

Stenogram of the written record of the recollections of Theofilia Solomonovna Gandverker regarding events in Ukraine in the period of the German occupation.

January 22, 1946.

The conversation was conducted by T. S. Zolotareva, researcher of the Commission on the History of the Great Patriotic War in Ukraine [signature]

Stenographer – E. Ya. Peisakhzon

I was born in Lvov in 1918. Non-party. Before the war I was a student at the Lvov state conservatory. I was completing the fifth year of my studies and worked as a concertmaster at the conservatory.

When the Germans came, I didn't work for two months, and then I was a domestic servant for a railroad worker. I hid that I was a Jew because Jewish women weren't allowed to work as domestic servants. I didn't have a livelihood, which is why I went, but it was very dangerous, because the people I worked for knew that I was a Jew.

When they started sending women to work too, I went to the *Wehrmacht* to do hard labor. I worked as a loader on the railroad. They did not pay us for the work, nor give us food. I worked so that I had a document saying I worked. When there was an action<sup>1</sup> against Jews, I could keep going to work because I had a document. It was harder with my mother. During actions I hid her in basements. If they had come with a dog, they would have found her. My mother sat in one house for two weeks. At night I had to bring her food. That was hard.

[1.1] The scariest action was in 1942. One couldn't sit in a basement because they were walking around with dogs. I took my mom to the sector where I worked. Outside people were not allowed to be there. She came at night. I hid her in a store, where the brushes were. There was a small space there. Crouched, she sat there for two weeks.

One Jew, who lost all his close ones, almost lost his mind, and he told someone that a person is hiding here. The *Gestapo* came to do a search. They searched but didn't find.

When the main action occurred before the establishment of the ghetto, I saw that it was impossible for us to live. We had no money, and only few possessions remained. I was told that there was a person who could take us out of Lvov to Krakow, where I would be given work. I was told that he had taken some people from Krakow to Lvov. I didn't have money, but there were still a few items. I described them to him and he said that he would take me for these items. He took

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<sup>1</sup> The term "action" is probably derived from the German *Aktion*, which is how the German authorities referred to their raids against Jews.

everything from me, went to the railway station to put these items in cargo, and in the morning my mother and I were supposed to flee from Lvov.

I didn't know that this was an agent provocateur. He came to Lvov with Jews and saved them so that they would trust him. But in reality, he was an agent provocateur. He took everything from me and we were left with that in which we were standing. Two hours after he took everything, he began beating me horribly and said, "we're going to the Gestapo."

I began to cry and plead: "You left me bare and barefoot but leave me my life." He persisted: "We're going to the [l.2] Gestapo."

Before this, there weren't air raids in Lvov. On that day, the first air raid occurred. He got scared and ran away. I left home and went to this one Polish woman. After this, I went to the ghetto with my mother. I couldn't work in the Wehrmacht, as all the women were thrown out. The ghetto wasn't closed yet. I would go to the city to Aryans<sup>2</sup> I knew to ask for bread. Me and my mother thought about committing suicide. My acquaintance said that I could come to her.

On the next day, we went to this lawyer who had been a patient of my father's (my father was a doctor). He said that when my mother gets Aryan papers, he'll take her in. At night, this one Ukrainian got Aryan papers for my mother at the police station. The birth certificate was fake. My mother went to the lawyer with these documents, and I went to my acquaintance's. We lived there 18 months.

I lived the last four months at the lawyer's where my mom was living, too, because a bomb destroyed the house of my friend, where I had been staying.

One day the *Gestapo* came to the lawyer's for a search. I ran to the attic with my mother. I did not want to cause him troubles, knowing that the *Gestapo* could come again. My mother could live there, since she was registered to live there. I went to the basement and spent two weeks there. At night my mother slept there with me. There were big rats there. After I had been there two weeks, the rats felt that I could not do anything to them. They began to approach me very closely. If I hadn't left, those rats would have gnawed me to death. [l.3] The lawyer insisted that I come to the upper floors, but I wouldn't agree. He said, "whatever happens to you will also happen to me," and so I left the basement.

I was in the ghetto for four weeks. In one little roomlet there were 10 people. Every day something happened.

Only SS workers lived in the SS house. Jews also worked in the SS, doing hard labor as loaders, and lived in this house with their families.

One day, without any reason, lots of cars arrived in the courtyard, took the families of the Jews who were working in the SS, and took them away to their death.

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<sup>2</sup> Aryans here likely refers to gentile Poles and Ukrainians.

There was a Jewish police force in the ghetto. One Jewish driver turned out to have a handgun, and this became known to the *Gestapo*. When an SS man approached him, he killed him. Almost all the members of the Jewish police were hanged for this.

In the ghetto there was an SS security force that maintained order. A pregnant Jewish woman passed by. An SS man killed her with a revolver.

How many atrocities there were at the square of death! There were “dogs,” who forced men to remove their clothes and ripped out their genitals. When a person pleaded to be finished off, they didn’t do that, and the person died in horrible torments. There was one who would shoot in the head in such a way that would rend the skull, but the person would continue to live.

Once there was such an episode: they brought a husband, wife and child and stripped them naked. The husband got an erection. A *Gestapo* man noticed this and forced him to perform [l.4] a sex act in front of everyone, promising that for this he will gift him his life. But after this they hung them anyway.

It wasn’t only the SS and *Gestapo* who exterminated Jews – all Germans were soaked in this propaganda. I was walking down the street. A Jewish man with a bandage was walking in front of me. He was walking with a little three-year-old girl. A German family was walking towards them - he was a railroad worker, walking with his wife and with a girl just like that Jewish one. The two even looked alike, both with blond hair. He himself was walking with his child but when he got to the Jewish man and his child, he took this girl and, in front of his child and his wife threw her against the pavement with such force that her brain spattered.

Not just the police, but the whole German people was saturated with fascist propaganda.

They had a branched police system: SS, SA, SD, *Gestapo*, *Krapo*,<sup>3</sup> *Schupo*, *Wasserpelizei*, *Wasserschutzpolizei*, criminal-police. Special police for the seizure of livestock, and so forth.

In the ghetto, the railroad stretched just outside the windows. I saw the trains with people who were being taken away. There were not only Jews there, but also Russians. This is how they were mobilized to Germany. They took people from the movies, from the theater, from work, from the market. They didn’t take those who had documents showing that they worked, but they took the other 99.9%.

On the fifth day after the coming of the Germans, all of the museum rarities and paintings were taken out of Lvov. Synagogues were burned. They were filled with silver and gold ornamentations, candleholders, and so forth. All of this was broken apart by hammer and shipped off.

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<sup>3</sup> Most likely a misspelling of *Kripo* – a short form for the Criminal Police, who were responsible for investigating serious crimes like murder but also enforced Nazi racial policies.

[l.5] Each Hitlerite had huge amounts of money. Lvov had 200,000 Jews. Those who died left their valuables to others, but then all of this came to them [the Germans].

Those who were sent away in echelons threw all the valuables that they had out of the wagons. Jews were taken away only bare. They poured lime into the wagons. They put naked women, men, and children into these wagons. If the wagon couldn't fit the people, they closed the door. If a hand remained out, they broke the hand off. During the journey, they didn't let people out of the wagons. People got poisoned by the lime.

Every day tens of echelons were sent off. They sent off five echelons for work and five-six echelons with Jews.

In the Stanislaw region, General Kriger<sup>4</sup> had people killed on the spot. They sent Jews from other regions through Lvov to Belzec<sup>5</sup> and exterminated them there.

Here in Lvov they established an *Arbeitsamt*.<sup>6</sup> There we got work documents – a *molde-karte*.<sup>7</sup> Veberg<sup>8</sup> worked there – the boss of the *Arbeitsamt*, Himmler's brother-in-law. I went there to receive a *molde-karte*. Many people were lined up in front of the office. Veberg came out. He beat people on the head with a leather whip, and he split in half the head of the old man who was ahead of me.

There were many thousands of such cases of atrocity and savagery every day.

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<sup>4</sup> A reference to SS Captain Hans Krüger, a notorious mass murderer of Jews in Galicia who organized, inter alia, the "Bloody Sunday" in Stanislawow – the slaughter of 10-12,000 Jews in one day in October 1941. See: [Hans Krueger and the Murder of the Jews in the Stanislawow Region \(Galicia\)](http://yadvashem.org) ([yadvashem.org](http://yadvashem.org))

<sup>5</sup> Belzec was a Nazi extermination camp, located about halfway between Lvov/Lviv and Lublin, in today's eastern Poland.

<sup>6</sup> Arbeitsamt: German, for Labor office.

<sup>7</sup> Should read: *Meldekarte*, German for: registration card, indicating location of employment.

<sup>8</sup> SS Gruppenführer Richard Wendler, who served as governor of the Krakau District in 1942 and 1943. Wendler was SS Chief Himmler's brother-in-law.