

[L. 1]

Commission on the Compilation of a Chronicle of the Great Patriotic War

Stenogram of conversation with comrade Maria Rudol'fovna Heytkova

Conversation conducted by researcher E. M. Gritsevskaya

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Riga

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Buffet worker at a village store of the Luga<sup>1</sup> union of consumer cooperatives. Estonian, born in 1918, non-party.

The Germans came to Luga on August 24. I worked as a buffet worker 12 kilometers from Luga. We wanted to evacuate and did not make it in time. We went into the forest. We were going in the direction of Novinka<sup>2</sup> and Chashcha,<sup>3</sup> and landed in an encirclement. There were very many people in the encirclement - troops as well as civilians. The Germans came and said: "Leave the forest, because the forest will be shelled," and we left to Luga from the forest on September. We were 13 families, and we went with one horse. The horse was given to us by the rural consumer association.

We arrived in Luga. I did not work for approximately a month. My sister went to the countryside. We gathered cabbage and potatoes from the fields and vegetable gardens because the peasants had already left. The Germans did not guard the fields and we took for ourselves for the winter. It was bad for us when it came to bread. One cannot live only on potatoes. I'm walking. The Germans say:

-Are you registered?

I said: - No

-Please, -they say, -go to the exchange.

I went and they directed me to this factory to work. I landed in a wool-felting factory as a worker, and I rolled, and I felted, and I packed. I was single. Only my sister was with me. Me and her evacuated together.

I came to work and they started familiarizing me with the work. There was a master worker there who knew the work. She was from near Leningrad. She made

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1 Luga is a large town currently in the Russian Federation, about 140 kilometers south of St. Petersburg.

2 Novinka: small village about 80 kilometers northeast of Luga, located even today in a heavily wooded and swampy area.

3 Chashcha: a small village about 70-80 kilometers northeast of Luga.

herself understood in the Russian language. They started to show us how to pack and roll felt boots. We mastered this very fast.

They would give us 300 grams of bread a day. Later, when we had already worked a lot, they would give us 30 grams of butter and 15 grams of granulated sugar a week. There were cards only for bread, while the other products they would bring to the factory and give out.

The director of the factory was a German. He treated the workers very strictly. It sometimes happened like this. We are working. There are hot stoves there. You roll the felt on them. In the summer the heat is horrific. You'd sit down to rest. As soon as you hear his footsteps, you always run to the stove. He would inflict penalties on many and impose monetary fines. We received 130 rubles a month pay. They paid [L. 2] in both Soviet as well as their own money, while in Riga they already paid in marks.

If a woman is pretty, they hit on her. We all lived convivially with each other. Among the Germans there was one very nasty one. We feared him very much. He turned us over to the police. It happened like this: he ordered us [one word crossed out] to make 200 pairs of felt boots. We [did not quite manage and], the boots were semi-finished when we gave them to him. He comes. We are sitting. He says:

-Why are you sitting?

We say that we are done.

He says:

-How can you be done?

and sends us to the police.

They gave different quotas every day: 100 pairs one day, 120 another day, and 150 another day. Sometimes we overworked our hours too. In Luga we worked 10 hours per day.

We had a kitchen at the factory. They would make swill - flour and water, and they would also bring dry spinach and cook it with this flour. It was like wallpaper paste.

In October they decided to move the factory. A German calls us up, gathers everyone into a bunch and says:

-You must leave to work, they are going to transfer you.

None of us wants to go, because each one has their household, their possessions. Then he says:

-You must leave. If you don't leave, we will move you out, sooner or later. Either way you won't stay here.

We rode ~~here~~ to *Riga* on a freight train. We arrived on October 12. The cars were not insulated at all.

We arrived here and lived a month and half at a plant in quarantine. Then they ~~moved us out~~ settled us in the Moscow neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> There was still wire there, seeing as the ghetto had been organized there. 3 houses were taken for us. My sister and I got a room. They settled families in separate rooms, while 3-4 singles would live together. We took our soft things with us, *and aside from that* the bed, the ottoman, and the table.

Materially, it was better for us here. They gave us a better ration than in Luga. We would receive rations, like the Latvians, by cards. From among manufactured goods, I received stockings. Then they gave points out to us. I once got a kerchief for these points, my sister - one handkerchief. Then one meter of silk. So, they would give nothing. We were given booklets of coupons, but they had no value. "*Ost*"<sup>5</sup> was written on the booklets.

Sometimes it was necessary to sell something to live. When we arrived, they gave us each a sack of potatoes. We consumed them economically and survived somehow. We did not have enough bread. When we were in Luga, you would come to a village and barter something for bread. Here you could sell at the market and buy at the store at the commercial price. But you would come to a store, ask in Russian, and they don't answer. The Latvians treated us in different ways. Generally, there are good and bad people. When we were working, it can't be said that they treated us badly. But when we were not deported it was clear that they were upset. The Germans moved everybody out, but we were given an order, and we worked. But then the evacuation got going again. ~~Before the final end~~ When they sent a car, ~~but~~ we all scattered, who where they could: who to the cemetery, who to different neighborhoods, and the chauffeur left. Me and my sister went to one Russian acquaintance, who did not live in the ghetto. They would normally carry out round ups in the morning. As soon as it is time to go to work, they are already cordoning it off and don't let you out. Once they gather a batch, on to the steamship with them. There were cases where people voluntarily went to Germany. The Germans agitated for us to go to Germany. They gave us newspapers to read, in which it was written: "We will take you to Germany either way. We are not evacuating you, but taking you away to Germany for labor. And after you will again return to your motherland, when we have taken everything." The people did not listen to this agitation. Then they began to take measures.

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4 "Moscow neighborhood" refers to a historical neighborhood south of the center of Riga. It was on the road that historically connected Riga and Moscow. The Riga ghetto was set up in this area; tens of thousands of Jews were confined in the ghetto and many were taken from there to be mass murdered in nearby places like Rumbula and the Bikernieki forest. German Jews would later be transported to this ghetto as well.

5 Ost is German for East. This word is written in German, with Latin letters, in the original.

My sister and I did not want to go away under any circumstances. One could go away, if desired, but people from our factory constantly only talked about any way to just remain. They would catch men and young women, and led them out: "Give your passport," and off he goes. The gendarmes would cordon off the neighborhood.

I did not see them take the Jews to be shot. I only saw how they would drive them to work in cars and how they stripped two Jewish women of their felt boots.

The Jews had special clothing: the men had striped pants and the women wore a particular dress. Two Jewish girls worked with us. One took in the felt boots, the other recorded. It was forbidden to talk to them, and it was forbidden to talk to the prisoners of war.

They shot my aunt already in 1941, *and* they shot 5 or 7 families in the same village. The Germans were told that partisans had taken a sheep. I don't know who reported this, but the Germans came and shot ~~all the families~~ a person per family. Those who lived in the countryside suffered a terrible rage. In the cities, people held on a bit longer. We did not open our doors, if someone was knocking.

Right now what is sad is that we write home and nobody answers. My brother and his wife are still there, and then my sister's mother-in-law. They were already elderly. We have just sent a letter to the rural council. The Germans had turned our room in *Luga*, where we had lived, into a smithy. If they need an apartment, a house, they will send the occupants off to wherever, while they themselves settle into this apartment. And that is how they proceeded with us: at 12 o'clock they announced it, and at 6 o'clock we had already moved out. We return from work and see that there are already pipes in the room. Now, nothing has been heard about our home for 20 months and more. At least to leave from here somehow and set our things there. But *Luga* suffered especially under the Germans. The Germans burned down many houses. They proceed with houses ~~like with bed bugs~~ *in this way*: when bed bugs bite, ~~so they begin~~ to fire treat the beds ~~But they will stoke the stoves so~~, so that at a distance of one meter from the wall the house catches fire too. We had such marvelous buildings in *Luga*, and they burned them down. Now we are thinking: you'll come and there will be nowhere to set the suitcases.

My sister's boy is 13 years old. They did not force him to work. When he lived in *Luga*, he was still in school. During the German occupation they also schooled them. Children worked at the factory from 14 years. Only a few children worked here. The rest was sent to shovel snow.

One girl came here to the factory, brought something for her mother. Her last name was Kireyeva. Bel'ts saw and said: "You are so big, we have to force you to work." And she started to work. Then a boy named Misha came. He was also put to work. This is why we did not let our boy come to the factory. Bel'ts himself walked

around the courtyard and agitated: “I have light, good work.” We would say to our boy: “If somebody comes, you hide, do not show yourself.”

Life there was so sad that I don’t want to recall it.

In 1941, when our troops were retreating and with them some from among the civilian population, the bookkeeper said: “You are childless. They are only evacuating people with children, and you must stay and work.” The buffet worker left, but I stayed. I lost two of my overcoats: one at the workshop, and the other I buried, and people dug it out.

In my labor booklet it says: “Terminated August 22nd, 1941 due to evacuation.” I closed the buffet at 11 o’clock, and they took the cash earnings from me. Later there was strong shelling. We left. We got to Tolmachyovo<sup>6</sup> and they told us that we also need to feed the partisans that will come. But the Germans had already shelled the bridge. We went to Tolgavka<sup>7</sup> We had gone 10 kilometers, and the chairman of the district executive committee says: “You have to work.” And already later he said that we must retreat because the Germans were close. We walked 12 kilometers away from Pikhemets,<sup>8</sup> away from Gatchina.<sup>9</sup> There was already shelling there.

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6 Tolmachyovo is a town about 15 kilometers north/northeast of Luga.

7 This is likely a typo and refers to Dolgovka, a hamlet 10 kilometers north/northeast of Tolmachyovo.

8 This is likely a typo that refers to Pekhenets, a village 10 kilometers northeast of Dolgovka.

9 Gatchina is a large town about 100 kilometers north/northeast of Luga, famous for the Great Gatchina Palace, one of the imperial ruling families’ most frequented residences in the 18th and 19th century Russian Empire.