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Summary

Vladimir Eremishkin was born on June 24, 1924 in Saratov, Russia, but at a young age he moved about 60-100 miles away near the Ukrainian border. His father, Dmitra had been a soldier in WWI in the Tsar's army. His mother, Daria Sokolova, planted a vegetable garden which helped the family survive during the Ukrainian famine which also affected them. Vladimir also had a younger and older sister. The family did not go to church because of Stalinist opposition, but his mother and a few women would get together and pray.

The family was not overtly political. Vladimir learned to worship Stalin in school though later he would become fervently anti-Stalinist. He witnessed the famine and the Soviet terror in the 1930s and saw people die in the streets and some unexplainably disappear. In June 1941 the Germans invaded Russia and his father, then forty-three, was inducted into the Russian army. Vladimir soon followed. He was seventeen and had recently finished high school.

Vladimir was sent to an officer training camp first before actively fighting the Germans. At first, he experienced little fighting. By the time he reached Stalingrad the Germans were already in retreat. His unit then went west following the German retreat. At Brest Litovsk he passed by a concentration camp and witnessed people in striped uniforms and half human figures. He had not known about Nazi atrocities before this. He also was with the Russian army as they sat out the destruction of Warsaw during the Polish revolt against the Nazis. Eventually his unit reached Berlin and he saw the bombed-out city. After repeated questioning about Russian violence and rape against the local population Vladimir said he had not witnessed this. Eventually he met up with American soldiers and decided to desert because of his opposition to Stalin. He was sent to an UNRRA camp near Kassel, Germany where he stayed. He did not tell them he was a deserter since he was afraid of what might happen to his family. In the camp he met survivors from Dachau who spoke of German trucks coming each morning to pick up the dead and take them to be incinerated. Vladimir stayed at the camp for two years pretending to be Polish.

After two years Vladimir accepted a Belgian offer to go and work in the coal mines for two years before being able to emigrate. He was only able to work in the coal mines for a year, however, because of illness. He then went to Brussels and found work and met his future Belgian wife. They stayed in Brussels until 1957 when they were able to emigrate to the United States. He eventually moved to Worcester, Massachusetts. And received an engineering degree. He never returned to Russia fearing what might happen to him. He finally started writing to his parents and sisters in 1957. They were shocked to hear that he was alive.

Frankly, there is little in this very long interview that would be valuable to Holocaust researchers.