

[L.1]

Stenogram of the recording of the recollections of Vera Fedorovna Bogdanova regarding events in Ukraine in the period of the German occupation

January 20, 1946

T.S. Zolotareva conducted the conversation [signature]

Vera Fedorovna Bogdanova, born in 1911.

Before the war I lived in Kuybyshev.<sup>1</sup> I am a doctor. In the first days of the war, I was mobilized and ended up in the signal battalion of the 31st Army<sup>2</sup> and on July 7, we left for the front. In September we landed in an encirclement in the Poltava Region, and on September 23, in the town of Orzhitsa, I was taken as a prisoner of war. I ended up in a prisoner of war camp in Kremenchug.<sup>3</sup> They drove us to Kremenchug on foot. They did not feed us on the way, and when the population would try to give something, they would drive them away as well as beat them. But the women would send their children forward and some were able to throw a piece of bread, potato, or groats to us, since they did not give us anything. In the last days of October I landed in a camp in Kremenchug. It was located on the outskirts of the city. For the quartering of the prisoners of war there was a special barn, former workshops, or a pigsty. Some German officer showed up at the camp and he did not like one pharmacist. He took him out before the formation, screamed and berated him, and began to beat his body and face with a rubber crop. Crimson streaks were left on the face after each hit. He was beaten until he fell and carried away, and I did not see him again.

There were 48 women in the camp. The camp was divided into blocks and was enclosed on the outside by barbed wire, inside it was divided into blocks. It was so cramped, that one could not sit. Many were under the open sky, and in October there were already frosts. It was very difficult to get water. Sometimes it was impossible to get even a drop of water for 2-3 days at a time. The food was bad, if it can at all be called food. A grain elevator was burned down in Kremenchug and they fed us bitter bread made from the rotten and burned grain. Then, they would give us some kind of

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1 Kuybyshev (Куйбышев) was the name of Samara (Самара) from 1935 to 1991. It is a large city along the Volga river. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samara>

2 This would seem to refer to the 31st Army, but the 31st Army was not formed until July 15th, 1941 and does not appear to have operated on the territory of Ukraine. This contradicts the corresponding information given in the interview.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/31st\\_Army\\_\(Soviet\\_Union\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/31st_Army_(Soviet_Union))

3 Kremenchug/Kremenchuk is a small-medium sized city in central Ukraine, part of the Poltava Region. It is about 110 km southeast of Orzhitsia/Orzhitsa.

inedible soup from burnt oats and rye. It was very bitter to the taste, and completely unsuitable as food. They would give us each 200 grams per person per day of this burnt bread. A person cannot endure in such conditions more than 3-4 months, and people would die a hungry death. Diseases broke out. Due to the crampedness and overcrowding, lice infestation appeared. I have never seen such an amount of lice. One could literally sweep them with a broom. Many did not have crockery and many would receive food into their hats or in the laps of their greatcoats. When people received this food, the Germans would torture them. They would beat people without any grounds. They would knock the food out of their hands, and it spilled out onto the snow and the dirt. And people, hungry, would gather it up along with the dirt and eat it greedily.

The only salvation was to get work in the city. For getting work in the city, the *politsai*<sup>4</sup> took big bribes - they would take away gold watches and good things just to register you for this team. Because when people would go out beyond the boundaries of the camp, the local population always threw food to the prisoners of war. And would even leave their bags when going to work and upon return they would find food there. And nobody touched them. Even the most audacious boys never touched these bags with food. In this way, only those who went to work could remain alive. There was a group of doctors there - Yakubovskii, Gol'denberg, Gokhberg, and Tuchinskii. They took off their coats and shoes, and drove them to hard labors. They forced them to carry raw clay and when they, exhausted, could not, they forced them to carry it running. And when they fell under the weight, they beat them hard with sticks and handguns. The doctor of the camp was the German Orliand, a really young man. He would walk around with a handgun and a stick and had great influence in the camp and would meddle in all the administrative affairs. He would come at night to check whether everyone was in their place, but he did not render medical assistance to anybody. In the morning, he would make a round through all the barracks [L.3] and would look to see who was alive and who was dead, and in the morning the taking away of the corpses began. There were cases where they threw still-living people into the pit. And the person was still breathing. They would drive this group of doctors, force them to bathe in dirty water, and then they shot them all. In March they shot all the commanders. They spread a rumor that they would transfer the command staff to a different camp. That is, to separate premises. And some, under the influence of hunger, went and said that they are command staff, and they shot them all. Down to the junior lieutenant.

A typhus epidemic broke out, and when it grew to a large scale and began to threaten the Germans themselves as well, because there had been one case where a

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4 This refers to collaborator non-German auxiliary police working for the Germans.

German feldwebel<sup>5</sup> got infected and died, they set up a separate barracks. Moreover, they forced everyone to bathe in cold water, and who did not want to wash themselves, this German doctor would physically force to undress and bathe in cold water, the sick too. If somebody had better clothing, it simply disappeared. This disinfector was built and all clothing passed through disinfection. Moreover, they handed them out completely wet and a sick person had to put them on. And then they would seat the sick in a cart and take them in the frost to this isolated barracks using bad horses. And by the time the sick person got there, he would turn into a chunk of ice and of course almost no one of those who ended up in this disinfector would get better.

I myself fell ill with typhus, but I was able to avoid this disinfector and in this way I remained alive. Actually, thanks to the efforts of Bulochnik, one of the doctors, who vouched for them to send me to the city hospital, I was sent [L.4] there and they managed to place some of the sick in the city hospital and from March 6th, I was placed in the city hospital. And thanks to this I remained alive, and I stayed to work at this hospital. I work there to this day.

In general, the Germans rampaged a lot. I remember such an episode. One German was killed. For this, 100 innocent citizens on this street were taken and shot. There was mass sending of people to Germany, but after my stay at the camp, my health was so undermined that they did not take me. People did not want to go to forced labor in Germany and hid in all sorts of ways. At first, roundups began. The police dammed up all the streets. They took not only the young, but the elderly. They took people from bazaars, from the circus,<sup>6</sup> and took them to Germany. Almost all the doctors tried to help the population in the hospital, so that they would not be sent to Germany. I personally gave notes to very many, saying that they were ill with tuberculosis. We even made these x-ray images that showed that the patient had tuberculosis. The Germans really feared this illness. And I had healthy people laying in my ward. And somebody reported this to a doctor from the district health department, who was on the side of the Germans, and he began to do inspections. But by this time, I had been warned by my people about when the inspection would be, and I hid the patients in my home, in my apartment. Other doctors would do the same thing. Then people didn't go to work, so that they would not be taken from work. And that's why we would give them notes saying that they were ill, and so on. In general, we would help in every way, so that people would stay behind. There was

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5 A Feldwebel is a non-commissioned officer rank. It was also used in the Russian Empire, hence there is its own word in Russian for it, which the interviewee uses.

6 The circus in Kremenchug was built in 1933-1934. It was on what is now Teatralna Street, in the center of town. During the German occupation, it was used as a collection point for Soviet youth to be sent to Germany. It was burned down by retreating German troops in 1943 and not restored. [Кременчуцький цирк історія з 1934 по 1943 рік \(okrain.net.ua\)](http://okrain.net.ua)

not one minute of peace. Searches every night - they go from apartment to apartment, with dogs, they grab people, shoot them,

[L.5] Now I am speaking as a witness in the case of Tschammer - major general and former commandant of the 213th division across the Poltava Region <sup>7</sup> I did not see him, but always felt his activities clearly.

End of stenogram of 20/1 1946.

Present from the Commission on the History of the Patriotic war:

comrade .....

comrade Zolotareva

Home address:

Author of the recollections [Bogdanova]

Conducted the conversation [signature] [Zolotareva]

Stenographer [signature] [Raskina]

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<sup>7</sup> Generalmajor Eckart von Tschammer und Osten commanded the 213<sup>th</sup> SS Security Brigade that was stationed in the Poltava Region. At the 1946 Kiev Trial, he was accused of mass killings, torture, and the mistreatment of Soviet POWs in the Kremenchug camp. Tschammer was hanged in 1946. "Vozmezdnie dlia dvenadtsati," *Rodina*, 2021, no. 1.