

Case No. 14

Record of conversation

with chairwoman of the Dikanka¹ rural council, comrade A. A. Lavrenko
3 pages.

[L.1]

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

Recorded in a face-to-face conversation by researcher of the Commission comrade B. L. Likhter, Dikanka village, Poltava Oblast, UkSSR.

15/II 1945

Anna Andreyevna Lavrenko - chairwoman of the Dikanka rural council, year of birth 1910, higher education, Ukrainian. She has been a member of the VKP(b)² since 1930, is being checked now.³

A native of Dikanka. Member of the VKP(b) since 1930. Finished the Kharkov pedagogical institute in 1938. Before the institute, before 1935, I worked in the Dikanka district. I worked as a secretary in the party organization "Vodyanaya Balka," 8 km from Dikanka. After that in Shishakskoye village, which then was part of Dikanka Raion, but was later separated out into an independent Shishaky district. My husband was a construction worker. We worked together in Fedun'ka village, of Shishaky district. My husband was a member of the party, and he joined the Red Army on 24/VI-1941 by special recruitment.

My brother was left behind by the Shishakskoye KP(b)U⁴ raion committee, to be an organizer of a partisan detachment. I was charged with helping the Shishaky detachment. On 17/IX-41 I was given evacuation papers and I, with the kids - a daughter of 5 years and a son of 14 years - ostensibly left. However, I moved to Dikanka village to my mother's. My brother also received evacuation papers on 17/IX-41 and ostensibly left, but in actuality returned to Fedun'ka village on 22/IX-41.

On 22/XI-41, my brother and another 4 comrades came to us in Dikanka, and lived there until 4/X-41. An hour or two before the arrival of the Germans to Dikanka, my brother and his comrades left from Dikanka, crossed the frontline and

¹ Dykanka/Dikanka is a small town in Poltava oblast, in today's central Ukraine.

² VKP(b): The All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the sole governing party of the Soviet Union.

³ All Soviet communists who had lived under German occupation underwent a thorough verification process as soon as Soviet power was restored in the liberated regions.

⁴ KP(b)U is an acronym for Communist Party (bolsheviks) of Ukraine. This was the branch of the VKP(b) corresponding to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR).

returned to Shishakskoye village again. The secretary of the Shishakskoye KP(b)U raion committee comrade Tutko and the chairman of the district executive committee comrade Kornelits were already there.⁵

On 24/X-41, I met with my brother and other partisans (12 people) in “Velikii Perevoz” village, Shyshaky raion, at the house of one collective farmer called Marfusha. I brought them cartridges and undergarments. When they were at our place, they left tobacco, sugar, and so on. My brother’s wife and I would bring it to ~~them~~. We stayed there until 30/X-41 - on 1/XI-41 I returned to Dikanka, and I was arrested already on 7/XI-41. They accused me of ties with “black people,” as they called partisans.

I was incarcerated until 11/XI-41. They beat me hard. They knocked teeth out. A detachment began operating here, around Dikanka. Groups of those who had been encircled, or, as people called it, Boldin’s detachment.⁶ They set up a confrontation⁷ for me with people from this detachment. They did not know me. *Starosta* Dmitirenko also said that he did not know me. They conducted searches at my mother’s house and took all of her things. They did not find anything suspicious. They did not know about the Shishaky detachment. I held to my position that I did not know any of these people. Finally, they released me. The black days of the occupation stretched out ahead.

[L.1 reverse] On 20/XI-41, I went to Zhorzhevka village in order to find out about my brother. *The codeword* was “redhead”. I came to the old lady and found out that the “redhead” was not there anymore. The old lady told me that my brother had been killed, leave from here quickly, there is a punitive detachment⁸ here.

It turns out that that my brother was seriously wounded during a raid on a German staff car on 5/XI-41.⁹ He died half an hour later. The partisans dragged him

⁵ At this time, K. Y. Tutko was the commissar of the Shishaky partisan detachment and D. D. Kornilich its commander. Kornilich is rendered in the interview text as Kornelits. [До 65-ї річниці Перемоги у Великій Вітчизняній війні 1941-1945 pp. \(archives.gov.ua\)](#)

⁶ General Ivan Vasilievich Boldin, with a relatively small group, broke out of German encirclement near Smolensk in August 1941 and he became a hero of that time. He was not directly commanding troops behind enemy lines by November 1941, though, so perhaps this detachment and/or locals simply referred to this detachment in this way in reference to the famous example of Boldin. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Boldin

⁷ Confrontation in a legal context, to determine whether accused people knew each other.

⁸ This may have referred to an Einsatzgruppe, a German mobile killing squad mostly staffed with local police auxiliaries. [Оперативные карательные отряды | Энциклопедия Холокоста \(ushmm.org\)](#)

⁹ Another version of this episode seems to point to the bringing down of a German two-motor/twin-engine airplane (perhaps a Focke Wulf Fw 187 Falke). <https://www.facebook.com/shyshaky.ua/photos/шишаки-і-друга-світова-війнагітлерівські-війська-ввійшли-у-шишаки-22-вересня-194/863127510703975/>

away with them and buried him in Baranovka village.¹⁰ After this episode they wandered off, each their own way. I did not run into anyone else again.

Raion committee secretary comrade Tutko crossed the frontline. They dropped him by *parachute* into Shishaky raion in 1942. Someone saw him when he was descending by parachute. He came out to the women who were working near the thresher.¹¹ He was talking to them. During this time, he was surrounded by police, and he shot himself.¹² He didn't get to do anything. It seems that the one who saw him descending reported it.

Comrade Kornelits was found dead in Zhorzhevka village. The circumstances of his death are not known. Now there is a monument to them in Shyishakskoe village, in the center of the village, in the park. It is written on the plaque that the monument is in honor of the fallen partisans Grigorii Andreyevich Kukhar,¹³ Kornelits, and Kuprian Tutko.

The entire time of the German occupation I lived with relatives in Dikanka village. I worked at the kolkhoz yard, or the community yard, as the *Germans* called it. The public yard, as we called it. This is the territory of the former collective farm "Red Intensive Worker". We did various field work. During this time I was arrested three more times. I brought a radio receiver from Shishakskoe. I had an *antenna system* already. They arrested me for this. But when they took me away, my neighbor burned the radio receiver. They did not find anything. Otherwise they would have shot me. There was a group of trusted women to whom I told news that I heard over the radio receiver. We would get newspapers as well as leaflets, and among a particular group of reliable comrades, who will not give me up, I read them. The radio receiver was burned already in January 1942.

In VIII-1942, my husband was taken as a prisoner of war. He lay wounded in a hospital, from where he escaped and came to Dikanka. On 25.VIII.1942 he was arrested. This was on the second day after he arrived. On 5/IX-42 in Poltava, they shot him. They shot 150 people there then. I came with a parcel, but I was told: "Go and do a memorial service." The police were local and not local Ukrainians. The policeman who gave me up was subsequently shot by the police themselves, and the one who beat me in the Poltava prison is sitting in the Poltava prison now, I am told

¹⁰ Baranovka is a small village a little less than 20 kilometers west of Zhorzhevka and about 10 kilometers north of Shishaky.

¹¹ The word used here for threshing machine (молотарка) is Ukrainian.

¹² In another version of this story, he died while fighting the local collaborationist police here rather than shooting himself. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Тутка_Купрія́н_Йосипович

¹³ The interviewee's brother was apparently the assistant to district committee secretary Tutko. <https://www.facebook.com/shyshaky.ua/photos/шишаки-і-друга-світова-війнагітлерівські-війська-ввійшли-у-шишаки-22-вересня-194/863127510703975/>

by our soldiers. He was arrested by the NKGB.¹⁴ I was incarcerated in the Poltava prison in 1943, already not long before the arrival of the Red Army. They took many people then from Dikanka district. They took them from the Poltava prison to Maidanek. They shot many in July 1943. 5 women were taken from my cell. One was 9 months pregnant.

[L. 2] They said that they were taking her to a maternity hospital. We later found out that they had shot her. They took them at about 4 o'clock during the day, and on the next day at 3 o'clock at dawn¹⁵ loaded them into cars. And then the cars came back empty. There were 42 people from Dikanka raion. I was in the prison for 5 days. I persistently denied partisan activity and that I was a communist. They freed me and put me on a watchlist. They held 4 people who had said they were communists back in the prison.

When I came back from prison, I did not live at home. The police would come, but I hid in gardens, in the forest, in the field. I wandered about for about 1 ½ months. On 22/IX-43, they liberated Dikanka and on 23/IX-43 I began working as the chairwoman of the Dikanka *rural council*.

They designated my son for Germany, and he fled from Poltava. In 1942 he worked at the community yard. When they took him, he was 15 years old. This was still in the first times. They had not registered those who had escaped.

After the arrival of the Germans, immediately, from the first days, a part of the population, from among the repressed,¹⁶ went to serve the Germans. For example, Maksim Berezhnoy - he had been tried for the theft of a horse and sentenced to 6 years. He became a policeman.

Gachin – a former gendarme of old tsarist Russia. The 4 brothers Shapoval were criminals, bandits. Gorbas' had been sentenced to 10 years.

The dekulakized were given back their houses. They came, appeared. I don't know where they were all this time. From among them, they appointed *starosty* for the *community yards*. They designated *property* ~~and me~~ to the German barons. They designated the Dimitrov collective farm¹⁷ as the property of some German baron. But

¹⁴ The NKGB, or People's Commissariat for State Security, was a Soviet secret police and intelligence/counter-intelligence agency that existed as a separate administration for most of the war.

¹⁵ It could not have been dawn at 3am at any time of year this far south, but clearly the interviewee is referring to very early morning.

¹⁶ This refers to those who had been victims of Soviet political repression, such as imprisonment, deportation to prison camps, resettlement, etc.

¹⁷ A farm likely named after Georgi Dimitrov, famous Bulgarian Communist and Stalin-appointed leader of the Comintern from 1935 to 1943.

this was a sham estate. The baron never even made it here. They declared the MTS¹⁸ government property of the Germans. They took the cows away from the most active kolkhoz workers first, the families of the command staff, and Red Army families. They immediately took the cows and pigs away from the collective farm. When they were retreating and when they were arriving - they looted intensely. If he likes a skirt, or whatever - he will take it.

All people were registered and were obligated to work at the *community yard*. Everyone had to work from early morning until late evening. Meanwhile, they gave 100 grams of wheat husks each for a labor day.¹⁹ Better *starosty* would give more.

In 1942, they took away all the wheat and all the rye. They gave the collective farmers 100 grams of millet and 200 grams of barley each.

Then people started to perform sabotage. The police would watch over our work during the harvest. Commandants with translators came often. The commandants beat women a lot if they caught them not working. Women, as soon as they saw a commandant arriving, would flee into the forest. I would involuntarily remember how merrily the women collective farmers came running if someone of the arrived head Soviet workers appeared in the field.

We stole everything robustly. You take however much you can. Otherwise there was nothing to live on. We stole poppy, sunflower, wheat - everything that we could.

In 1942, the Germans collected bread, but in 1943 *people* sabotaged the threshing. The Red Army was already close. The *starosty* became kinder. They gave us a kilogram each and burned all the rest as well as the houses.

There were a lot of police in Dikanka. About 500 people from 3 districts were there. There were Vlasovites there.²⁰ Every stook was set on fire. This is how everything burned.

In May 1942, when they drove a huge number of youth to German forced labor, even the elite, who served them, began to become embittered. [L.2 reverse] When the Germans came in the early days and promised to distribute land, relations were still tolerable, but when they began to take away ever more people, mass embitterment emerged.

One could hear the grumbling in any group of people.

But when they took away all the bread and gave people threshing remnants, the embitterment became sharp.

¹⁸ MTS: a "Machine Tractor Station", a state-owned enterprise where agriculture equipment was held and maintained for use on Soviet collective farms.

¹⁹ A labor day or day of labor was a unit of value in Soviet collective farms from 1930 to 1966.

²⁰ Vlasovites refers to those serving in the German-collaborationist anti-Soviet military formation, the Russian Liberation Army led by General Andrey Vlasov.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Liberation_Army; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrey_Vlasov

Then among us they would say:
“Down with Hitlerite grams
Give us Stalinist kilograms.”
We also had these couplets:
“The Germans came to Ukraine
Their boots were shining
But when they ran from Ukraine –
Their ribs were rattling.”

In 1943, the brigadiers, helpers of the *starosty*, would go door to door and drive people out to work. But we did not work more than 2-3 hours a day. We would lie in cool spots and run to swim in the lake. We would fill a bag with corn or something else and would leave. We stole for ourselves: and the women supported the nurses and the teacher. We would give to them too.

It is possible to judge the scale of the stealing by the following example. We were threshing poppy in a shed. Over two days about 3 centners made it into the room, while about 6 centners were pilfered - more than half. They trimmed the thresher belts.

Aside from the police, a German commandant and Germans with him lived permanently in Dikanka. In addition, there were Germans who came periodically. Frontline units were formed. They particularly looted chickens, pigs, clothing - everything.

I never went to the center of the village. I was afraid. I was afraid to see a German or a *politsai*. And indeed all the people shrunk with fear. He'll throw dirty undergarments and not say a word, and you were obligated to launder and iron it.

In a ravine we had a mass grave. There were people from different districts there. There is a memorial placed to them now.

From Dikanka itself, they took 245 girls and young men.

On 7/IX-43, the Germans began to set the village on fire part by part. Then they stopped. But already on 20 and 21/IX-41²¹, a massive fire was blazing in the village - the people were hiding. They began to put it out when the Red Army had already come. Right away, we began to bring the horses together and pull off their collars. We gathered the things that were hidden. On the second day after liberation we gathered the remnants of the collective farm property.

We gathered about 70 horses.

17 pairs of oxen.

380 cows. We harvested unharvested grain, sunflower, and potato from the collective farmers. We organized the sale of grain to the government. We sold 1 ½ thousand centners, and of sunflower more than 1000 centners. There was nothing for sowing at the collective farm. We gathered it from the collective farmers and

²¹ Probably a typo: should read “20 and 21/IX-43”.

received it from other collective farms and other districts where less grain had been burned.

There are 3 collective farms in my *rural council*. In one of them there is enough millet left for 3 hectares.

There was not one little piece of straw. They had fed everything from the *barns*. Straw was taken off of houses, and made to last to the harvest. We fulfilled the sowing plan and gathered a decent harvest. In fall 1943 we already sowed the winter crop. Our spirits rose. We didn't need to be driven out to work. When also in Dikanka itself [L.3] 750 houses were burned down before the departure of the Germans, embitterment against the Germans reached its limit.

A strong patriotic upsurge was experienced. This was manifested when they were gathering voluntary contributions to the Red Army, and at work.

The winter crop was my height. The women cut it. Up to 150 women across the rural council were cutting it. The labor was hard and unfamiliar. Before the war there were mowers.

I was the chairwoman of the *rural council*. There were more than 2 thousand workers. How many have left now, but the sowings are the same. The Dimitrov collective farm sowed 100 hectares of wheat. On average, we took 15 centers for a hectare across all 3 collective farms. We gave out an advance of 800 grams of grains for *labor days*, but we will give more at the final accounting. Now we are still threshing.

We fulfilled the state procurements from the entire area but sowed 75% of the prewar area. It is difficult with manpower. We use everyone that we can, the disabled too. Of course, some have to also be forced, but there are mass friendly relations.

We built up 350 houses once again, 50%. It became more cheerful to live. Songs began to sound out in the village. There is a lot of grief, but it has become free to breathe. Nobody will beat you.

In 1942 the Germans also upset the people with the fact that they had promised to open a church. The people cleaned up and cleaned up, and they opened an abattoir there. They got deeply upset then.

Immediately there was greed for land. But when the shootings in the ravine began, as well as other insults, they cooled off about the land.

But the Germans dealt with the land thus, when the front was close. They began to divide it. The front moves away - they stop. They would say: we will not give land to the politically harmful, but in fact they did not give it to anybody. We oriented ourselves as to where the front was by the land. If they start discussions about division - it means the Red Army is drawing near.