11:11]

Maybe a sofa, maybe an armoire, or maybe something else?" We needed to survive somehow. We weren't allowed to buy things, and we weren't allowed to go to the market. So we were happy. [They would say to us,] "Oh, you know there aren't any politsai right now. I snuck in, and there's a truck [waiting]. I'll

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[32] "Did your former neighbors… visit you": In practice, ghettos in the former Soviet territories were not hermetically sealed off from the surrounding city. Jewish labor assignments beyond the perimeter of the ghetto facilitated continued interaction between Jews and non-Jews, including bartering for food. Furthermore, both Jews and non-Jews actively smuggled goods into and out of the ghettos.

bring you [something in exchange] tomorrow." So they took the stuff, "Goodbye," and that very day they would sell it.[33]

[00:11:30]

That's the kind of people there were.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, was your home in the ghetto or were you moved there?

>> No, our home was actually there on Komintern Street, where they brought the other people.

>> They brought other people to you.

>> On Komintern Street.

Segment 7

>> Please tell us more about the Jewish… you said the Jewish Board or the Jewish Council.

>> The Jewish Council.

>>Council. What was it?

---

[33] "So they took the stuff": On the broad spectrum between collaboration and resistance, many local non-Jews sought to enrich themselves at the expense of their former Jewish neighbors, even without joining the politsai or taking an active role in mass shootings or officially-sanctioned plundering. Here, Liubov' describes how some local Ukrainians in Zvenigorodka capitalized on Jewish desperation by coming into the ghetto to barter for Jewish household goods in exchange for money or food, or, as Liubov' describes, for the promise of money and food.

>> It was like our "cardinal" center.

>> [You mean] Coordination Center.

>> Yes. There was the head of the Council, his deputy, and five or six foremen. The Germans came to the Council with their demands: they needed, for example, 50 plates, boots, tarps, spoons, forks, etc.[34] They came to the Council, and, for us, it was better than the Germans coming directly to our apartments.[35]

[00:12:21]

The [Judenrat] foremen would then send us from house to house. We went to each house, "Comrades, give at least one plate, give two." We went around the ghetto, collecting as much as was needed. It was fine for one day. But the story repeated itself almost every day, and eventually no one had anything left to give.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, who were the members of this Jewish Council? Who were these people?

[00:12:42]

>> Ordinary Jews.

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[34] "their demands": As Arad explains, "In many localities, the German administrations, both military and civil, imposed a special levy on the Judenrate, either monetary or calculated in valuables equivalent to a certain sum. The task of the Judenrate was to collect this levy from the Jews within an extremely short period of time and then to pass this on to the German administration. The Jews dubbed this levy a 'contribution.' These exactions had two purposes, first, to rob the Jews of their funds in order to harm them economically and reduce them to ruin; and, second, to serve as an initial and immediate source of funding for the German administration to help meet its local needs." See Yitzhak Arad, "Plunder of Jewish Property in the Nazi-Occupied Areas of the Soviet Union," Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center, p. 13, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%202277.pdf.

[35] "it was better than the Germans coming directly to our apartments": individual German officers and politsai also participated in the impromptu plunder of Jewish homes in the ghettos. Such raids often took place at night and the randomness of the raids terrorized ghetto inhabitants.

>> Who appointed them to manage everyone?

>> I wouldn't even know.

>> Were they elected, or were they appointed?

>> We didn't know.

>> Why were they picked and not someone else?

>> We didn't know.

>> You didn't know.

>> No.

>> And even today you cannot remember?

[00:12:59]

>> We knew who they were but not who appointed them.

>> What was their fate? Just to wrap up the topic.

>> What was their fate? They all perished.

>> They all died.

>> They all died; not one was left alive. The Germans shot them.[36] They served their purpose, they took care of everything. Here in Zvenigorodka we were under the Goebbels Commissariat.[37]

[00:13:18]

Goebbel's [regional] commissar was Becker.[38] There was the Gestapo[39] and field Gendarmerie,[40] so the entire [regional] German leadership was in this city. Zvenigorodka became the headquarters of a *gebiet*,[41] and which incorporated the Shpola, Ekaterinopol', Ol'shana, and Mokraia Kaligorka, and Lysianka

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[36] "The Germans shot them": Judenrat members performed their duties at an impossible crossroads of compliance, intercession, and resistance. Furthermore, they functioned without the knowledge that ghettoization, forced labor, and pillaging were merely the first steps toward mass extermination. Judenrat members had little room in which to maneuver, and despite their seemingly elevated status within the ghettos, they ultimately shared the same fate as their compatriots. See "Judenrat," Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-judenrat. Confronted with their own powerlessness, some Judenrat members, like Adam Czerniakow – the chairman of the Warsaw Ghetto Judenrat, committed suicide rather than acquiesce to the murder of their fellow Jews. See Raul Hilberg and Stanislaw Staron, "Introduction," *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), 25-70. However, some Judenrat members were active in organizing ghetto revolts. See Trunk, *Judenrat*.

[37] "Goebbels Commissariat": Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) was an energetic propagandist for the Nazi party, earning an appointment in 1933 as minister of propaganda and public information. His career was largely focused on domestic issues within the German Reich. Here, Liubov' is likely thinking of Erich Koch – head of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 1941-1944 – who ruthlessly oversaw the mass murder of Jews in Ukraine as well as the exploitation of Ukraine's rich agricultural and natural resources for the benefit of the German nation. See Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 36-9.

[38] "Becker": In November or December 1941, Zvenigorodka and its surrounding districts were transferred to the German civil administration of the Generalkommissariat Kiew within Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Hannjo Becker was appointed Gebietskommissar of the newly formed Gebiet Swenigorodka (*USHMM ECG*, 1601, 1611).

[39] "the Gestapo": German secret state police, responsible for many early shootings of Jews, communists, and Soviet POWs.

[40] "Gendarmerie": German gendarmes patrolled small towns and were often responsible for sealing off ghettos and killing sites prior to liquidation. While some gendarmes participated in mass shootings, their role was primarily to oversee local politsai who served as primary instruments of terror. See Sulrich Baumann, *Mass Shootings: The Holocaust from the Baltic to the Black Sea, 1941-1944* ([Berlin]: Stiftung Denkmal für die Ermordeten Juden Europas : Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, 2016), 59. See also Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 77.

[41] "*gebeit*": An administrative district, like a county.

districts.[42] All of these became part of the Gebiet Swenigorodka, which if you translate it to Russian, was like a province.[43] And all of the [German] administrators were headquartered here.

[00:13:49]

The Commissariat issued its brutish directives, and the Gestapo and the Gendarmerie executed them.

Segment 8

>> Exactly. Were there only residents of Zvenigorodka in your ghetto, or were there Jews from the surrounding towns as well?

>> No, there were Jews who had been evacuated from the west. They reached Zvenigorodka and stayed here. They came from Western Ukraine, Western Belorussia, and Poland. Once they got here, they decided not to travel further; they stayed. They escaped from one fire and fell into another one. In the camp, we had about five Polish Jews.

>> I take it… you mean in the ghetto?

>> Yes, first they were in the ghetto, then later they were in the [labor] camp with us.

[00:14:38]

>> Ok. We will get to the camp [in a bit]. What kind of structure was there in the ghetto? Was there a set of rules: what time to get up, what time to go to bed?

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[42] "Lysianka": Liubov' includes the Lysianka district as part of Gebiet Swenigorodka; the *USHMM ECG* (1611) omits it.

[43] "Gebiet Swenigorodka": Actually, the Gebiet was more analogous to a county within the larger Generalkommissariat Kiew.

>> No, there wasn't. We couldn't sleep anyways. We went to bed; who could say what the night would bring? Morning came, [and we said] "Thank God," we were [still] alive. "What will the day bring?" That's how it was. Who could sleep in those days?

[00:15:00]

We woke up early and waited for death every single day. It was the same in the ghetto and the same in the camp.

>> What kind of work were you assigned?

>> In the ghetto, there were all kinds of work [assignments]: sweeping the streets, cleaning toilets, moving trash bins.

>> What about you personally, for example?

>> I did the same work as all the others. I also swept the streets. I remember as if it was yesterday. But there's no need to record that, I think. We swept the Prospect, and [non-Jewish] children walked past us… it was so humiliating… schoolchildren walked by and sang a rhyme, "Come here Stalin, have a look,
What from your kikes life has took.
Sweep the sidewalks clean all day,
For 110 grams bread pay."[44][45]

[00:15:41]

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[44] Translation by Eugene Bondarenko.

[45] "Stalin… your kikes": "Both German and local anti-Semitic propaganda was effective in linking the Jews with a supposed 'Judaeo-Bolshevik' conspiracy. This message found a receptive audience amongst those who had suffered from Soviet repression." Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 163. While such resentment was especially intense in the former Polish regions of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, the Soviet history of farm collectivization, deportations, famines, and purges fueled anti-Jewish sentiments in central Ukraine as well. Thus, some Ukrainians viewed the German dehumanization of Jews as desirable means of settling old scores.

>> They were judging you.

>> Yes, of course.

Or, for example, we carried barrels and jugs to the airfield. The airfield was three kilometers from here. [turns to a friend] Right, Nina, the airfield is about three kilometers from here? [To interviewer] So we would go there and back on foot, rolling barrels and jugs. We put sticks through them and dragged them along that way so it would be faster.

[00:16:03]

Segment 9

Blind Ivan stood there… [turns to a friend] Do you remember him? He'd say [in Ukrainian], "Oy, Jewies, little Jewies, now *you* are the ones in prison!" And what could we say back? In a way, he was right. We were in prison.

We young folks were in the ghetto until May 5, 1942, which, by the way was the birthday of Karl Marx—the Fifth of May.[46]

[00:16:28]

They told us the day before, on May 4. A German came to us and said that we should take two changes of clothing, underwear, outerwear, and go to the Jewish Council.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, I'd like to talk a little bit more about the ghetto.

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[46] "May 5, 1944": This was immediately after the Jews from the nearby Ol'shana ghetto were brought to the Zvenigorodka ghetto on May 2, 1942 (*USHMM ECG*, 1599). The German authorities brought the Jews from Ol'shana "to Zvenigorodka at the end of the day, and at night they put them in a prison. The next morning, they selected the able-bodied Jews among them for assignment to a labor camp. Those who were not considered fit to work were sent to the Zvenigorodka ghetto. On May 5, 1942, by the order of the Gebietskommissar [Becker], the Ukrainian police and German Gendarmerie rounded up the able-bodied Jews to perform road repair work on the Transit Highway IV (Durchgangsstrasse IV) project. These Jews were resettled into a labor camp that was created in the stables in the village of Nemorozh" (*USHMM ECG*, 1611).

>> Of course, of course.

>> When you returned home in the evening, what else [did you do]? Did you visit one another, did you go to each other's homes?

[00:16:50]

>> God forbid! Each of us stayed in our own little burrow. We were afraid to step outside more than necessary. We were just grateful that we made it home [safely]. My mother would wait for me at home and would say, "You made it back alive. Thank God." That's how it was.

>> Were there young people, old people [in the ghetto]?

>> Yes, of course. The whole population that had stayed in Zvenigorodka was there. Everyone.

[00:17:09]

And the young people… they took 300 of us [to work in the camp]. But while we were still in the ghetto, they shot my mother.

>> Tell us about that.

>> On that day I went to work. That day… my mother usually worked. But on that particular day she had stayed at home.

[00:17:29]

She stayed home. So I was walking home from work with two other women, one of whom will be here soon, and the other was a relative of mine who lived with us (she perished [during the war]). So we were walking. A woman told us that "They're beating Sarah" [the name of Liubov's mother]. But there was

another [Sarah] who lived next to us. So we thought it must be her. I got home, and the door was only pulled to; it wasn't bolted.

[00:17:56]

I decided my mother must be nearby. There was an annex off of the courtyard. If you go there, [you'll see] our home and then the annex. I can show you where they shot my mother and where we lived. Our neighbor came out—she had been a teacher in my [Yiddish] school—"Liuba,[47] come to my place, your mother is there." I went in and saw my mother sitting all beaten up and bruised.

[00:18:16]

"What happened, mama, what happened?" She told me who had come. Tat'iana Kislaia's [son] Grishka[48] had come and demanded a new blanket. We didn't have a new one, just an old one—you already know what conditions we were living in. "No. Give me a new one." He beat her out of the house; beat her all the way to the river where the road is.

[00:18:38]

He fractured her skull, brought her home, tied her to a chair and went to get some Germans. He thought that if, by chance, our folks came [from the Jewish Council], then he could say that he hadn't done it, the Germans had. He returned with Germans from the highway department who were young and drunk. In all fairness, the traffic department never participated in shootings.

[00:19:04]

But what did he [Grisha] care? He brought them, and they sent me out. They took her away again, brought her back, but didn't let me in. Then they went away somewhere and came back, and again sent

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[47] "Liuba": a nickname for Liubov'.

[48] Grishka (or Grisha) is a nickname for Grigorii. As Liubov' later reveals, this young Ukrainian politsai had grown up next door to Liubov's family. As Martin Dean points out, for many Jews, "betrayal by their neighbors was more disturbing than the hatred of alien Germans with whom they had little direct contact. […]. This element of the perpetrators personally knowing the victims in the small ghettoes of the east lends a gruesome intimacy to the massacres. It does not conform with interpretations of the Holocaust which stress the bureaucratization and impersonalization of mechanized killing." Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 163-4.

me to the teacher's house. When I came the second time, they had left. My friend was standing there and said “Let’s go in.” We found my mother sitting, tied to a chair.

[00:19:31]

I had to untie her. The featherbed was torn, the pillows were torn. I couldn’t find anything. How to untie those knots… we barely managed to free her. We helped her lie down on the couch, and she said, “Give me a wet towel [for my head].” I asked for a towel; my hands were shaking; I couldn’t find anything. My friend helped me. We had just put the towel on her head when they returned, the policeman and the Germans.

[00:19:56]

“Who untied her?” “I did.” “And who gave you permission?” “Why would I ask for permission? She’s my mother.” They sent me out again, but the Germans at the door made me go back in. finally the policeman talked with them, and they took me back to the teacher’s. Later, they brought me back, took me to the garden and handed me a shovel.

[00:20:18]

They told me, “Dig.” I took two shovelfuls and refused to go on. He brought out my mother and saw that I wasn’t digging. Mother said to me… mother said to him [in Ukrainian], “Let me say goodbye to my daughter.” He answered [in Ukrainian], “Shut your Jewish face. You [Jews] tortured us for 23 years.”[49] And, by the way, we had been neighbors to him and his mother.

[00:20:41]

And they…. We rented our apartment from his uncle since we didn’t have our own home. They knew all about us, everything, from the inside out. They had known us all our lives. But he didn’t take that into consideration. He saw that nothing would happen [to him] and shot my mother. She fell on her side. The Germans immediately left the yard. He saw that my mother fell on her side and thought she was still alive.

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[49] “23 years”: from the years of the Russian Civil War to the German invasion. Grisha’s statement suggests that he saw the German occupiers as liberators who could exact revenge on local Jews for their support of the Bolshevik regime. See f.n. 43.

Segment 10

[00:21:03]

He returned. He took a rifle from a German and shot her a second time, apparently with an exploding bullet. It turned my mother over on her back and her entire skull and brains flew all over the entire garden. [Voice breaks] I stood there. I couldn't…. I stood there, probably for ten minutes, frozen… like a block of ice. I couldn't scream, couldn't do anything. And then I started to cry.

[00:21:28]

A [Ukrainian] woman walked by. She lived across the river. [in Ukrainian] "Why are you crying, my child?" She… all of the Jews had hidden. They had heard two shots; later they told me that they thought I must have been killed as well. The woman banged on their windows, [in Ukrainian] "Come out, you parasites, how could you leave this girl alone?" They came running, saying, "We were working at the communications office til now."

[00:21:52]

There was a woman living nearby who had lived in a German colony near Odessa before the war.[50] So she spoke German well, this neighbor of ours. I ran after her, and the communications officers came. I remember as if it was yesterday: one German said that a human being couldn't have done such a thing, only a monster could do such a thing.

[00:22:12]

And then we had to bury my mother. But all the Jews were afraid to take her into their houses. We had to go to the [German] commandant. There was one commandant, he was the agricultural commandant at the time. We went to him, and the woman told him what had happened. He said, "We didn't receive any

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[50] "German colony": Over several centuries, Germanic settlers migrated to Russia for economic and religious reasons and settled across the Lower Volga region, the northern coast of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Crimea, and many other regions of the Russian Empire. The "Black Sea German" community originated in the early nineteenth century when a group of Germans migrated from Alsace to agricultural colonies outside of Odessa. Unlike Russian serfs, these farmers owned their land. In 1941, in response to the German invasion, Stalin ordered the deportation of ethnic Germans to Siberia and Central Asia to prevent them from becoming a fifth column. However, the German Army advanced too quickly for the deportations to be completed. During the German occupation, approximately 300,000 ethnic Germans were "repatriated" out of Ukraine to the German Reich. Irina Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 11-12, 20. See also Ingeborg Fleischhauer and Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Germans: Past and Present* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1986).

orders to shoot anybody today." she said, "You didn't. But that's what happened." He said, "Go home. We will be there shortly."

[00:22:36]

While we walked home, he drove there with a translator. He looked around, told us to take my mother inside. Then the head of the politsai came, and the whole local leadership was in the yard. He told the head of the politsai to give us a cart so we could bury my mother in the Jewish cemetery.

Segment 11

My father had been shot six weeks earlier. He went to work and never came back.

[00:23:04]

The next day we went to search for him. A woman saw us and told us to look in the yard of the motor [department]. So we went. Two of them had been shot: my father and Skibinskii. Papa was lying closer, the other Jewish man was on the other side of the fence. So I also buried my father in the Jewish cemetery, and then my mother. When I took my mother, I made my father…

[00:23:27]

Well, you probably don't know this. There used to be wooden Jewish gravestones that looked like beehouses.[51] We had a chest of drawers and there was one Jew who made these markers. Mother had given him the chest to make father a small monument, and by the time the monument was ready, I had to bury my mother. So I put up the monument for my father, and I knew where I had buried my mother because I buried her next to my aunt [who had died before the war].[52]

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[51] "like beehouses": Many Jewish communities in Eastern Europe marked their graves with wooden, brick, or stone structures shaped like small houses. See a 1919 photograph from Cherkassy, Ukraine in YIVO's *People of a Thousand Towns Online Photographic Catalog*, Record ID 4362, http://yivo1000towns.cjh.org/picture.asp?PictureSetID=4362&ImageID=53416&PictureSetIndex=24. In the case of famous rabbis, these structures were referred to in Yiddish/Hebrew as an *oyel* [Heb: *ohel*]. See a 1926 photograph from Zheludok, Belarus: Record ID, 12123, http://yivo1000towns.cjh.org/frame_viewer.asp?PictureSetID=12123&PictureSetIndex=69&ImageID=38205.

[52] "I buried her next to my aunt": In many East European Jewish communities, spouses were not buried together. Instead, men and women were buried either in separate sections of the cemetery or in

[00:23:55]

But then during the German occupation all of the wooden "houses" … [Ukrainian] neighbors who lived nearby, from Chervona,[53] they took them down and used them for firewood. And there were such nice gravestones… they are all lying in the Jewish cemetery in pieces. So… now I don't know where they are buried; I can't go to visit either my mother or my father.

[00:24:20]

So that's why I… well, of course, this was later… I have done a lot for the mass graves [around Zvenigorodka].

>> I see.

>> So. That was in the ghetto. Then, after my mother, after my father, still in 1941, they took 100 [Jewish] men, only men, and took them outside the city, telling them they were being taken for work. But they were never seen again.[54]

[00:24:49]

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alternating rows within the cemetery. In such towns, family plots still existed but were single-gender in nature.

[53] "Chervona": Likely a district within Zvenigorodka or a neighboring village that has since been incorporated into the city.

[54] "100 men": According to the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, "In September 1941, a detachment of Einsatzkommando 5 [a subunit of Einsatzgruppe C], commanded by SS-Obersturmführer Lehmann, arrived in Zvenigorodka, where it was based for several weeks. At the end of September or the beginning of October 1941, Lehmann's mobile squad of Security Police conducted the first Aktion [mass shooting] in Zvenigorodka, seizing about 100 Jewish men and shooting them" (p. 1611). Shootings in the initial months of the German occupation had ostensibly focused on eliminating potential resisters – Communist party officials and other "radical" elements. The transfer to civilian government in the fall of 1941 brought a fresh wave of aktions between September and December 1941. The implicit goal of these shootings was to purify the land of racial inferiors to obtain territory for future German settlement. See Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941-1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 106-15; Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 19-20.

Where were they shot? There is the famous Laptev meadow[55] here. There they shot partisans, and communists, and Jews. But there isn't a single monument there. Nobody. Nothing. It has all grown over there like a wild place. No one even thinks about doing anything about it. You see? And evidently those 100 men were shot there. Then there were more taken, boys included, and where they were taken, no one knew.

>> These were all people from your ghetto?

>> All from our ghetto.

>> I see.

>> And they took 13 more men, and again no one knows where their grave is. And then….

>> You were an orphan?

>> We… I was orphaned, yes. That neighbor who spoke German, she took me in.

[00:25:38]

Moreover, I had heard many stories… My mother had told me about her childhood. You know, how mothers tell you things. She told me many stories about orphans, and how hard it was for them. And so I went up to people's houses. Everyone was indoors, they were afraid. I went up, knocked quietly. Maybe people didn't hear, or maybe they were afraid. I would cry and walk away thinking, "I'm an orphan. No one cares about me."

[00:26:01]

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[55] "Laptevo-Levada": Likely a meadow in or near Zvenigorodka.

And meanwhile someone would see me through the window. I was the first [in the ghetto] to lose my parents. Everyone was still with their parents, I was already a complete orphan.[56] Even though neither my mother nor my father were communists.[57] That's how my fate turned out.

>> Yes.

Segment 12

>>And so I stayed with that woman, with Eva, until we were taken to the ghetto.

[00:26:23]

She stayed. She had three children; she lived with them.

>> Until you were taken where?

>> To the concentration camp[58]… I'm still saying "ghetto!" This was on May 5, 1942. We were told to go to the [Jewish] Council. We went. [Then] we were taken, of course, on foot. We didn't know where we were going. We composed a song about it.[59]

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[56] "a complete orphan": In both Yiddish and Russian, "orphan" can refer to a child who has lost one parent. A "complete orphan" indicates a child who has lost both parents.

[57] "communists": In the immediate aftermath of the German invasion, under German military government, mass shootings and executions purportedly targeted communist party activists. In reality, "communist" often served as a euphemism for "Jew" (Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 72-79; Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 19-20). Many Jews took false comfort in the fact that they had never joined the communist part. As the deaths of Liubov's parents illustrate, random, officially-unsanctioned violence also claimed the lives of many Jews living within the ghettos.

[58] "camp": In the village of Nemorozh, approximately 8 km northwest of Zvenigorodka. Able-bodied Jews were sent there to perform repairs on the Transit Highway IV (Durchgangsstrasse IV) project (See *USHMM ECG*, 1611).

[59] "We composed a song": within camps and ghettos, Jews created new songs and reworked prewar songs to articulate their experiences, to restore a sense of normalcy, and to voice feelings of hope, despair, and daily struggle. Sometimes songs were performed in theaters within the ghettos, but they were also part of everyday life among friends and family. These songs were important cultural expressions that allowed inmates to witness their own suffering and the suffering of those around them. Songs also served as a form of spiritual resistance by demonstrating a will to survive in the face of

[00:26:45]

(sings)

Farewell, our native city.

Farewell, family so dear.

Farewell, precious mothers.

(wait…) [trying to remember]

Farewell, to all our friends.

Blindly, we walk down the road,

Not knowing what lies ahead.

The ominous thought is growing,

That awaiting us is death.

From the distant mountains,

Nemorozh's houses peer out.

Heavily the heart begins to pound

And tears begin to fall.

Such a home we were given:

A pig stall without a window or a door.

[00:27:21]

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death. See Gila Flam, "The Role of Singing in the Ghettos: Between Entertainment and Witnessing," in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1999), 141-53; Eliyana R. Adler, "No Raisins, No Almonds: Singing as Spiritual Resistance to the Holocaust," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 50-66.

A heavy wind blew right through us,

And chilled us down to the bone.

At first we were not used to it,

Such savagery, brutality.

With sweat we toiled to till the earth

And watered it with tears.[60]

>> What is that? You and your friends wrote it?

>> Yes. We would return from work. We slept in a stable on the ground. They threw us a bundle of straw, and we slept on it.

[00:27:50]

So we would come back. One thing about the Germans is that work ended at five o' clock. No matter what the work was, we were not made to work later than five o' clock.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, please tell us about the camp, how you were taken there, who took you?

>> The politsai and Germans, [surrounded us] on both sides. There were 150 of us, and they walked on both sides of us, and led us to the stable, "This is where you will live and work."

[00:28:15]

We were glad, as long as they didn't… We had thought that they were taking us like they had those other 100 people [to be shot].

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[60] Translation by Daniel Kahn and Eva Lapsker.

>> Yes.

>> But it turned out that we were allowed to live.

>> And approximately how many of there were you in this…

>> 150 at first. They took 150 of us young folks.

>> Grown men, women? Or just young folks?

[00:28:32]

>> Grown men. No, young folks, but there were young adult men as well.

>> I see.

>> And then a week or so later they brought another 150 people. There were instances where a mother would be [in the ghetto] with her daughter and son, and the father was at the front. The son and daughter were taken [to the camp], and the mother was left behind alone [in the ghetto]. She would come to the camp voluntarily.

[00:28:52]

The camp was like a Jewish home. And then they brought people from Ol'shana, all from Ol'shana originally.[61] Some of them were shot, and some young folks, women and girls, were brought to the

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[61] "Ol'shana": Rus: Ol'shana, Ukr: Vil'shana. A town approximately 25 km northeast of Zvenigorodka. Prior to the Russian Revolution, roughly 1,200 Jews lived in Ol'shana (one fifth of the total population). However, due to Soviet industrialization and urbanization, a mere 200 Jews remained by summer of 1941. See *YV EGH*, 545.

camp.[62] Everyone lived together in the stable. It wasn't separate for men, for women. We slept in the clothes we were wearing.

[00:29:14]

>> What did you sleep on?

>> On hay, on the ground.

>> Directly on the ground?

>> Directly on the ground. There was nothing to cover ourselves with. So we returned from work in those clothes, ate the thin gruel they gave us. They cooked it for us twice a day, morning and evening. No salt. A quarter of a bucket of millet to 17 buckets of water.

[00:29:35]

No bread. That was the kind of food they gave us. In the mornings, we would find a container—ammunition cans. They would pour [the gruel] in; we drank it, and went to work.

Segment 13

>> What did you do? What kind of work was it?

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[62] "some young folks… were brought to the camp": In the Ol'shana ghetto, "During the winter of 1941-1942, the number of ghetto inmates declined due to deaths from sicknesses, starvation, and the terror imposed by the German administration and the Ukrainian police. [….] On May 2, 1942, the German administration formed the remaining 100 or so ghetto inmates into a column and marched them to Zvenigorodka, where the Jews were divided into two groups: the elderly and small children were put into [the Zvenigorodka] ghetto, while the older children and younger women were sent to forced labor camps at Smil'chyntsi and Nemorozh, which were established for the construction of the new highway (Durchgangsstrasse IV) (*USHMM ECG*, vol. 2, 1599).

>> We repaired the road.[63] We dug the ground and planned the road. The road led to Lysianka,[64] then to Kiev.

[00:30:01]

That road, that's where we worked. Of course, beyond Lysianka we didn't work; we didn't work on that side.

>> What kind of tools did you have?

>> We had shovels and picks.

>> So those were brought to you?

>> They were brought to us and handed out by the police in the mornings. Then we were sent outdoors and counted.

[00:30:22]

If we were assigned to a spot, we worked there. Sometimes we were sent to different sections [of the road]. They counted and sent whatever number… The German who oversaw us—he decided how many

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[63] "the road": the Durchgangsstrasse IV highway project sought to expand and modernize a system of roads that dated back to the days of Catherine the Great. The ultimate goal was to create a supply line to the front and provide a thoroughfare for future German colonial settlement in Ukraine. The Durchgangsstrasse IV stretched from L'vov (Ukr: L'viv) to Taganrog, Russia, with tributary roads running north-south. The Jewish laborers who built, maintained, and repaired the highway resided in a series of camps along the road. Although they provided valuable labor, they were seen as expendable. German police and local politsai oversaw the laborers and guarded against partisan sabotage of the highway. See Andrej Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor: Jews and Thoroughfare IV in Central Ukraine," in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 190-223; Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in the Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 142.

[64] "Lysianka": A town approximately 30 km north of Zvenigorodka. The villages of Nemorozh and Smil'chyntsi, where Jews from Zvenigorodka and Ol'shana were sent to work, are located along this road. Kiev (Ukr: Kyiv) lies another 160 km north of Lysianka.

people to send where. And the politsai (we had many of them), they took us. Wherever we were sent, we went with the politsai. They stood guard over us to make sure that no one escaped, that we worked… they were slave-drivers.

[00:30:49]

>> I see. Did anyone ever try to run away?

>> No. No one tried to escape. Why? I'll explain. For one thing, there was nowhere to run to. No one let us go anywhere [unguarded]. No one. By 1943, when the front was moving closer, then it was easier. By then it was possible to escape; people would sometimes give you a piece of bread or allow you to spend the night in a barn.

[00:31:13]

But before then, nobody would let you in.

Segment 14

So that's one factor. Second, the Germans had a rule: if one [prisoner] ran away from the camp, ten other innocent [prisoners] would be shot.[65] They would choose any ten they pleased, and that was that. We didn't want to be the cause of others' deaths. We decided that whatever happened, it would happen to all of us together.

[00:31:38]

But I couldn't allow someone to be killed on my account. That's why we didn't run away. Of course, once, two friends and I did plan to run away. We risked running away. We were working in the forest, near Nemorozh—Gubskii Forest, on the road to Kiev. We were working there in the forest, and there were some Ukrainian girls working there weaving screens.

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[65] "if one ran away… ten…would be shot": in both ghettos and camps, the threat of collective punishment presented potential escapees and resisters with a moral quandary that discouraged both escape and other forms of resistance. See Rab Bennett, "Jewish Resistance and the dilemma of Collective Responsibility," in *Under the Shadow of the Swastika: The Moral Dilemmas of Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 216-37.

[00:32:01]

We were dragging brushwood, branches. And they were weaving screens. Two of them exchanged clothes with us. We gave them our clothes, they gave us theirs. And the three of us decided to escape. Two sisters and I. But one of the Ukrainian girls figured out [our plan] and told the politsai. After that, no one else tried to run away.

[00:32:25]

Two helped us, and the third betrayed us. After that, we knew to be more cautious. And after that, no one else tried to escape.

Segment 15

>> Liubov' Naumovna, did you have any identification markers, badges?

>>Yes, we wore a white patch with a light blue Mogen Dovid [Star of David].[66]

>> Blue you said? Because…

>> Yes. And when the people from Ol'shana arrived, they wore yellow patches.

[00:32:47]

But we wore a Star of David.

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[66] "a white patch with a light blue Mogen Dovid": although the yellow star is one of the most iconic images of the Holocaust, local policies regarding the exact color and style varied widely. As Liubov' points out, even two nearby towns could have different patch styles. For a representative sample of Jewish badges from various regions of Nazi-occupied Europe, see "Holocaust Badges," Holocaust Memorial Center, https://www.holocaustcenter.org/holocaust-badges.

>> What did the yellow patches mean?

>> It was simply sewn on their clothes. It was a sign that someone was a Jew.

>> I see.

>> It was basically the sign of someone condemned to die. And we wore a Star of David.

>> So, how long were you there for?

>> Where? In the camp?

>> In the camp, yes.

>> So as I was saying…

[00:33:10]

We were in the Nemorozh camp for about a month. When they brought the people from Ol'shana, it became crowded in the one stable, and they decided to create another camp in Smel'chintsy.[67] It's about six or seven kilometers from Nemorozh. It's on the same road, the same work, except now there were two camps. The Nemorozh camp remained and worked [on the highway] toward Zvenigorodka. And we worked from Smel'chintsy toward the forest and toward Lysianka.

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[67] "Smel'chintsy": Rus: Smel'chintsy, Ukr: Smil'chyntsi. The village is located approximately 12 km northwest of Nemorozh, on the road toward Lysianka. Liubov' was among the prisoners transferred to the Smel'chintsy camp.

[00:33:44]

We worked in the stone quarry, and in the sand quarry, and on the road. [In Smel'chintsy] we also lived in a stable, slept on straw, on the floor, it was all the same [as in Nemorozh]. There… and then we… In the Nemorozh camp, they shot those who had remained there. They were shot on November 2, 1942.[68]

[00:34:09]

>> That means that if you had remained in the Nemorozh camp, you…

>> Then we might have been killed too.

>>Why were they killed?

>> Stop.

[68] The Nemorozh victims were shot in the Gubskii Forest between Nemorozh and Smel'chintsy. See "Commemoration of Jewish Victims," Yad Vashem Untold Stories, https://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/commemoration.asp?cid=985. The German administration saw Jewish laborers as expendable, so selections and camp liquidations were extremely common in the Durchgangstrasse IV camps. See Andrej Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor," 209-11.

TAPE 2

Segment 16

[00:00:00]

>> Because, as I was saying, if we had been in Nemorozh, we might have died, because when they [the gendarmerie] first went into the camp, they took those who were [working] in the camp. There was a cook, men who transported water, chopped wood. You see, maybe ten or more altogether, who were working there doing maintenance.

[00:00:22]

That's how they arrived from the gendarmerie and first took those who were [working] in the camp. They had no chance to escape. Then they went to collect those who were working [outside the camp]. When they shot people at our camp…

>> Why were they killed?

>> What use were Jews to them? They were only useful for…

>> But they were building the road.

[00:00:42]

>> Well, that's why we [in the Smel'chintsy camp] were left [alive]—to build. It was too much of an extravagance to leave so many Jews alive.

>> I see.

>> So, we had been taken to Smel'chintsy. We were in Smel'chintsy until December, until the frost started. At that point, we couldn't live in the stable anymore. It was cold. And one more thing…

[00:01:05]

When they killed the people in the Nemorozh camp, they had prepared pits in advance. They dug the pits, but they weren't filled [by the shooting]. There was still some space left. So they came to us at the Smel'chintsy camp. They had us line up. They looked at us. "You. You. You." They selected another 50 people, first men and boys, and then elderly women. Then they took them there, to the edge of the forest, to that grave.

[00:01:39]

They told a politsai to send [another] ten men with shovels to the edge of the forest in about half an hour. That's what he did. Those ten went, also not knowing what was going on. We still didn't know that the Nemorozh camp had been shot. When those ten were on their way, going on foot since there was nothing to ride on, [they met local Ukrainians] going to Smel'chintsy, possibly coming from Zvenigorodka.

[00:02:02]

"Where are you going?" "We were told to go to the edge of the forest." "Turn back. Your folks are being shot there, as we speak they are being shot."

Segment 17

They [the gendarmes] did not want to leave any witnesses. Obviously, they would have killed those ten people, too. Those [ten] returned [to the camp]. They somehow covered the grave; both politsai and Germans had participated in the shooting. They covered the grave somehow, and then… for a long time after we were not taken to the edge of the forest [to work], so that we wouldn't visit the grave.

[00:02:31]

[Back in the camp,] we still didn't know what had happened. And then, late at night, a truck full of clothes arrived at the camp. It was the clothes from those who had been killed.[69] "What have you been up

[69] "the clothes from those who had been killed": Avrom Sutzkever's famous poem, "A Wagon of Shoes" evokes the horror that many camp inmates experienced when the death of their friends and relatives

to? Did you come from Kiev? Did you go through the forest? The Gubskii Forest?" It [the forest] is split; one half… that central road, one half is on the left when you're driving on that road, it's lower [on that side], on the right it's higher. There's a sort of ditch on the right side.

[00:03:02]

They forced the people to undress on that side of the road and go to the pit, lie down five at a time, face up. [The politsai and Germans] stood and shot them from above. They shot to kill or shot to injure, whichever they pleased.

>> How do you know that this is what happened?

>> We were told.

>> You were told?

>> Of course. Ukrainians who lived in a nearby village watched what happened [and told us].

[00:03:27]

Then the next five people had to get undressed and lie down. And then all the clothes were brought to us in the camp. We couldn't sleep for some three nights. We sat and cried over those clothes. Our director, Borkenhagen was his name, had a translator, Ida.

>> What do you mean "director"?

>> He was the head of road construction.

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was tacitly announced by piles of shoes or clothing. See Avrom Sutzkever, "A Wagon of Shoes" in *Yiddish Holocaust Poetry: Translated into English Verse*, trans. Amelia Levy (Johannesburg: Ammatt Press, 200), 96-7.

[00:03:55]

He was our boss. He provided us with our food. He was like the director of the [local] camps.

>> Camp director?

>> Of the camp, yes. Road construction. As I was saying, he had a translator, Ida. So when they brought the clothing to us in the camp, she told everyone they couldn't touch a thing until she had picked out what she wanted.

[00:04:19]

That's how it was. Ida came and picked whatever she liked, whatever was the best. And we were barefoot and practically naked in the winter cold. Then we sorted through whatever was left to at least dress a little warmer for the winter. And then in December we were transferred to Budyshche,[70] also in Lysianka district. There we lived in a village clubhouse.[71]

[00:04:43]

>> The whole [Smel'chintsy] camp? Or the Nemorozh camp?

>> Our whole camp—Smel'chintsy. Nemorozh had already been liquidated.[72] There were about 100 of us left [in Smel'chintsy], maybe more, I don't remember exactly how many. We were transferred to Budyshche. What was the benefit?

---

[70] "Budyshche": a village approximately 8km northeast of Smel'chintsy.

[71] In the 1920s and 30s, the Soviet Union established workers' clubs as an alternative to the social aspects of religious institutions. These clubs promoted educational and creative leisure consistent with socialist values. Such clubs existed even in small towns and villages. See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "The Shaping of Soviet Workers' Leisure: Workers' Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (Fall 1999): 78-92.

[72] "Nemorozh had already been liquidated": on November 2, 1942. See footnote 66.

Segment 18

The building wasn't heated. But for one thing, the floor was wooden instead of dirt, and at least it was an enclosed space.

[00:05:13]

No more stable doors, but ordinary doors. But what difference did it make? Most of us wrapped our feet in rags. There were some kind of shoes, but they were torn. We wrapped our legs in rags, and in the mornings, we were taken outside so the politsai could count us: who went here, who went there to work. While we were standing, those rags froze to our feet, and when we walked, we clattered as if we had wooden legs.

[00:05:41]

In the evenings, we returned from work. There was nowhere to dry [the rags]. We unwrapped our feet. If we put them on the floor in the unheated clubhouse, they would be cold, and we would have to wrap them around our bare feet. So instead, we put them under ourselves, under the straw [where we slept] so they would at least be warmed by our body heat. In the morning, we would wrap our feet again, head outside, and freeze again.

[00:06:03]

That's how we lived. And they also fed us badly. But what was better in this camp was that the people in the two neighboring villages, Shesteryntsi[73] and Budyshche, did a lot to help us.[74] They were wonderful people. All we can do is say "thank you" to them for the rest of our lives. Of course, we would like to express our gratitude to them somehow. They would come to the camp, they would persuade the politsai, bring us half liters, bring us pieces of bread, a potato here and there, and if they lived nearby, something hot to eat.

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[73] "Shesteryntsi": a village just southeast of Budyshche.

[74] "did a lot to help us": Survivor testimonies like Liubov's complicate stereotypical images of Ukrainians as uniformly antisemitic, eager to collaborate with the Germans in the murder of Jews. Liubov' doesn't shy away from describing a complex reality in which the politsai guards in her camps were ethnic Ukrainians. Then again, so were the local villagers who brought food to the camp prisoners and, later, aided escapees by hiding them.

[00:06:40]

They really supported us. And we also got a little creative. The politsai had been with us so long they knew that we wouldn't run away, so on the way home from work, either on the road or right near the camp, we managed to run in pairs to the village to ask for something to eat. If only one person came up to the door, they would even ask, "Why didn't you bring a friend?

[00:07:05]

We would have fed both of you." They fed us, gave us pieces of bread, gave us potatoes, gave us a little salt. That's how they supported us. If it weren't for them, we would likely have died from hunger. [Our bellies] would have swollen up. They really helped us. The people in those two villages helped us in many ways.

Segment 19

So, again, we lived in Budyshche until the spring, until May.

>> Until May of which year?

>> 1943.[75]

>> 1943 already.

>> Until May 1943. And in May 1943… I don't remember the exact date, of course… we were transferred back to Nemorozh. But instead of living in the stable, we were settled into the old school beyond the stable. It is no longer there.

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[75] "1943": The vast majority of Jews in Reichskommissariat Ukraine had been shot *en masse* in 1942. In 1943 and early 1944, the German occupiers completed a final round of ghetto and labor camp liquidations as the Red Army began to advance further into Ukraine. Of the labor camps that survived until 1943, most were involved in the construction of the Durchgangstrasse IV or were producing essential supplies for the German front. The last of the Durchgangstrasse IV camps was liquidated in December 1943. Very few Jews were able to escape these final mass shootings. See Arad, *Holocaust in the Soviet Union,* 338-40; Andrej Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor," 208, 211-14.

[00:07:50]

We lived in that school. Until August 23, 1943[76] we stayed there. In August, the harvest started in the [nearby] kolkhoz.[77] They didn't have enough people, and in [the village of] Nemorozh, there were two kolkhozes. They were called the Civic Courtyard kolkhozes. There were chairmen, and people went to work just as they did before the war. They needed additional laborers to help with the harvest. Both of the kolkhoz chairmen went to the Agricultural Commandant in Zvenigorodka to get permission to take 10 workers from the camp who could help [with the harvest].

[00:08:32]

Of course, he gave them permission. We had one quirky politsai, Pritula. He picked whomever looked like a Ukrainian. It didn't matter if the person looked Ukrainian and couldn't work or looked like they couldn't work. He didn't care. So, of course, I was chosen.

[00:08:53]

I was picked to work in the kolkhoz that is close to here. We probably won't be able to visit there today. Will you still be here tomorrow?

>> We'll have to see.

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[76] "August 23, 1943": The date of the Nemorozh camp's second liquidation. Arad specifically mentions Nemorozh as one of the last camps in Ukraine to be liquidated, and he confirms the date of August 23, 1943 (Arad, *Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 340).

[77] "kolkhoz": a collective farm established by the Soviet government as part of its agricultural reforms beginning in the 1920s. Despite German ambitions to dissolve collective farms and restore family farms in occupied Soviet territory, in practice, the demand for food production prevented drastic changes to the existing agricultural system. Instead, farms continued to function collectively throughout the German occupation – they were simply renamed "community farms." See Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945: A Study of Occupation Policies* (London, Macmillan, 1981), 320-75.

>> So maybe we will visit it tomorrow. So I was assigned to that kolkhoz. They gave the ten of us a quota to harvest 10 hectares[78] of peas. Peas are thorny, you know, and we started harvesting by hand, so it was slow going.

[00:09:19]

Some women brought out sickles for us, and we used them. We, the ten of us, fulfilled our quota a day earlier than assigned. We finished in nine days. On the tenth day, we went to the kolkhoz office and asked the chairman what we should do: should we go back to work on the road or stay on the kolkhoz. He said, "Do you really want to go back to the road?" We said, "We'd be happy never to see it again."

[00:09:46]

"I see. Go to the stable. Our women are stringing tobacco [leaves] there, and you can work with them." We thanked him and headed off.

Oh, and I left out something: during those days when we worked on the kolkhoz, the kolkhoz allocated food rations for us. They were cooked in the same kitchen in the camp, but prepared separately just for us, in a separate pot. And they gave us an open carriage as well.[79]

[00:10:09]

When we went to work in the field, we took the food with us and ate it there. And the day we were in the stable, which was right next to the camp, the camp folks who had been bringing our food to us asked us, "Shall we bring your food here, or will you come to the camp to eat?" "Why bring it here? We will come to the camp."

[00:10:33]

Just as we sat down to eat [at the camp], the… the Gendarmerie arrived. We already knew that only the highway department was authorized to check our work. If the Gestapo or the Gendarmerie came, it meant

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[78] "hectares": A hectare is a metric measure of area, equaling 10,000 square meters (approximately equivalent to two and a half acres).

[79] "open carriage": Known in Russian as a "bedarka," open carriages were used by kolkhoz workers to get around the fields before tractors became ubiquitous.

it was to conduct a shooting. We lived in fear of that every day. Every day. We slept through the night, everyone—especially the elderly women (we were young at the time)—everyone would say, "Well, thank God, we survived the night.

[00:11:01]

Now what will the day bring?" That's how we lived the whole entire time.

The Gendarmerie came and a girl went out. She was like the superintendent. She received food rations from the Germans, and every day would portion them out in the kitchen and cook for us. She came out; he [a soldier from the Gendarmerie] looked at his watch and said, "Where is everyone working?" She replied, "In the forest."

[00:11:27]

He looked at his watch again, "It's lunch break?" She said, "Yes." So they drove off. She popped in [to where we were eating]: "Girls, the game's over. The Gendarmerie was just here and was making inquiries." We ran out of the school [building], threw aside the food, everything. We went down through the yard, down to the stream (now it's wide, but at the time it was narrow) and on the other side of the stream was the Khlipnovka Forest.[80]

Segment 20

[00:11:55]

In the camp, there were four men who hauled water, two who cut firewood, and three cooks, the ten of us who came back [from work], and the woman who managed the pantry. Altogether, there were about twenty of us. If [the Gendarmerie] had done what they did in 1942, they would have gathered up all of us immediately, and that would have been that. But there we were; we ran out, along with the cook.[81] And we went not too far from the camp.

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[80] "Khlipnovka Forest": Khlipnovka is a village near Nemorozh. It stands on the eastern bank of the Hnylyi Tikych River while Nemorozh sits on the western bank of the river. The Khlipnovka Forest surrounds the eastern side Khlipnovka.

[81] "we ran out": As Liubov's testimony illustrates, inmates assigned to work around the camps as cooks, mechanics, or other support personnel sometimes enjoyed certain advantages over those who went out to perform more grueling physical labor on the roads. Namely, they had better access to food and more immediate access to information. See Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor," 209. Of course, the first

[00:12:22]

We stood and thought, "Maybe it's just panic? Maybe it's not a massacre?" The cooks said, "It's just panic. Let's go back." I immediately told them, I said, "I wish to God that this were just panic. But I refuse to go back there to the camp. I'm going to act on this panic since there's no one there who could be shot on my account."

[00:12:45]

So four of us young women left. The cooks decided to go back. Two of them were killed; one survived. So we left. Like I mentioned, there was a stream and the four of us stood there and thought, "Where should we go?" Two of them said—there was a Polish girl, and one girl from Zvenigorodka, she said, "Let's go to Zvenigorodka." And the other, who now lives in Israel, who ran away with me.[82] [Those two said],

[00:13:15]

"You stay here. We will go out to the road and see what's going on. If there's a shooting going on, we'll come back and tell you. If not, we'll come back anyways." But if they went out to the road and heard what was going on there, why would they come back to tell us? They went. And they never came back. So we went as well. We walked and walked down the road, crossed the stream, went to a field where there were shocks of wheat from the Gudzivskii kolkhoz.

[00:13:46]

We sat for a bit, as long as there were no workers in the field. And then we crossed the road. And somewhere along the way we came to some vegetable gardens. After significant effort, we found a home. If you sent me along that road, I would never find the spot. It was already night. It was August, the 23rd of August actually, almost September. It was cold at night, and I was in a sleeveless camisole, that's it.

[00:14:11]

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liquidation of the Nemorozh camp provides a counter example in which the camp workers were the first to be executed, before the road workers.

[82] "the other… who ran away with me": Raya Miropolskaia. See http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=4038499.

On top of that, the nerves! It was cold, and I was terrified. The other girl, although she was younger than me, had at least grabbed a coat. I had left with what I had on. So I was freezing. We went up to the house, where there was a pile of manure. I said, "You know, let's rest here." At least under the manure it was warmer. Then an elderly woman came out.

[00:14:29]

Want to or not, we had to approach her. She might think that we were planning to steal from the vegetable plots. So we went and asked, "Auntie,[83] please let us stay the night." "Who are you exactly?" We couldn't tell her the truth. We said that we had escaped from Germany, that we were from the Chernigov Province.[84] There were lots of folks like that—escapees from Germany—wandering around at the time.[85] [She said,] "Let me go ask my daughter."

[00:14:51]

The daughter came out and also asked who we were. "Let me go ask my husband." They asked the husband, and he gave permission. They made us a bed on the floor. In the morning, she woke us up early, the sun was just starting to rise, and we went onward.

Segment 21

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[83] "Auntie": In Russian and Ukrainian, unrelated, older adults may be referred to as "aunt" or "uncle." This form of address conveys respect and, often, the hope of assistance.

[84] "Chernigov Province": a province in north-central Ukraine. It lies on the eastern bank of the Dnieper River, as opposed to the Cherkasy Province which lies just to the southwest of the river.

[85] "escapees from Germany": Due to labor shortages in Germany, beginning in early 1942, the German authorities in Ukraine sought non-Jewish Ukrainian laborers to work in German farms and factories. Some willingly volunteered; others were taken by force to fulfill "recruitment" quotas. Roundups became increasingly pervasive and brutal in 1943 as the tide of the war turned. By June 1943, over one million such laborers had been sent from Reichskommissariat Ukraine to the German Reich. Labor conditions were harsh, and a steady stream of these laborers fled back to Ukraine. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, 253-74. See also Laura J. Hilton and John J. Delaney, "Forced Foreign Labourers, POWs and Jewish Slave Workers in the Third Reich: Regional Studies and New Directions," *German History* 23, no. 1 (2005): 83-95; Edward L. Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

My God. We reached the Ol'shana sovkhoz.[86] This was all on foot. My companion said, "Let's ask somebody [for directions], so we won't have to go through Ol'shana.

[00:15:18]

Because," she said, "the politsai will recognize me." We asked one person and he sent us back to Zvenigorodka district to the sovkhoz beyond the village of Kniazha.[87] "Go to the sovkhoz and work there for a bit. You'll see where it is." We turned around and went to Kniazha. We spent the night at someone's house. From there, I knew the road since I had worked my first year as a schoolteacher in Kniazha. I knew the roads around there.

[00:15:48]

I told her, "You know, Raya, we shouldn't stay here. At any moment, the Zvenigorodka politsai could come to the sovkhoz, for any reason, and recognize us. Let's keep moving." So we decided to go to the Kirovograd Province.[88] At the time, it was part of the Kherson Province.[89] Because we had met people from there who had come here. And so we made it.

[00:16:14]

The houses were still in the Kiev Province, and then the Mala Vyska,[90] and on the other side is the Kirovograd Province already. On this side was the former Mokraia Kaligorka [Ukr: Mokra Kalyhirka] district, the village Kozachany, and on the other side was the village of Petroostrov [Ukr: Petroostriv].

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[86] "sovkhoz": A Soviet state-owned farm (as opposed to a kolkhoz – a collectively owned farm). Again, under German occupation, these farms were maintained as collective farming enterprises and were not converted to family farms.

[87] "Kniazha": Kniazha is about 25 km south of Ol'shana and 20 km east of Zvenigorodka.

[88] "Kirovograd Province": The border of the Kirovograd Province lies approximately 40 km south of Kniazha.

[89] "Kherson Province": Here, Liubov' seems to confuse the Kherson Province, which lies further to the south, with the Nikolaev Province. In 1939, the Kirovograd Province was created out of the northern part of the Nikolaev Province. Under German occupation, the Kirovograd Province was again considered part of the Nikolaev Province. In 1954, the Kirovograd Province lost some of its districts to the newly established Cherkasy Province but also received some western districts from the Odessa Province.

[90] "Mala Vyska": A tributary of the Velyka Vys river that separates the then Kiev (now Cherkasy) Province from the Kirovograd Province.

That's already the Kirovograd Province. We went up to the bank of the river and didn't know what to do. There was no bridge. Nothing. How would we get to the other side?

[00:16:42]

There was a woman there washing linens. We went up to her and asked, "How can we get to the other side?" she said, "Why? Where are you headed?" We said, "We are headed to the Kherson Province." "Don't you hear the dogs barking over there?" "What about it?" "They are catching people to take to Germany. A raid." We said, "We have already escaped twice from Germany. We're tired [of running].

[00:17:06]

We'll keep going." We had decided [to risk it], thinking that at least in Germany we would be treated the same as everyone else. At least we wouldn't have to fear death. What will be will be. But we would be just like everyone else. She said, "If only I had flour to grind, I would take you home and you could work a little bit to harvest my vegetable garden.

[00:17:28]

That way you could rest and then keep moving. There's plenty of time to travel." We asked her, "Do you have anything for us to grind?" She said, "I do." "Well, in that case, let's go." So she took us, that woman. She took us to a millstone and we ground flour. She gave us food and we stayed with her. And then other women started to hire us so that we could help them harvest their gardens.

[00:17:53]

Then we went back to that woman, and she figured out who we were. God made me speak Yiddish in my sleep, and she heard it. After that she said to us, "Tell me the truth, girls. Who are you? Don't be afraid of me." We already knew that these were good people, so we told her. And then she hid us.

[00:18:15]

She had a pantry. She put us in the pantry and during the day would give us a mattress and pillow. You'll excuse me, but she even gave us a bucket so that we wouldn't have to go out. People in the village started asking her where we had gone, and she said, "They finished working for me and went somewhere else. Where, I don't know." And so we stayed with her until we were liberated.

[00:18:36]

And then everyone found out who we were.

Segment 22

And by the way, I applied… this is off topic… I'm applying to Yad Vashem so they can be recognized as Righteous among the Nations.[91] I just received a letter that on May 12 they were given the title, "Righteous among the Nations." They should be receiving a medal and a certificate.[92]

[00:19:01]

And I recently received a letter from Katia Gusarova saying that I should contact an association in Kiev, [contact] Fel'dman, or even write a letter directly to America, so they can be granted a pension.[93] There you have it. Once we were liberated, we stayed [with them] a little longer. We were liberated in February—the end of January, or February. There [in Zvenigorodka] they were liberated in March.

[00:19:26]

It was muddy, and still cold, and I was barefoot. Where could I go? So I stayed there [in Kozachany] until May. And then Raya and I went to Zvenigorodka. She went on to her home in Ol'shana. She found her

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[91] "Righteous among the Nations": Since 1962, this has been the designation awarded by the State of Israel to non-Jews who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, whether by hiding them, providing them false identity papers, or helping them to escape. The primary criteria are that the rescue was performed for humanitarian reasons and at significant personal risk. To date, Yad Vashem has recognized 2,634 Righteous from Ukraine. See http://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html. For more on the history of Soviet non-Jews who rescued Jews, see Arad, *Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 430-9.

[92] According to Yad Vashem's records, the Ukrainian woman who rescued Liubov' and Raya was Yarina/Irina Sokur (b. 1911) from Kozachany (Mokraia Kaligorka District, Ukraine). Yarina is listed along with a man named Kondrat Sokur (b. 1910), likely her husband. See http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=4038499; http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=4035762

[93] "association in Kiev": likely referring to the Ukrainian fund "Memory of the Victims of Fascism in Ukraine," part of the Jewish Council of Ukraine. The organization is primarily concerned with the needs of Jewish survivors, but it also participates in ceremonies recognizing Righteous among the Nations that are organized by the Israeli Embassy in Kiev. However, the fund occasionally recognizes rescuers with its own award, "Righteous of Ukraine." Another Fortunoff Video Archive interviewee, Klara V. (HVT-3303) served as secretary of the fund.

relatives in the Odessa Province and went to live with them. I stayed in Zvenigorodka, and in September I went to work in a school again.

>> I see.

>> That's it. That's my whole…

Segment 23

>> What was Zvenigorodka like after your return? You said that before the war there were a lot of Jews…

>> Yes. But after our return, it was like a wasteland to us. I came back in tears. I knew that I had left, that I had lived here, and I had had parents. But now there was no one.

[00:20:07]

Others came back as well. It's rare that anyone found a surviving relative.[94] There were maybe 15, 20 of us who returned to Zvenigorodka. I can't even remember. If I were to count on my fingers, I would say… well, it's a long story. Everyone came back alone; everyone was an orphan. It was rare that someone had a mother still alive. So we started to make a new life for ourselves. At first, five of us girls lived together in one room.

[00:20:35]

Then in the fall I went to work in a school. I was sent to a village to work. The other girls also went to work. Everyone did the best they could, whatever fate determined. This one married happily; this one unhappily. I, for one, married unhappily. Despite everything, again, I had to… I had a very bad fate.

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[94] "It's rare that anyone found a surviving relative": The Holocaust decimated the Jewish population of Ukraine, and it took years for survivors from the same family or town to discover each other's whereabouts. Before Operation Barbarossa, the Jewish population of Ukraine (today's borders) equaled 2.7 million. 1.6 million were murdered during the German and Romanian occupations. A mere 100,000 survived under occupation; the others survived either in evacuation or in the Red Army. Alexander Kruglov, "Jewish Losses in Ukraine, 1941-1944," in *The Shoah in Ukraine*, 273.

[00:20:58]

I had a Russian husband; he drank, cheated. So, you see, I had very little happiness in life. I raised my daughter and in 1976, I couldn't take [my husband's] criticism anymore and divorced him. I live together with my daughter and grandson. Her life also didn't work out so well; she's also alone. That's how it goes.

>> That's life.

>> Indeed. She works as a court secretary. We get along well.

[00:21:24]

That's all. What else can I tell you?

>> Thank you, yes.

>> Tell me, maybe there's something else, maybe I left something out.

>> I have more questions. I saw in your memoirs—very interesting memoirs—I saw….

>> I was younger then, I remembered more then.

>> Here you have several very interes… a variety of poems or songs. What are they about?

>> I can….

[00:21:47]

>> Please tell me about this creative work during the war years.

>> Which one do you have there? How does it start?

>> “A brave ten…”

>> Okay, got it.

>> Who wrote these poems?

>> I’ll tell you.

>> Please do.

Segment 24

>> It was our day off [in the camp]. As I mentioned, we would go to the nearby village to beg for food.

[00:22:09]

It was a day off, a Sunday, so we didn’t go to work. Everyone sat on their beds, and the politsai were taking a headcount, a roll call, to see if everyone was there. We waited and waited and started getting hungry. We’d drunk up our watery porridge and were hungry. We had to get to the village, but as luck would have it, that politsai was doing a head-count. If only he would finish, we could go.

[00:22:31]

A few couldn’t take it anymore. [Notices something off camera] Oy, poor thing, they’re taking a….

>> (Cameraman) You’re on camera.

>> [returns focus] So we decided to chance it. I was headed not far, to the village. I had gotten some beans before, and I had taken them to a woman on Saturday so she could cook them, and on Sunday, I was going to get them.

[00:22:57]

Others went to the village as well. The politsai counting us was Stepan… we had six politsai: Stepan Sikolo, Stepan Ivashchenko, Domashchenko, Petro Makushenko, Drobot… goodness, who was the sixth?

>> Vertepa.

>> And Vertepa was the sixth. So, that Stepan Sikolo, he was like our overseer. He was blond, and he went around in a dark blue jacket, a dark blue hat. If we wanted to make a comment about a politsai, we obviously couldn't refer to them by name. So we came up with nicknames for all of them.

[00:23:38]

We called Stepan "Blue," and everyone knew who we were referring to. Everyone who had run to the village started to come back, and he stood at the gates, "Where were you?" Everyone started to make their apologies, "We won't do it again," etc., etc. He didn't do a thing, he didn't punish anyone. We were caught off guard. The next morning, Monday, when we were being counted out for work, he said, "The ten of you, step forward!"

[00:24:06]

They stepped forward, and I stood in place. I thought, "I wasn't even in the village." "You too. Step forward!" I replied, "But I didn't go anywhere." "Step forward anyways." So they took us out. The rest went to work in the forest. Everyone was brokenhearted because they didn't know what our fate would be. They took us to Lysianka. And in Lysianka there was our director and the foreman.

[00:24:26]

All of them lived in Lysianka. They took us there. We were convinced they were taking us to the Gendarmerie. He [Stepan] would say that we tried to escape, and that would be it; they would shoot us

and shoot the entire camp. Then we looked—he wasn't taking us to the Gendarmerie. He was taking us to the highway department. There was also a young, mean German there, Hans.

[00:24:50]

He [Hans] told him [Stepan]: "What did I tell you? Not to bring them to me, but to give them each 20 lashes with a ramrod. That was that. On Monday, those who had gone to work came back in the evening. And on Tuesday, we ate breakfast and then, one by one, in the kitchen, we each got 25 lashes with a ramrod. And we crawled out of that kitchen on all fours.

[00:25:14]

And after that beating, we went back to work. That's what that song…

Segment 25

>> Who beat you?

>> That Stepan and Domashchenko beat us. Domashchenko beat us and Stepan sat and counted with precision, so no one would get less….

>> And all ten of you got it.

>> All ten received the same treatment. I can recite the song for you. [What you have written there] isn't all of it.

>> By all means.

>>

Stepan "the Blond," a guard so strict.

Day in, day out, with his rifle he sits.

Dutifully doing his duties,

Law and Order are his domain.

But this gang of ours is very naughty:

They don't want to listen to their Blond.

He only has to turn his back,

Off to town (to beg for food) they run like rabbits.

[00:26:05]

So once, on their day off, this brave Ten

Went running to the village.

When the Blond learned of it at the inspection

He decided to teach them a little lesson.

When they returned, the Blond was waiting:

"Where have you been, who gave you permission?"

"We beg: forgive us, it won't happen again."

"I shall forgive," he said, but thought: "Just you wait."

The next day he got his Ten together,

And brought them to the German to be judged.

[00:26:36]

"We are lost, doomed, never to return!

For a piece of bread we'll meet our end."

But, alas, every one of them returned,

And a delightful treat awaited them.

The Blond prepared a tasty breakfast
For each of his Ten — 25 hard lashes.

The ramrod whipped, and the moans wheezed.

And our gang went down in tears and terror.

To the side the Blond was sitting, smiling, satisfied,

Having taught these naughty Ten such a tidy lesson.[95]

>> You have a good memory, Liubov' Naumovna.

>> Once upon a time. Now, not so much.

>> Who wrote these rhymes?

>> Everyone, all together. This one would give a word, that one would give two. This one a line, and the next would add another. That's how it came together for us.

>> I see, I see. Liubov' Naumovna, I see you have more poems.

[00:27:27]

>> I do.

>> Long ones. What is this one about?

---

[95] Translation by Daniel Kahn and Eva Lapsker.

>> Read me the title.

>> “The Clouds over Budyshche Turn….”

>> That was when they transferred us to… the camp in Budyshche. That’s where we wrote that song. About our food….

>> You sang, too?

>> We did. I know all of the melodies.

[00:27:47]

But you… you probably can’t write down the notes.

>> No, we won’t write down the notes.

>> But how will you record the melody?

>> Can you sing it?

>> I should sing?

>> If you remember it, of course.

>> It's to the tune of "Clouds Have Risen over the City."[96]

>> (continues) "…the air smells of thunder." Go ahead.

>> (sings)

The clouds over Budyshche turn to steel

In the camp it stinks of weak broth.

[00:28:08]

People fight over bones.

Chaika is running around with a fire poker. (That was one of the cooks, a mean lady)

"Stop all the noise, people!

Go stand in line for the soup."

And then go get some rest

On the hay in the unheated club house.

And then go get some rest

On the hay in the unheated club house.

The slop here isn't so bad —

This thin broth of millet and water.

It could take you an hour
To find one pellet of millet in there

[00:28:52]

But friends, don't despair,

They'll bring in a blind nag,

---

[96] "Tuchi nad gorodom vstali": A popular song from the 1938 Soviet film, *Man with a Gun*. Mark Naumovich Bernes, a Jewish actor from Nezhin (Chernigov Province, Ukraine) starred in the film and came to be known for his vocal performances in a series of famous mid-century films.

And you can forget about any bread.

They'll feed us a crumb once a week.

And you can forget about any bread.

They'll feed us a crumb once a week.

The nights fly by so quickly.
It's morning and time for work.

All day long we waste away,

Freezing in the bitter frost.

It's hard to go to work—

The German comes out to meet us.

[00:29:35]

He gives us our tasks — better be strong —

He'll see to its completion.

He gives us our tasks — better be strong —

He'll see to its completion.

Like an arrow we fly home,

One thought on everyone's mind:
To reach camp, toss the shovels
And quickly run off to the village.

It's hard to run to the village, but returning is harder.
God forbid Stepan should catch you at the door,

And give you red stripes.

[00:30:17]

God forbid Stepan should catch you at the door,

And give you red stripes.

But we aren't afraid of the lashing,

And the ramrod doesn't hurt at all.

We're ready to endure it all,
Only to make it to another day.

It's hard to make it to another day,

Unheard-of torments to endure.

But in such damp dirt
Young girls would rather not lay.

[00:30:53]

But in such damp dirt
Young girls would rather not lay.

But hope is what ever sustains us,

Hope keeps us ever alive.

They are slashing the wings of the eagle —
Then we will ascend the path of joy.[97] (We meant the German emblem, the eagle).[98]

>> Great.

>> That's it.

>> It's beautiful.

>> We also have a German song; we composed it in German.

---

[97] Translation by Daniel Kahn and Eva Lapsker.

[98] "the eagle": The eagle has been an important symbol in the Germanic lands since the time of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1935, Hitler adopted the eagle with the swastika as the national emblem of the Third Reich. For Liubov' Naumovna and her fellow prisoners, the eagle was an emblem of fascism.

[00:31:25]

>> Who composed it?

>> Again, all of us. It was a joint effort.

>> A real joint effort.

>> Mhm.

>> What is this German song about?

>> It was when we went through Smel'chintsy. Who here knows German?

>> Together we will probably be able to translate it.

>> Who knows Yiddish? It's similar to German.

>> We know it as well.

>> You know it too?

>> Yes.

[00:31:40]

>> (sings)

In the little village “Smilchyntsi”

In the camp the Jews are living miserably

Hear the women crying

Crying without end

Where is our homeland?

When will we return?

In the stall we live like pigs

Hungry as dogs are we

A child without a mother

A mother without child

Where is our homeland?

When will we return?

Jews, o Jews, o how we suffer

Nothing like it was ever seen

The tears we’ve wept

Could be rivers

The blood we’ve spilled

Could be an ocean

The tears we’ve wept

Could be rivers

The blood we’ve spilled

Could be an ocean.[99]

---

[99] Translation by Daniel Kahn and Eva Lapsker.

That's it.

Segment 26

>> Yes, and yet it could just as easily have been an ocean of tears and of blood…

>> There could have been a river of tears and an ocean of blood.

>> Life in the camp went on, and…

[00:33:10]

>> It did.

>> … you managed to survive.

>> We managed to survive.

>> How many others [survivors] were there?

>> Here is one other woman who survived [points to her friend off camera]. [Asks her friend] Liza isn't coming she says?

>> [friend replies] She went to the community center. She plans to come back.

>> Ok, ok.

>> [woman from interview team] Liubov' Naumovna, don't get distracted.

>> Yes, ma'am.

>> And how many are still alive today?

[00:33:31]

>> Today?

>> Of those who were in the ghetto and in the camp.

>> Today? Let's see, there are four of us in Zvenigorodka. Three in Kiev,[100] assuming Musia didn't move to Israel. Three, so that's [a total of] seven. In Kharkov,[101] there's one woman, so that makes eight. In Dnepropetrovsk[102] there's another woman, so that's nine. One woman in Astrakhan,[103] that's ten. In Gorky,[104] there are two women, that makes twelve.

[00:34:02]

Should I also count those who have emigrated to Israel?

>> Count them.

---

[100] "Kiev": Rus: Kiev; Ukr: Kyiv. Capital of Ukraine, located in north-central Ukraine on the Dnieper River.

[101] "Kharkov": Rus: Kharkov; Ukr: Kharkiv. A city in northeastern Ukraine.

[102] "Dnepropetrovsk": In Ukrainian, Dnipro. A city approximately 400 km southeast of Kiev.

[103] "Astrakhan": a city in southwestern Russia, near the northern coast of the Caspian Sea and close to the border with Kazakhstan.

[104] "Gorky": Likely a reference to Nizhny Novgorod, Russia – a city approximately 400 km east of Moscow. During the Soviet period, the city was called Gorky, named in honor of the famous Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, who was born in the city.

>> In Israel: Lida's one. Mania is two. Rakhilia is three. Fania is four. Five people in Israel. Two women, no, two… two women in America. So, in total, about twenty people are still alive.

>> I see. Liubov' Naumovna, when did you first start to tell people about your wartime experiences?

[00:34:43]

[end of tape 2]

TAPE 3

Segment 27

[00:00:00]

Before, you know, we… I was even listed as a Ukrainian in my passport.[105] They looked at us like lepers. You know how it was. So, most [of my story] I had to keep quiet.[106] Now, under Kravchuk,[107] things have gotten easier. I wrote my memoir a long time ago, but I wrote it for myself. I didn't show it to anyone, and I didn't tell anyone about it.

[00:00:22]

---

[105] "listed as a Ukrainian in my passport": In 1932, to limit mass migration from the countryside into the cities, Stalin introduced internal passports in the Soviet Union. In addition to basic personal information such as name and date of birth, the fifth line of these passports indicated the holder's ethnicity ("nationality"). Within their titular republics – e.g. Kazakhs in Kazakhstan – individuals enjoyed certain "affirmative action" privileges, including better access to education and jobs. See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). However, for minority groups living outside of their titular republic, as well as "extraterritorial minorities" like Jews, Tatars, and Chechens who did not have a designated national territory, this quota system severely limited access to educational and professional opportunities. See Binyamin Pinkus, "The Extra-Territorial National Minorities in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939: Jews, German and Poles," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry: Jews and Other Ethnic Groups in a Multi-Ethnic World*, eds. J. Frankel, P. Medding, E. Mendelsohn, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, volume 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 72-97. Because of the disadvantages associated with certain ethnic designations, many Soviet citizens found creative ways to change their passports to reflect a more desirable ethnic affiliation. In Liubov's case, a passport officer overheard her speaking Ukrainian and assumed she was ethnically Ukrainian (Liuba Krasilovskaia, Interview 34375, *Visual History Archive,* USC Shoah Foundation).

[106] "looked at us like lepers… I had to keep quiet": As Shternshis explains, "Those who survived the war in German- or Romanian-occupied territories were automatically considered suspicious…. Many survivors of Soviet-based camps and ghettos lied in their documents, saying they had been evacuated, in order to avoid troubles with the law. Often, their children did not know the truth about their wartime past. As unofficial restrictions on Jewish occupations and life began in the late 1940s, many Jews tried to hide their origins by rewriting the 'nationality' indicator in their passport – they did everything possible to make sure that they and their children would not live with the stigma of being Jewish." Shternshis, *Sonia and Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.

[107] Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk (b. 1934) was the first president of independent Ukraine after it broke away from the Soviet Union in August 1991. Kravchuk served from December 1991 to July 1994.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, here in Zvenigorodka, were there military field court trials or trials of people who participated in mass shootings?[108]

>> There were three military trials. The military tribunal came and convicted only one politsai—the one who shot my mother. They came here, to the NKVD[109] building. That's where they tried him.

>> You served as a witness.

>> I served as a witness. They arranged for me to testify with him in the room.

[00:00:49]

I nearly beat him up at that hearing.

>> I see.

---

[108] "trials": Immediately after the war and continuing into the 1980s, the Soviet government actively prosecuted its citizens who had collaborated with the Nazis. The focus of these trials was on rooting out anti-Soviet elements and pacifying nationalist groups that had allied themselves with the Germans. For the Soviet prosecutors, there was no specific interest in convicting those who had collaborated in genocide against Jews. See Tanja Penter, "Local Collaborators on Trial: Soviet War Crimes Trials under Stalin (1943-1953)," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 49. No. 2/3 (Apr-Sep 2008): 341-64. Regarding the prosecution of German war criminals, see Andreas Hilger, N. Petrov, Günther Wagenlehner, eds., *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, Vol. 1: Die Verurteilung deutscher Kriegsgefangener 1941-1953; Vol. 2: Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945- 1955. For information on Soviet trials of German perpetrators, see Alexander Victor Prusin, "'Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!': The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials, December 1945-February 1946," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 1-30.

[109] "NKVD": The Soviet secret police between 1934 and 1946. It was preceded by the "Cheka" and succeeded by the MGB (1946-1954) and, later, the KGB (1954-1991). After the Second World War, the NKVD played a vital role in punishing collaborators and repressing nationalist movements in the formerly occupied territories.

>> The rest of our politsai were summoned to Uman',[110] and they sat in prison in Uman'. They summoned us for questioning and then summed us to the trial. The military tribunal didn't come here again. It was here just that once. The rest were tried in Uman'.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, I asked how many [of you] are still alive in order to say, first of all, thank you, [and] to say that we wish you and all of them health and long life.

[00:01:19]

>> Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much for taking an interest in us.

>> And we would also like to thank your friends who are hosting us here. Nina and…

>> Do you have any other questions, maybe?

>> No. Thank you.

>> Nothing else? Thank you.

>> Hold still… hold still.

[00:01:39 - 00:05:37]

Segment 28

[00:05:37]

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[110] "Uman'": A city in central Ukraine, approximately 80 km southwest of Zvenigorodka.

[cut to footage from the village of Nemorozh—the first labor camp where Liubov' was imprisoned]

>> Go ahead.

>> Liubov' Naumovna, we are standing at the site where your doleful group was brought on May 5, 1942. What stood here at that time?

>> There was a long, old, shabby stable here. There was a doorway where the wagon went in, on one end, and from the other end. And on both sides [of the stable], we lay on the ground, from one end to the other.

[00:06:10]

We made our beds out of hay and lay on the ground.

>> What was the stable made of?

>> It was made of clay, wattle-and-daub… clay. It was old and shorter than this [newer] one. It looked lik… it looked like the stables that are over there in the farm yard. But it was situated just like this [newer] stable. And just across [from it] was a second stable.

[00:06:33]

>> Got it.

>> Yes. It was whitewashed at least a little, but the other was red, unpainted. One time… we had just arrived here to work, and we didn't know yet whether we had the privilege of getting sick or not. Four people fell ill: three women… two women, one girl, and a boy. He had blood running from his nose, and the other had a sore throat.

[00:06:59]

So they stayed [in the barn]; they didn't go to work. That evening, when we returned from work, the Gendarmerie turned up unexpectedly and had us line up outside, along the stable. They went inside. [The sick people] were lying in their beds. They pulled them up and shot them behind the other stable.[111] There was some kind of pit there. Not specifically for shooting. There was just some pit dug there.

Segment 29

[00:07:26]

They stood at that pit. Everything here was fenced off. The one girl managed to run away. At the stile—where you could go through [the fence]—stood Silich, the politsai.

>> Your local politsai?

>> Our local politsai. She ran there to escape somewhere. He grabbed her by the hair and brought her back. They shot her.

[00:07:49]

>> Who shot her?

>> The ones who were doing the shooting: Germans and politsai. We couldn't see [what was going on]. We stood here, and they were shooting on the other side of the other stable. We couldn't see. But later, I was at the trial of that Silich. He was convicted. I reminded him about this incident. He said, "I didn't shoot her."

[00:08:09]

---

[111] "shot them behind the other stable": In Reichskommissariat Ukraine, food shortages prompted "the German administration to reduce food rations for non-Germans, especially Jews. Those incapable of work were deemed 'superfluous mouths' and were marked for annihilation" (*USHMM ECG*, 1586).

I said, “Don’t deny responsibility.” “I don’t.” I said, “Isn’t it the exact same? She could have escaped, run somewhere in the barnyard, hid somewhere in the sunflower or corn field, and then when they left, she could have returned to the camp.”

[00:08:28]

He said, “It’s true.”

Plus, we… we young folks had been brought here, but many had parents who were left in the city, in the ghetto. I was the only one who didn’t have any relatives there. That girl’s mother would come to the camp to bring her food to eat. And then the girl was dead. We couldn’t tell her [the mother]. We said, “[Ask] the politsai.” He said, “I can’t tell you anything.”

[00:08:49]

We said the girl had fallen ill, and that it was forbidden to enter the camp. So the mother came here with food for three days, until a politsai told her [what had happened]. The mother lost her mind.

>> Oy, oy, oy.

>> The girl, she was engaged. The mother lost her mind and, of course, they shot the mother. Simple as that.

Segment 30

>> Mhm. And from here they took you to work?

[00:09:10]

>> [Liubov’ points to the road] They took us to work from here, on this road that we drove here on, all the way to the forest. We worked in the forest as well. Later, once there were two camps—our camp and the Smel’chintsy camp—this camp and the Smel’chintsy camp, sometimes we would meet [with the other camp’s prisoners], sometimes they gave us other assignments. So the entire road from Zvenigorodka to Lysianka was taken up by us, Jews. We constantly… and in Lysianka…

[00:09:40]

>> You built this road, so to speak?

>> Yes, yes. In Lysianka we worked in a stone quarry, and in a sand quarry. Once in the stone quarry we broke off rock to pave the road. It wasn't made of asphalt, it was made of stone. One girl (she now lives outside of Gorky)… a politsai or a German didn't like how she was working. So he grabbed her from on top of the cliff and threw her [into the pit].

[00:10:09]

Somehow she survived. She's alive, but she's very sickly. Now she's blind. She lives near Gorky. There you have it.

>> Were there any water wells or private farm plots here?

>> We didn't know. We didn't concern ourselves with such things.

>> The kitchen, where they fed you…

>> There was a kitchen. There in the barnyard. Here's where the stable was, and there, more or less near the stable, that's where the kitchen stood.

[00:10:31]

They prepared things for us [there]. There was a sort of, you know, roof. It wasn't designed to be a kitchen, it was just made into one. The walls were made out of clay, just enough to cover the cauldron.

>> Got it.

>> Of course there was [a kitchen].

>> Show me what else was here at this site.

>> Nothing else that important was here.

>> What… what kind of fence was there here?

[00:10:51]

What kind of fencing?

>> Wooden, like this fence [now].

>> Wooden?

>> Yes. Exactly the same, but the entire area was fenced off. That's how it was… there was a gate and a stile, to go out. That politsai [Silich] stood guard at the stile.

>> And later, in the course of time, they took people from here—from this camp—to be shot.

[00:11:11]

>> No. From this camp, they shot… The entire Nemorozh camp was shot on November 2, 1942.[112]

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[112] The Nemorozh victims were shot in the Gubskii Forest. See "Commemoration of Jewish Victims," Yad Vashem Untold Stories, https://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/commemoration.asp?cid=985.

>> I see.

>> The grave is in the forest where you will be driving.

>> Yes.

>> And from our camp, from the Smel'chintsy [camp], they took 50 people there to fill up the grave pit.

>> I see. So this camp [Nemorozh] ceased to exist. Everyone was shot.

[00:11:33]

>> Everyone was shot. Destroyed. Some five or so people escaped, no more.

>> I see.

>> Three of them came to our camp afterwards. One man also, Etinzon. But he was caught later. He told us how he was walking at night and didn't have any strength left when he saw a light from a peasant hut. He went there and asked for a piece of bread.

[00:11:57]

[The woman told him,] "Eat, eat, I'll give you plenty!" She put out so much food that he was surprised. [She said,] "I have to go out for just a minute. You eat. I'm going to visit my neighbor for just a minute!" So she went to get a politsai. But he had a feeling. He told us that she ran out suddenly and he left. She had a garden. He went out [into the garden]. He was thin as can be.

[00:12:16]

He went out and hid behind a tree. The light in the hut was still shining. And it lit up the garden. He could see her bringing the politsai. He crossed the garden and ran off. There you have it. That's why we didn't run away [from the camp], because there was nowhere [safe] to run.

Segment 31

>> Liubov' Naumovna, on the way here you were telling us about the terrible mass shooting that…

>> Yes, it was a dreadful shooting.

[00:12:37]

They gathered all of us young people up, in the ghetto… that's what I was describing…

>> [You mean] in the camp….

>> And in the camp too. The rest of the people were still in the ghetto.

>> In the Zvenigorodka ghetto.

>> They were still in the Zvenigorodka ghetto. They survived until July 17, 1942.[113] But they were taken from their homes on July 14. The Germans and politsai with dogs surrounded the ghetto at daybreak.

[00:13:01]

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[113] According to the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* (p. 1612), "On June 18, 1942, the Germans liquidated the [Zvenigorodka] ghetto. Before the liquidations, a group of Jewish craftsmen, their families, and other able-bodied individuals were selected out. The remaining 1,375 people were shot in the nearby meadow. The shooting was organized by a detachment of the Security Police and SD subordinated to the Commander of the Security Police (KdS) in Kiev, assisted by the Ukrainian police and German Gendarmerie. The Jewish craftsmen survived in the town until August 1943, when they were also shot."

There were 300 politsai in Zvenigorodka. In tiny little Zvenigorodka.

>> Yes.

>> So they rounded everyone up, dragged people from their beds at 4, 4:30 in the morning. They herded everyone… we drove past that facility—where we turned to cross the bridge. At the time, it was a prison. They herded everyone there.

[00:13:23]

It was summer, it was hot. The children were crying. This one was thirsty, that one was hungry. What could the children do? What could their parents give them? [The Germans and politsai] started asking, "Who has gold? We will free you." Of course, nobody raised their hand. That's how it began. Three days straight they took them to the forest, on the way to the school, toward [the city of] Cherkasy.

>> By foot?

[00:13:44]

>> On foot. So they wouldn't see that they were passing a city, they took them through the fields.[114]

>> I see.

>> They took them to the pit. The pit was enormous. They took them to the pit but then decided it wasn't big enough. So they took them back. The next time either the head of the Gendarmerie or the Gestapo wasn't there, so again they were taken back. They shuttled them back and forth until the 17th.

[00:14:08]

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[114] Likely a strategy to discourage escape.

On the 17th they shot them. There were people who were carrying infants, little ones. There was one politsai, Tyshchenko, he tore the children out of their hands by their legs and hit their heads against a truck, fractured their skulls, filled the entire truck, then climbed in and trampled them with his feet. To make room for more.

[00:14:32]

Then they dug a second pit. There's a separate grave there for the children. We have three monuments there. They took them [the children] to the pit and using pitchforks… like shoveling lambs. They flung the children into the pit with pitchforks and covered over the grave. No one even knows how many children are buried in that pit.

>> And the others?

[00:14:54]

How were they shot?

>> The rest… so there was one enormous grave where everyone [else] was shot. And when the ghetto was liquidated, they left behind 80 people, including their families, to provide various services. These included tailors, cobblers, glaziers, tin-smiths, to work for them. And when our camp [Nemorozh] was executed on August 23, 1943, those 80 were also [shot].

[00:15:22]

Our camp was shot in this [Gubskii] forest. Here.

>> Yes.

>> But many escaped. Whoever was caught on the road, whoever was captured, was also taken to the forest where that terrible grave is. Where the groves are. To a separate grave. So from our camp, let's see, maybe 50 survived. Out of 150.

[00:15:45]

So there are 100 there [from the camp]. And then 80 [from the ghetto]. So around 200 people. So one of the graves has around 5000 people, and the other has around 200, and then there's the children's grave, which we don't know how many it holds.

>> Got it.

>> There are three graves there. The fourth grave there holds Ukrainians, partisans, communists. There's even a list compiled of who lies in that grave.

[00:16:08]

And in this [Gubskii] forest, there's one grave. That's where the [first] Nemorozh camp was shot on November 2. Plus 50 people from our Smel'chintsy [camp].

>> There's an obelisk or monument there thanks to your efforts?

>> Where?

>> Where the large shooting took place.

>> There are several monuments there.[115]

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[115] In total, there are four monuments commemorating the Jews of Zvenigorodka, Ol'shana, and other neighboring towns. Liubov' first describes the three in the Dubrava Tract, where the mass liquidation of Jews from the Zvenigorodka ghetto took place. According to Yad Vashem's Untold Stories Project, there are three monuments in the Dubrava Tract. "One of these monuments is a fenced-in marble tombstone bearing a Russian inscription that reads: 'Here are buried about 2,000 Soviet civilians who were shot by the German-Fascist murderers in July 1942. [Erected by their] relatives and fellow townspeople.' Another monument, a small, fenced-off obelisk, commemorates the Jewish children murdered during the massacre of Olshana and Zvenigorodka Jews in the summer of 1942. The third

>> What do they say?

>> "Here lie buried…" And when I erected those monuments, I put them up myself…

[00:16:33]

>> I see.

>> I corresponded with people, many relatives [of those who died], they would give each other my address and send me money.[116] I used this money to order three monuments, [and to pay] for the labor; I went to Tal'noe.[117] They brought them there from Korostyshev[118] where there's very good polished granite.

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monument erected on the Dubrava Tract commemorates the Holocaust victims from Olshana, Zvenigorodka, and other places in the area who were murdered in the summer of 1943. This fenced-off marble stone bears a Russian inscription that says: 'Here are buried about 200 Soviet civilians shot by the German-Fascist murderers in August 1943. [Erected by] their relatives and fellow townspeople."

A fourth monument was erected in the Gubskii forest in memory of Jewish inmates of the Nemorozh and Smel'chintsy camps who were murdered in late 1942. According to Yad Vashem Untold Stories, "the Russian inscription on this marble monument reads: 'Here are buried about 200 Soviet civilians who were shot to death on November 2, 1942 by the German-Fascist murderers and [local] policemen who were traitors to our motherland. [Erected by] surviving inmates of concentration camps and relatives of those who were murdered.'" See Yad Vashem, Untold Stories, Olshana, Commemoration of Jewish Victims, http://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/commemoration.asp?cid=985.

[116] Beginning immediately after liberation, survivors across the Soviet Union used similar fundraising strategies to construct hundreds of monuments at the mass graves where their loved ones had been murdered. Similar efforts continued through the end of the Soviet period and even into the present. See Altshuler, *Religion and Jewish Identity*, 219-23.

[117] "Tal'noe": Rus: Tal'noe, Ukr: Tal'ne. A town approximately 30 km southwest from Zvenigorodka. In the nineteenth century, Tal'noe was home to the Hasidic court of the Tolner Rebbe, R. Dovid Twersky of Tal'noe (1808-1876). See Paul I. Radensky, "The Rise and Decline of a Hasidic Court: The Case of Rabbi Duvid Twersky of Tal'noye," in *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*, ed. Glenn Dynner (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 131-68.

[118] "Korostyshev": Rus: Korostyshev, Ukr: Korostyshiv. A city in the Zhytomyr Province of Ukraine, about 200 km northwest of Tal'noe. The Zhytomyr Province is known for its granite.

>> Mhm.

>> They brought it here to Tal'noe. And there some guys engraved [the monuments] for me. I paid them, and they transported and erected them for me.

[00:16:59]

>> I see.

>> I needed to engrave the monuments, but I didn't have the right to do it myself without permission.

>> Yes.

>> So I went to the city council and told them how many people are buried there. They didn't give me permission to write the inscription. It was Pavlenok, the head of the city council. He said, "We don't have those statistics.

[00:17:18]

We show that in total, with the Ukrainians, there were 2000 people shot there." I told him, "That's impossible. That's not true. It can't be." So I was forced to write on the large monument "More than 2000 people." "More" is an elastic term.

>> So what is the inscription there?

>> So… "Here lie buried more than 2000 people, Soviet citizens,[119] who were shot on July 17, 1942 by the fascists and politsai."[120]

[00:17:50]

>> I see.

>> That's what happened.

>> At the grave where your camp [Smel'chintsy] was shot? At their shooting site?

>> Here also, the same thing is written, "From relatives…," the monument reads, "From relatives and survivors of the former prisoners." That's what we wrote here.

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[119] "Soviet citizens": From the earliest months of the war, the Soviet state was aware of the mass murder of its Jewish citizens. However, state wartime propaganda emphasized the struggle of the Soviet people against fascism. In part, this policy was intended to foster unity among the Soviet Union's ethnically diverse population and avoid inflaming nationalistic sentiments (Arad, *Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 534-44). After the war, state-approved ceremonies and monuments commemorating the Great Patriotic War avoided referencing the ethnic (much less religious) identities of civilian victims. Instead, euphemistic, generic phrases such as "Soviet citizens" and "peaceful residents" became ubiquitous. For more on the tensions between official, Soviet commemoration of the war and Soviet Jewish memory, see Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory*. Despite the overarching silence regarding the mass murder of Soviet Jews, more recent scholarship has revealed that, within certain ideological limitations, the murder of Jews did feature in Soviet cultural life, particularly in postwar films. See Olga Gershenson, *The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013); Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938-1946* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

[120] "They didn't give me permission to write the inscription": In the process of constructing monuments, survivors encountered varying degrees of opposition, support, and indifference from local Soviet officials. While Liubov' sought permission from the local authorities and complied with their demands regarding the inscription text, survivors in many other towns simply avoided contact with the local authorities and erected monuments that directly referenced the Jewish identity of the victims or included Stars of David and Yiddish/Hebrew inscriptions. Of course, this bold approach carried the risk that the local authorities would demolish the monuments as unauthorized.

>> But nowhere does it say that…

>> That they were Jews? We didn't write that anywhere because the monuments would have been knocked down long ago.

[00:18:14]

If we had written that.

>> I see, I see.

>> Once, a rabbi came to visit us, he said that we should add a Star of David [to the monuments]. We talked it over and decided not to. We have to remember where we live.

>> Understood.

>> There you have it.

>> No matter how good, no matter how easy, it's our…

[00:18:34]

All the same, there are still problems.

>> True. There are problems everywhere.

>> For the same reason, I'm listed as a Ukrainian in my passport, and I didn't change it, it's still the same. In my diplomas, everywhere, I'm Ukrainian. But in my heart, I'm a Jew.

>> Thank you.