

Stenogram of conversation
with comrade A.G. Novikova

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Commission on the Compilation of a Chronicle of the Great Patriotic war.

Stenogram of conversation with
comrade A.G. Novikova

Researcher of the Commission comrade P.M. Fedosov
conducts the conversation
Comrade O.A. Roslyakova records

Smolensk. December 17, 1943.

Aleksandra Grigorievna Novikova.

In 1941, before the war, I finished the Smolensk pedagogical institute.¹ Now I work as a math teacher at the 9th school² in the 6, 7 and 8 grades. Non-party.

In September 1941 a seminar for teachers of Smolensk and the region was held. At the time, I worked at the German infirmary and did not attend. Apparently, there was a report about "The Origin of Germans and Russians," and one about "The Rebirth of Eastern Europe." Then there were meetings of a methodological character.

At the department of propaganda there was the German doctor Tsigast.³ He spoke through a translator. One time, a teachers' meeting was organized. He talked for two hours about the German school system, about how schools are supposed to be. The teachers asked questions. He answered. His translator was professor Somal'skii. Then there were seminars of a methodological character.

After some time, they called me up from the infirmary and said that you have to go work in your profession. At the infirmary I worked as a cleaner. I

1 This is currently known as the Smolensk State University. From 1930 to 1998, it was known as Smolensk State Pedagogical Institute.

2 This refers likely to what today is known as Middle school no. 9, located south of the center of Smolensk.

3 This refers to doctor Tsigast, who was, according to other sources and in contrast to what the interviewee seems to be saying, the only German in the Russian administration of Smolensk of the occupation period. He was in charge of "Russian education" but apparently did not know Russian. The spelling in German may have been Ziegast or Ziehgast.

worked at the 2nd school⁴ for a month and after that at the 44th. I went to work at school in November.

I live in the Yamshchina area. The ZhKTu,⁵ I think, opened a school and told me that I would be transferred to work there. This affair would stretch out until February. Then they took a prisoner of war from a camp, some Grishin or other. He said that he had finished the Moscow pedagogical institute,⁶ a mathematician by speciality. I think that he did not have a special mathematics education. I think that he more likely had a technical education, maybe two years' worth. This prisoner of war Grishin became the director of the school. I taught math for the 5th and 6th grades.

There was a lot of control from the director's side. Maybe he wanted to curry favor with the Germans. He often demanded things that could not in any way be done. He would demand, for example, for there to be outlines. When you are conducting a lesson, he eavesdrops by the door. Once I sent a student: "Go open the door quickly." She opened the door quickly and hit him with the door right in his forehead. He would say that he had a lot of authority, and that our school was the best school.

The head of the city Menshagin⁷ came to the school just to take a look at the appearance and dropped in to a lesson. He was at my arithmetic lesson for no more than five minutes. He came, peeked, and left.

There was also the head of the city department of education, Ivan Ivanovich Solovyev, my teacher. He would come, take a look, and not say anything. He never moralized.

We were given a program. We would compose quarterly plans according to the program, and then concrete lesson plans. These plans [L.1 reverse] were looked through by the director. The textbooks were old Soviet ones. At the department of education, there was a list of what needed to be corrected, and what needed to be thrown away.

I did not correct the textbooks the first year. The second year, when I started working, I say - I need to correct them. Some children corrected them, others did not take textbooks to their lessons. We had to correct such questions: the growth of industry and agriculture in the USSR and Germany.

4 Currently known as Middle school no. 2, and located relatively centrally in Smolensk.

5 It is unclear what this acronym stands for, but it is likely something to do with housing.

6 The Moscow pedagogical institute was at the time officially known as the V.I. Lenin Moscow State Pedagogical Institute and is since 1990 known as the Moscow State Pedagogical University.

7 Boris Georgievich Menshagin was the mayor of Smolensk during the German occupation (September 1941-September 1943), becoming mayor of Bobruisk after the Red Army retook Smolensk.

The students knew when the director would come and hid uncorrected textbooks under their desks. In German language textbooks, they would tear out portraits of Hitler and other fascist leaders.

I don't know if there was an order regarding corporal punishment or not. Doctor Tsigast would say: I did not inflict corporal punishments, but the possibility is not excluded, they can be implemented. In general, there were corporal punishments in schools. In our school there weren't any, if only the inspector himself did not implement them. There was one teacher, the children said, who would come up and tug you by the hair a little or push you out of the classroom.

Religion classes were introduced in 1942 in May. I don't remember the last name of the religion class teacher. This was most likely a priest. Religion class lessons were introduced into the schedule. Our inspector had strived for religion classes to be introduced. The inspector made the acquaintance of the priest and invited him to work. This priest plays⁸ well, sings well, and is able to speak on all topics.

I was present at one of the religion class lessons. The priest was talking about the origin of man. I knew that that would be the topic and I went.

He said that man, as the highest creature, was created by God. He said that a model was made from clay, and then God blew a soul into this clay model and man came to be. He acknowledges natural science, as a science, but believes man was created specially.

He talked about the seven days of the creation of the world. He spoke quite eloquently. The students sat quietly. This was a 6th grade lesson. When he stepped out, the students started laughing, and started asking, if there weren't enough people from one of the sides, to make a bunch out of clay and blow a soul inside and send them to the front. "Well, I say, the ceramic factories are going to produce people."

In 1943 religion classes were canceled.

⁸ In the sense of playing a musical instrument, most likely, given the context that the priest also sang.