

RG 50.226. 0028

Interview with Pioter Rapcevich

01.00.30.

I was born in 1923, in Drogichin. In 1924, my father got a new job in the village Mokraja Dubrova and we lived there until 1938. In 1929 I began to study at school. I studied until 1936. In 1939, after finishing school, I entered the technical school. My family had 6 children. In 1939 we moved to Pinsk.

01.03.14.

In 1939 the war began. In 1939, when West Belarus was freed, I began to work. I worked before the second war began.

01.05.50.

The first day of the war, Pinsk was bombed and in two weeks the Germans entered the town. Since the first day of the war, many Jews were killed. Also the Germans took many hostages and in order to rescue those poor people we brought a lot of stuff to the Germans, which included gold, silver, warm clothes etc. Soon we had no warm clothes in our houses because everything was taken by the Germans.

01.09.20.

In August 1941, more than 10 thousand Jews, all men and small boys were killed. Also that day were killed my two brothers. My father and I survived and it was a miracle.

01.11.50.

There were 36,000 inhabitants in Pinsk and among them were 28,000 Jews. Until 1939, there were a Jewish school, a synagogue, a theater and some other places for Jews in our town. Our family celebrated all Jewish holidays. The last Jewish holiday was celebrated in October 1942, inside the ghetto. After October 29, 1942, the Germans killed all Jews from the ghetto.

01.14.16.

In autumn, 1942, we knew that already Jews from Brest, Drogichin, Vyanov, Kobrin, Stolin were killed, and we understood that the next turn would be ours.

01.16.50.

My boss for whom I worked was a German but he had sympathy for me and he did everything possible for me in order that I could leave the ghetto. My boss looked for a good opportunity to rescue me from death. One day a German officer from another place got a task to work with my boss and when my boss understood he could trust him he talked with that man about me. He asked that man if he could help me with a new place to live and assumed that would be a good idea to take me to Kiev. By the way I could speak German very well.

01.20.20.

The life inside the ghetto was ugly. There were many rules and we had not enough food and water. If Jews tried to take some food from a village to the ghetto they were killed because the Germans forbade it. Since the first day of the ghetto, our Jewish passports were taken by the Germans and we received other documents. So even if some of us were lucky to escape from the ghetto, they would be taken back very soon according to their new documents.

01.25.30.

In autumn 1942, a few days until the German execution of October 29, my boss took me to his place and there I stayed for 10 days. I knew that while I was hidden, all Jews from the ghetto were killed. Although my boss was a German he was very upset about what happened in the ghetto. A few days after the execution in Pinsk, my boss got a letter from Kiev about my new place to work. As I had a Jewish name Rabinovich, my boss decided to change my name. Also was changed the place of my birth. I got all documents I needed from my boss in order that could have a safe trip from Pinsk to Kiev. When I entered Kiev I was taken to a job and I got a place to live. My life in Kiev was not easy because I had not enough food, I was glad I survived from the ghetto.

02.07.30.

In August 1943, the Germans began to evacuate Kiev and some Germans from my job knew that I was a Jew but they were kind to me and said nothing to the police.

02.10.30.

After Kiev was freed from the Germans I wanted to change my name back but I was afraid to do it because I worked for the Germans during the war. In 1944, Pinsk was freed too and my friends and colleagues from the job where I worked before the war tried to prove what kind of a person I was. But some people did not believe me thinking that I survived the ghetto because I helped Germans in their bad purposes.

02.12.50.

In 1947, I entered the institute. In 1950, I got married and I have two children.

02.14.00.

Many times I tried to find the Germans who saved my life but I had no success. People with whom I spoke about my rescuers did not believe me, and all I could hear was that all Germans were ugly during the war and nobody wanted to help me to find those Germans. But I know for sure that if my boss and his friend did not help me I would never have survived.

02.16.00.

My mother and father were killed in the ghetto and many members of my mother's and father's family died during the war too. Many times people asked me how I could work for the Germans and each time I explained that first of all I tried to survive and besides the job I had was not involved with killing people; I worked in a transport organization.