

[L.12]

Stenogram of conversation with worker of the Shipyard of the city of Sevastopol Petr Maksimovich Lubenets.

11/VI-year 44

City of Sevastopol

Conversation conducted by Captain Z. I. Fazin

A.I. Shamshina stenographing

Has been at the yard since 1902. Went to the yard at age 13. Was born in 1888. Chaser.¹

In Sevastopol my father served in the military in the Black Sea Fleet. He served 7 years back then. He stayed here and brought us over. My father finished out his service here and worked at this yard. He was a boatswain at the dry dock. I was born in the Melitopol District. I am not a party member.

I worked as a chaser up to the most recent time. Part of the workers were evacuated to the Caucasus and part were dismissed. I transferred from the yard to the trolley park to do trolley repair. There I already worked up to the most recent time. I did not work at the special combine because the fleet left and there was nothing to do there. We had to go to the military enlistment office. I showed up. They rejected me, of course. Then I went to work at the trolley park and worked there until the final days before they destroyed our park and turned the wagons upside down.

From about June 17, everything ended for us. We were offered to resign and go home. I was working checking the air part of the compressors of the brakes. We were supposed to receive the resignation on Frunze street in an adit.² Those who went did not return. It was no longer possible to walk on the street because bombs, bombs, bombs, and shells were flying constantly. I stayed at home. I live on the Vorontsov hill itself, where the Eagle monument is.³ The whole neighborhood is visible to me and I see what's going on, how they are bombing, and where the shells fall. Then they started pouring on us. Had to scramble out of that too. Five

¹ To chase is to "to ornament (metal) by indenting with a hammer and tools without a cutting edge." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chasing>.

² Adits are usually entrances to mines. There don't appear to have been mines in Sevastopol itself. The interviewee likely meant some sort of covered entrance, perhaps partially underground, perhaps chosen as the location for this in order to be sheltered from bombs and shells. Multiple heights and hillocks exist in Sevastopol and this location may have been something carved into the side of one of those.

³ Vorontsov hill is a height in Sevastopol. The "Eagle monument" to the Monument to the Sunken Ships in Sevastopol, which consists of a pillar with an eagle on top of it.

“lighters” (incendiary bombs) came my way, but that’s ok, though the house caught fire. I immediately put it out under shelling. And immediately shells fall. He⁴ threw the lighters and then poured on the shells. There was this one old man there. He got wounded and I helped him. The houses are empty, burning, and there’s nothing we can do.

After that he threw lighters a second time. It’s impossible to come near them, they explode. Someone runs up from a different street, and says:

-It’ll be more fun for us.

A lighter exploded and wounded him, as shrapnel fell all around. There’s no water. I had a reserve in a barrel, everything got smashed, there’s nothing. I had a good little garden, everything’s destroyed. The house is destroyed. I fixed the little corridor later and lived there with my wife.

Now we are coming back up a bit. When ours⁵ entered, I saw that two of ours are coming. I greeted them, and then suddenly two shells hit my corridor. There was nothing but debris flying through the air. I have my own little house. There was a lot of destruction in our area, a bomb in almost every house. The houses did not get hit much, more often the gardens were hit. There are no military objects there. There were little gardens, trees, greenery.

[L.12 reverse]

There was nothing but beauty there. They destroyed the trees. A bomb flew into every garden. There are such houses, here across from me there’s a little house, and they dropped a one-ton bomb, nothing is left. Giant stones flew more than 200 meters.

The first to come to our little settlement were the Romanians. My house is destroyed, but the one higher up survived. We’re sitting in the basement, this one veteran with his wife and girl, and I. They already sent away the wounded old man. We closed the door and are sitting in the basement, waiting for what’s next. You come out all the time and look around. I look and I can already see that troops are standing on the hill, apparently not ours. Germans in gray, Romanians dressed in greenish. We saw them and did not show ourselves after that. From the first houses, they started to slam the houses with mortars. It’s already reaching us. We hear mortar rounds and shells falling and exploding. We think: in any case, if the first wall is broken through – there will still be two walls left.

After about 20 minutes, we look and they’re already knocking. I say:

-The guests have arrived, open up.

We opened up. We, of course, were overgrown with hair, bearded, gray-haired, unkempt. They ask:

⁴ “He” is short for “the German.” “He” and also “they” in reference to the Germans is used very frequently, if not always consistently, throughout the interview.

⁵ “ours”: soldiers from “our” side.

-Any soldiers here?

-No, - we say

-Where are the soldiers?

-There aren't any soldiers.

They see that there are only old men, women, and little children here. Below they are still shooting. They went to my place. He went down there, I followed after him. I had a pit in the garden. I had brought my belongings there and covered it with earth. He starts digging with his hand. I see how its going to be, so I opened it for him. He looks – nobody there, only clothes, and moves along.

After them, the Germans came and began to loot. My only daughter was at the front from the first days of the war. She is a feldsher. The Romanians took her blouse and her skirt. What was left was what I hid in time. They took 4 pairs of my daughter's stockings, with darned heels, and they took one pair of her shoes.

They moved in across the way at my neighbors'. They came to me five times day, every day, to conduct searches. The veteran with whom I was hiding says:

-Give your things here.

The belongings that I had buried underground remained, the rest I brought over to them. The Germans poke and prod, poke and prod, but there's nothing. That's how I saved the remaining things, otherwise they would have cleaned everything out completely. They took from many, but from a few they took nothing. They took from me, took it to where they were and awarded it to others. Of course, they awarded it to the youth, that's known now. Those will poke and prod, dig around in your things, while others stand around twirling revolvers before your eyes. The thing that got to me: did they not have these rags in Germany? He answered in Russian, strictly – no. I'm thinking: well go ahead and take then, I can't do anything anyway. He'll kill you and that's it. It's a shame, but there's nothing you can do.

By order they sent everybody to work. I didn't go to work for about three months, but I would pile junk in a cart and go six kilometers away to barter. Bartered good bread for myself. I knew that ours would yet be here, hoped that they would come here. I wanted to remain in order to have some kind of communication with my daughter. I received letters from the front up to the most recent days.

When they started calling us to work, I'm thinking: I'm old, an invalid, I won't go work. And later, when they already started to smoke them out of Sevastopol, then I'm thinking: well, what can you do. They're calling to go to the [labor] exchange. I showed up. They send me to work as a motorman. I say:

-I can't as a motorman, I'm in chasing, - I know that there's no chasing.

[L.13]

With ire, the exchange boss sent me to the Minnaya Bashnya,⁶ but there was no chasing there, no vessels, nothing to chase. You'd sweep the shop, bring lunch to the guys, be away from work for a month on sick leave. You'd come out, putter about again for a week, then back on sick leave again. This is how this whole period passed for me. Toward the end I didn't show up there. They say they started to send people away and shoot them. I say: let them shoot. Then they started to give out certificates of residence for 3 days. I'll come out, they'll extend it, won't come out for two days, and come out on the third day. I got 1 ruble and 60 kopecks per hour and worked 8 hours. I got 300 grams of bread, and they increased it towards the end, starting to give 500 grams. We lived on bartering. The old lady didn't work anywhere. We had a little vegetable garden, and there was this and that when it came to greens – sorrel, parsley, cucumbers.

At first I fished, but then they started to arrest for it and not allow fishing. One could fish near Inkerman, but then it started to get to them that we fished. One time I went out on a weekend and caught three hundred mullets. That was a big help for me. I salted it. Then I went out on the next day and caught a hundred fifty. Then I went out another time and a German officer nabbed me. He was walking with a translator and yelling something. I don't understand, but I surmised that fishing is not allowed. I'm standing there, looking at him. The translator says:

-What, you don't know that fishing is not allowed? It is forbidden to fish here, leave. If you don't leave, you will be arrested.

I turned and left. A few days passed and I came again. They arrested me and took the fish away. They held me, released me, and warned me:

-If you're caught, you won't return anymore.

I am an old hunter. Made a little net. You jump out and catch a pair of quails for soup. They forbade that too.

We had to live somehow. I lost almost half of my weight. I always felt healthy, but lately not well. The first air raids did not affect me. I did not fear anything. I participated in the war of 1914, was used to it already and did not fear anything. A person sat by me and I tell him a plane is screeching. I yell: "Down!" I went down, he didn't. I was fine but he was pierced all the way through.

I knew everything that was going on in Russia. Thereafter I received briefings. I had this one Mokozone, a young guy on the Korabel'naya Storona,⁷ who supplied them, and would give them to me. We know each other from work. He's from the shipyard. We worked together. We'd come together and share. He

⁶ A tower built in the early 1800s that held the town clock for several decades until the Crimean War. Located not far from the area near the "Eagle" monument that the narrator lived in.

⁷ Korabel'naya Storona ("Ship Side"), an area on the south side of Sevastopol bay and east of Korabel'naya bukhta ("Ship Bay").

brought [the newspaper] “Red Crimea.”⁸ We would secretly pack into a nook somewhere and read what’s happening where to our guys. The leaflets reported everything that was happening on our fronts.

Then the Germans would release the newspaper “Voice of Crimea”⁹ in Russian. We would sort things out using these newspapers. You look, and the first article – smashed the reds, the second article did the same, but in a different form. That means his forces already pulled back by order or by reduction of the front. We already surmise that here they’re lying and here’s the truth. And so, little by little, we heard all the reports. Here some guys worked well, but were afraid. One warned me:

- You need to quiet down, do you know where they send you for such things?

[L.13 reverse]

I had a neighbor, so I didn’t show him anymore.

-You, -he says, -beware, don’t you dare even talk about it.

You stop conversations with such people. I come to the smithy. Free time, nothing to do, they’re interested in the news. What I know I tell Shmatchenko and others who I trust. They told me:

They have driven the Russians far away.

I say:

-They won’t drive them all the way. They may drive them at first, but later they’ll be coming back.

Many workers were saying that they would smash the Russians. I say:

-No, look, the Germans will run. He goes forward, so will he go backward.

And so it turned out.

Comrade Shmadchenko. He said the truth. Every time I talked with him, everything was truthful. He did well on that score.

Comrade Lubenets. I was in the other war [World War I], and when there was a retreat, not one soul, not one inhabitant knew that the troops were retreating. And now he [the German] retreats in Nikolaev, and all the inhabitants already know that they’re retreating. I say:

-This is how he wins people over.

⁸ “Red Crimea” was a major newspaper in the area. Its editorial office moved to Kerch and then to the North Caucasus during part of the war and continued to put out issues.

⁹ “Voice of Crimea” (Голос Крыма) was the largest collaborationist/occupational mass media platform in German-controlled Crimea from its beginning in December 1941 to its end in April 1944 as Soviet forces recaptured Crimea.

He's coming and here people are already congratulating each other. Many waited for the German, but I knew him, and I say:

-Don't wait, you'll be crying because of him.

-No, - they say. – Do you remember how he was when he came in 1918?

I say:

-Laws were followed then. Now you'll cry.

To one old man, he left, I said:

-You will cry. Under ours you got yourself a house, under them you'll lose it.

-No, he says, - the German will bring silk and bread.

But when he [the German] brought his goods he didn't give anything to anyone. People lived thanks to the fact that some had reserves. And how many people died of hunger. We, even as victims, shared the last piece of bread with prisoners of war and helped, but he [the German] – he gave nothing. Later, when it was clear that the Germans didn't give anything, I came to the old man and said:

-So, did he bring you silk and everything else?

He is silent.

-Here is silk for you, here is bread for you, eat up.

He didn't say a word to me.

I still remember, my uncle lived in the countryside. When I came to visit him, he says:

-Let's go bring some hay.

-Let's go, - I say.

We're heading back with the hay and a German is coming toward us on a cart.

-Get off the road.

He takes out a revolver:

-Or else I'll shoot.

The horse was barely pulling and my uncle flew to the side.

-There, - I say, - these are the freedom-bringing Germans, colonizers, and you want to await something good from them.

[L.14]

The Germans didn't conduct any meetings here, there was nothing.

I didn't go work until they hung three people on Pushkin Street,¹⁰ and when they hung them, I had to go to the [labor] exchange of course. I'm thinking: or else they'll hitch me up. They hung these young guys, and for what, nobody knows. They were each about 18-19 years old. This was about two months after their

¹⁰ Pushkin Street in Sevastopol is located near South Bay, not far from Ship's Bay, and Sevastopol Bay – the general part of Sevastopol in which all of the interviewee's recollections take place.

entry. Around that time I went to the countryside by cart with two women neighbors. I arrive and my wife says such and such.

-I'll go look.

-Just don't come close, there's a German guard there.

I went and looked from a distance. The guard is there, not allowing me to come near. Maybe it was people we knew. They hung for about four days. Some say they beat police officers. They worked at the yard, I think.

Then gallows were set up on Tatarskaya Street near the school and the hooks had already been prepared, but they did not hang anyone there and they removed it later. This gallows stood here for over a year. Then they started taking people, so nobody saw, and they took a lot of people. It was noticeable that when they took someone, they would say – we are sending you to Simferopol, then there, there and the traces are erased.

For a time they offered those who wished and were under 40 to go work in Germany. The first batch agreed, many went, and then the second and third were already sent by force. A policeman comes directly to your house, and announces:

-Show up at such and such place, - and that's it.

They take your passport away, show up there. You show up there, and they don't give the passport back until they put you in the wagon and you're off.

Four Malyutki submarines stood here. At first two came, and then another two came and they stood at the artillery workshops by the shore. Then they left. They did not appear for a few months, until the Italians got it.¹¹ Then they came here. There was a commotion. They always stood by the walls, then they lifted them with a crane and I don't know where they put them. One of the big ones was left. This one, it appears, had come out of Nikolaev. They lifted them, but there was no repair of any kind. When this commotion happened in Italy,¹² their troops in the city were recalled. 6 KT¹³s were released, which had been built in Nikolaev. One sunk, one's side was blown out, one's bottom was blown out. The Germans didn't have cruisers at all. Two Romanian destroyers always came when the transports come. They always escorted them. People said:

-Why aren't they hitting ours.

At first they sailed confidently.

There was this one cutter here, and a Bulgarian. He speaks Russian. You come to him. He, in Russian:

¹¹ The implication seems to be that the Italians were trying to copy the design of the "Malyutka" or extract something from it technologically.

¹² "This commotion" could be referring to the Allied invasion of Italy and the fall of Mussolini's regime in 1943.

¹³ This likely refers to the "KT" class of German ships, built originally as transports but reclassified as anti-submarine ships in summer 1943.

-Hey!

-Hey.

He says: So such and such cutter is kaput. Then they had our big transport, the “Kharkov.”¹⁴ It was always transporting goods. I come, and this Bulgarian, who was on their tugboat, is calling me:

-Come here.

I say:

-What?

-The “Kharkov” is kaput, a lot of Germans went to the bottom.

[L.14 reverse]

-Well, -I say, - good riddance. They won’t transport shells here.

Then also the “Varna,”¹⁵ the Bulgarian transport, came here. Then the ship left with music. I tell my guys:

-That one is saying goodbye and will not come back here again.

And, sure enough, he did not come again. The Bulgarian says:

-A shame, a lot of ours drowned.

Towards the end, there were almost no Romanians here. All the boats left in such a way, at night, that we didn’t even know they left. They all gradually left in such a way that we didn’t see them leave.

There were a lot of cutters here. The tugs were Romanian, Bulgarian, and ours from Odessa that they captured there. This one good Romanian tug is sitting somewhere by Yalta. And the cook there was a Romanian, a character. I ask:

-How did you get hit?

-Well, we, - he says, - were pulling a barge. We had already pulled the barge to the pier when an airplane appeared.

I say:

-So how did you survive?

-As soon as the plane comes over the mountain, we go in the water.

-And how did it hit the cutter.

-No, - he says, - the barge got hit and pulled the boat. A shame, - he says, - my clothing didn’t survive. They gave me German clothes, but I’m going to Romania now, home, and I’m not coming back.

¹⁴ This ship had a winding history, being originally built in the German Empire just before the outbreak of World War I and making its way through multiple countries’ possession before being sold by Weimar Germany to the Soviet Union in 1932. It was sunk in Nikolaev port by German airplane bombs in July 1941. Then the Germans raised it from the sea floor and restored it – this is the part of its life Lubenets is referring to. The “Kharkov,” named the “Boy Federsen” in this third German iteration, was sunk once and for all in August 1943 by Soviet air-dropped torpedoes.

<https://moniacs.kh.ua/parohod-harkov-samoe-dlinnoe-sudno-v-mire/>

¹⁵ Built in 1937 and sunk by a Soviet submarine in August 1943.

<https://www.shipsnostalgia.com/media/ss-varna-of-1937.360810/>

Those who speak Russian, their disposition is alright, against the Germans. The majority of the Romanians were against the Germans, but some were for the Germans.

When ours came, I was at home all the time. Ours entered. They smashed me exactly on the last day. I'm thinking: I'll go to the factory again. It needs to be rebuilt and I need to help the way an old man can. I went and they let me go a bit so I could find a place to sleep over. They let me go for about two weeks and then I went to work.

They didn't reach our neighborhood yet, first attacking Zelenaya Gorka.¹⁶ They drove all the inhabitants to the train station and themselves set about plundering. When that exhausted itself, they took cows, chickens, goats, and peoples' things. But we had buried our things in the ground in advance. Let them rot in the ground, as long as they don't get them.

After that, they reached part of the Ship Side, and after that, as soon as they took this they dismissed them, go home. They took out part of the Ship Side. They held them for a long time in the factory, and in the workshops on the last days. They took 57 souls onto a Bolinder.¹⁷ They packed it full of troops, with women and children on top. They gave them white handkerchiefs, or towels, in case one of our airplanes appears, so they would see that they are civilians.

Then they captured our neighborhood. My old lady happened to be frying meat right at that moment. What meat? The Germans had been shooting horses. While it was fresh, they would cut off a piece and fry it. My old lady was frying cutlets and had fried half when suddenly they came in:

-Vek!¹⁸

Everything is left behind and she takes a bag. There were already rusks there and a pair of undergarments. She took the bag and left, leaving behind the cutlets and everything. They sat down, ate those cutlets to their fill, and looked around, seeing there was nothing. I left everything open.

[L.15]

We had only descended half the hill to the train station, when their gendarmerie drove by in a car, already transporting inhabitants from somewhere. A shell landed on their car, hitting the Germans. This shocked them, they left:

-Vek, back!

And we came home. That was May 2 or 1. After that this one German would go to the neighbors. He spoke some Russian and said:

¹⁶ "Zelenaya Gorka" is a height and surrounding neighborhood in Sevastopol. It is also on the south side of Sevastopol Bay, like the rest of the locations mentioned in this interview.

¹⁷ This most likely refers to a "Bolinder" type landing barge, built in 1916.

<https://war-book.ru/desantnie-barzhi-tipa-bolinder/>

¹⁸ German "Weg!," in this context meaning, "Go away!"

-Don't go outside, it's better if you don't show yourselves. This neighborhood is considered empty, everyone got kicked out. Or else, - he says, - take you away again.

When they put an [artillery] battery behind our houses, on the outskirts, then the Germans began to poke and prod. Nothing, they don't even say a word. They would come from the battery:

-Do you have chickens?

-Yes.

He takes them. What there is to eat – he takes. They take away groats, they take away flour. They had two Romanians at the battery. They also distributed burned canned food, giving it to the inhabitants. One was alright, but the other was probably ingratiating himself, he just came along. He would come to any vegetable garden and look. Where he notices something suspicious, he makes noise, the Germans come and begin to probe, finding things and taking them away.

The whole time I was waiting for ours to open fire. And how they began to fry them.

-Now, - I say, - we're saved, we won't be taken away.

I didn't fear anything, but I did not want to go there. That would be certain death. That got to me more than the air raids. Our shells are pounding. I go up and look where they are falling. They hit. They had placed 4 8-inch guns. I see that they didn't reach by about 30 meters. They're also transferring them to a different area and it starts getting hot again. In this way they destroyed one. Well, I think, good, its gotten a little easier for us.