

[L.21]

Stenogram of conversation with furnaceman of the 1st furnace of the open hearth furnace shop of the Stalin metallurgical plant¹ comrade Dmitri Elizarovich Tantsura (He now works at the 2nd furnace).

21/II-44. City of Stalino.² Stalin plant.

B. L. Likhter conducts the conversation.

A. I. Shamshina stenographs.

I always did a good job at work before the war. I was awarded with a People's Commissariat of Ferrous Metallurgy³ certificate of recognition. Born in 1905. I am from Voroshilovgrad,⁴ a peasant. From the army I went to work in industry from 1928. I worked for about six years at a mine in Lysychansk.⁵ I did not like it there, and I moved here. There was an army acquaintance of mine here. I started working at the Stalin plant right away. Here since 1929. The first year I worked as a cast-iron smelter, and then I went as an apprentice to the personnel department. Then I was constantly taking classes.

The duty of a furnaceman is to always watch the furnace. There is a brigade under his direction - to prepare the furnace for release. At the time of release, my responsibility was to release the cast-iron from the furnace and to close it, when we blow through it. And then prepare it for release again.

I lived alright, I had enough, and I saved for drinkies too. I live in the Four-rubles⁶ in the factory houses in Larinka.⁷ My apartment is English. These are sill the English buildings. I even had water in the apartment, and a root cellar. It was convenient for us, especially during wintertime. Half of the building burned down. The Germans burned it down. They set the fire at night, and they left. I was able to put it out. It was rather difficult though, and dangerous. They could shoot you. But how much smoke gathered, gas. And I saved my house in this gas. They don't go where there is a lot of gas. They run around the streets.

¹ This refers to the metallurgical plant in what is today Donetsk.

² Stalino was the name of what is now Donetsk from 1929 to 1961.

³ The interview uses the common shortened form, Narkomchermet, short for People's Commissariat of Ferrous Metallurgy.

⁴ Voroshilovgrad region, today Luhansk/Lugansk region.

⁵ Lysychansk/Lisichansk is a small city in western Luhansk/Lugansk region.

⁶ The four-rubles refer to large apartments constructed in in the 1800s, when Donetsk was much smaller and known as Yuzivka (Hughesovka - named after Welshman John Hughes, who founded it). They were known as "four-rubles" because this was the rent their inhabitants paid.

⁷ Larinka is a part of Donetsk, not far from the metallurgical plant.

I worked and was protected from military service by working at the plant. We were constantly preparing to evacuate certain sections. Later on, the head of the shop, Tsaritsyn, declared:

-Go home, they are going to blow up the shop.

We went home. It was already too late for us, of course, to evacuate. The heads had cars. They could drive away in their cars. But I'm a family man, what am I gonna walk? So I stayed behind. Of course, it was difficult. There was no bread. Who went where. Although, I did get a bit lucky. I went by foot to Zaporizhzhia region.⁸ There I bartered junk for tobacco. I traded my suit. I had a paper one. Tobacco was prized here. I traded nicely for the tobacco. Some had a lot of bread. They had stolen it. So, everyone survived how they were able to. Then it began: I took the suit, the blanket, the overcoat, and the wife's things, and my own. This and that, to be fair, remained. So we lived.

I did not try to get a job for about six months. They harry and harry. It's impossible to live at home. As soon as you get home, the wife says:

-The police came, asking why doesn't he work.

I went to the housing department. There was Mertsalov there, assistant to the head of the construction unit. I asked him and without anything he set up on water pipes. I began to work for the department. I did steam heating. It was, of course, difficult to live on this kind of ration. 300 grams. Damn the German. He treated us monstrously. Something isn't right, immediately sticks. This is unheard of. In the housing department there were Germans among us as well. They send us off to fix the steam heating where Germans are the occupants of the apartment. There were plenty of them everywhere. You begin to fix the water pipes. The work doesn't always go well, naturally, especially with them. My grip: you turn it, by the time you twist it, you've done something bad intentionally. Then he screams: "Dog!," and the stick. One German hit me two times at school number 25. We were piling boilers, and we dropped them there. How he started screaming. He became like an animal. When we were working, he would come in, acting as if he doesn't understand Russian. But when we dropped a boiler, [L.21 reverse] how he started to scream in Russian:

-You are partisans, bandits, doing this on purpose!

A Russian person couldn't say it as well as he screamed it. He beats us with sticks. Ask more than one person who worked here under the Germans. In general, beating was not customary for us. My brother beat me maybe two times as kids. You'd lose bulls in the forest and come home without bulls. So he would hit me for that. But as an adult? This was the first time. I began to tremble all over, it was insulting. He comes onto our land, eats our bread, takes advantage of everything...

⁸ Zaporizhzhia region is directly southwest/west of Donetsk region.

They took bread away from me two times. You are taking bread. You'll barter your very own pants, your undergarments, for it. You meet a German with a *politsai*. If the *politsai* had been alone, he would not have taken it away. It is a fact that the German said - take it away. It's not enough that they would take it away, take it somewhere for him. You'll take it and you return with an empty sack, and one time they took it with the sack too. What kind of attitude am I going to have towards the Germans? They called me to the plant, but I already did not want to go to the plant, to hit us on the head with our own production. I understood it this way: if I go to the factory, provide some kind of benefit, though under the stick, we will restore something. And if we restore something, then that is to the benefit of the Germans. I don't know about others, but this was my view. Of course, I understood that it was bad that I had stayed behind. But I spared myself. I was thinking of the family. That if I abandoned it, then knows what would happen. And I spared myself because I had worked myself to the point that the Germans were already nearby. If I had gotten into a car, I would have driven away, but if I go by foot, then he will catch up with me. If I remain here, everybody knows me and will say that I am a good worker. But if they catch up with me somewhere in Horlivka,⁹ they'll say I am a partisan and could kill me.

As they wrote in the newspaper, so it turned out. So our people would write in the newspapers that they had cut off a tongue. I did not have to witness this here, but some similar things were being done. I was walking from Avdeevka.¹⁰ My brother-in-law lived there, and I would go to him in wintertime. I am going by foot, with a little sled. I see that something ahead is darkening. It is snowing. There is some kind of gunshot ahead. I think: damn it, they'll think that I fired. I'm walking and I see - there's nobody there. I walk further. There is a person lying on the road. And women saw him from their apartment. They come nearer. I see that it is a prisoner of war of ours. I ask the women:

-Why are you looking, pick the man up.

-We are afraid, - they say.

-What are you afraid of, there's nobody here.

The women approached more bravely, picked him up, and carried him to their apartment. I ask them what the matter is. One says:

-Well, they have already begun driving our prisoners of war. I saw that they'd driven about 30 of them by. As soon as somebody lags a little, they shoot them on the road. The stick doesn't help. He hits and hits him with the rifle butt. The man is hungry. He is barely dragging his feet. They shoot them on the road. There were thousands of such episodes, our people tell us.

⁹ Horlivka is a city about 40 kilometers north/northeast of Donetsk.

¹⁰ Avdeevka/Avdiivka is a small city about 15 kilometers north/northwest of Donetsk.

I used to go to the theater here, and to the movies. But in the time of the German occupation I did not feel up to this, because you would go some one hundred kilometers, and by the time you pull that bread back, you are recovering for a whole week, and your feet hurt, of course. I frayed my health away. You are pulling a little sled or a cart behind you. And then, of course, you have to make up the work. For example, I got permission to be absent from work, but I have to make those days up. When ours came, I immediately went to work for the police, in a destruction battalion.¹¹ When the Germans were leaving, I put the house fire out and only then hid. They set fire to the house on the 7th, and ours came on the 8th of *September 1943*. I joined the destruction battalion, worked there about two weeks, and then there was an order to restore the plant. Comrade Tsaritsyn, the head [L.22] of the shop, had already arrived. I came to the shop. Some workers were already here. I got a note from the head of the shop, since I am a cadre worker. I went to the personnel department. There already was a personnel department. There, they registered me. Then I got a note from the personnel department. I went to my battalion captain. He was a responsible person, and said:

-Go ahead, since you are a cadre worker.

I came to the plant in the final days of September. They hadn't restored the shop yet. I came here, I believe, on the third day since ours came. Ours had only blown up the gas engines, and he [the German] already added damage here.

On the first day we came here, it was rather difficult. There was nothing to work with, everything was scattered around. Which crowbar, hammer, pickaxe, shovel. There had only been a cleaning, and we watched for mines. When the shop had been cleaned well, we began the dismantling of the columns. We dismantled the columns. The millwrights removed the roots, readied new columns, and began the shoveling out. The columns weren't there yet. They shoveled out the furnaces, picked clean half of the cauldron. All of this was done by hand. Slag formed. At a high temperature, the mass was melted. Everything was dripping down and some drops of cast-iron got into the furnace itself. The slag wound around the drops of cast-iron. You hit cast-iron, and you hit and hit. But its okay, we overcame everything, which is where the energy comes from, even though we were eating poorly. It even became joyous. We know the plant restoration plan, and we will fulfill it. And around the factory, as people are saying, the blowing machine will be ready on about March 10th. But we thought *we would start the blast furnace on the 1st. Yet without an air blower we cannot. This will delay us.*

18/IV-44 Likhter

¹¹ Destruction battalions were paramilitary units under the control of the NKVD that were to maintain internal security in areas near the military front. Among other tasks, they were to destroy valuable property that could not be evacuated from the advancing enemy troops.