

## **RG-50.407.0155**

### **Summary**

Vladimir Patent was born in Minsk in July 1929. He had four brothers and three sisters. His father Aron Wolfovich, had no education he could only sign his name, he worked with his mother in the garment factory. His mother, Gurevich Sarah Elevna, was born in 1900. When they had four children his father decided to join Jewish collective farm near Minsk.

The Jewish collective farm was organized primarily by Jewish people. Both parents worked there and all children helped.

This collective farm was doing very well until a new director from the communist party came in 1933. In 1937 his father and many Jews left the collective farm.

His father bought a horse and started transporting materials for constructions. His parents bought a small house they had a cow. In 1939 his parents bought a larger house. He went to a Jewish school for four years, but in 1938 all Jewish schools were closed and he went to a Russian school. The family spoke Yiddish at home. The parents subscribed to Jewish newspapers and celebrated Jewish holidays. He remembered bring bags of matzah, that was baked in a Jewish bakery that existed until the beginning of the war.

Jews lived with Russians on the same street in the same area, and people had friendly relationship.

Before the war they heard about Hitler and occupation of Poland. Two polish-Jewish solders happened to live in his grandmother's house for some time. However, the Soviet Government didn't give any information about possibility of German occupation. On the contrary, they heard on the radio that Germans will never reach Minsk, and that Soviet army was pushing Germans out of the country.

He doesn't remember any preparation by the Government before the war. People didn't know about destiny of Jews in Europe. Nobody knew the truth.

The family lived very modestly, children shared clothes, but they were not hungry.

Vladimir remembered that on the first day of the war June 21, 1941 they heard on the radio that the army is attacking Germans, while in reality Germans started bombing Minsk. On that day they had an event the "Opening of the Lake", people didn't expect anything.

Vladimir thinks that some Russian people were in reality undercover German spies and already lived in Minsk, and when the war started they became officers of the German army, and sometimes acted like "Soviet" police.

His father was 43 years old and he wasn't recruited. During the first days the whole family including relatives tried to leave the town, but they returned because they were told that

Germans are moving away. On the contrary by June 28th Germans entered the city, on the 29th they saw soldiers that were captured by Germans.

After one-week Germans ordered all men 16 years and older to go for registration at the gathering place outside of the city. His older brother was able to escape after registration, and he came home.

All Jewish men were sent to the local prison, many of them were killed, but after a week his father came home. Germans had information about Jews, because Russians reported them to Germans.

In July a new order came for Jewish people to move to a specific area near Jewish cemetery at the Yubilineaya plaza, and it became Minsk Jewish ghetto. Jews were ordered to wear yellow stars on their clothes. It took time for people to find places to live. Vladimir's family ended up living in with three other families, about 8 people in each small room. The ghetto was big, 20% of people in Minsk were Jewish.

In the ghetto people survived by exchanging money and valuables for food that was brought from outside. Sometimes his father had small jobs, because he had a horse. Working people got one loaf of bread per week. First, they had a small hospital and a Jewish committee, later all was closed.

Every morning people were assigned to different jobs; his father and his brothers worked as carpenters making coffins for Germans, Jews didn't need coffins. They receive some soup during lunch.

In the winter of 1942 Hamburg's Jews were brought to their ghetto, but kept separated. They were settled in empty homes without heat or food. Those Jews who had German marks, were able to survive for some time. At the end they were all killed together with Soviet Jews. They were told that they were transported to Palestine. Those who had valuables and gold were robbed by Germans and policemen.

On March 2nd Germans began a major round-up of Jews. They gathered very many people and conveyed them to the train station and from there to concentration camps. There were several round-ups when Germans with Russian policemen dragged people out of their homes in ghetto or just from the streets.

Vladimir went with his family, but decided to run away from the group of Jews, and one German soldier hit him with the gun and everybody thought that he was dead. When he regained consciousness, he saw nobody on the street and he went back to the Ghetto. He was hiding all the time. He knew about partisans, but had no connections. After a month he decided that the only way to stay alive is to go to the woods. In one village an old woman who recognized him as a Jew, gave him some food and showed him how to get to partisans. He walked for 2 days about 60 kilometers. He was lucky because he found a post of Jewish partisans. These Jews were all communists and they left before the organization of the Ghetto.

The commander was a Jewish man Lapidus. Vladimir stayed with them for about 2 months, he was on the watch out, he didn't have a gun.

Vladimir was in a small brigade. Not far from them was a famous partisan brigade of Zignakof, and they all were betrayed and later killed. The brigade of Nikitin, another Jewish man, came to stay next to Lapidus' brigade. Nikitin's group had weapons and was well organized. Lapidus ordered Vladimir to move to Nikitin's brigade.

Vladimir remembered that he received an assignment with about half of their brigade to go and blow up the bridge. They were led by a commander who was a major in the army, but when they stopped in the nearby woods, the commander and his wife disappeared.

When they arrived, they saw that another group blew up the bridge and Vladimir with two others went back. Then they stopped near the village, older men went to the village to get some food, but when they returned they told Vladimir who was only 16 years old, to go back to the brigade base alone and to tell the commander that he got lost.

Later Vladimir learned that the major and his wife were traitors.

Vladimir found the place, but the brigade was gone, after 10 hours of walking he was very tired and fell asleep. People from his brigade found him and took him to the base.

In the summer of 1942 his brigade together with another brigade, Stalin's brigade, received an order to push Germans out of the nearby village. Stalin's brigade included many Jews who ran from Germans to partisans. But the commander of Stalin's brigade sent primarily Jewish partisans to the designated location, that happened to be an open field, they didn't get any support and were opened to Germans' attack and were killed.

Vladimir remembered that he participated in several operations of capturing German officers. Once they saw a special car, they shot the car and captured the general.

Vladimir remembered that his brigade moved from place to place, they had about thousand people at that time. The commander wanted to cross the front line and to find help for people who were sick and to get support from the army. The brigade included women, who were finding refuge from Nazis, wives of partisans, children and elderly people. When they arrived near Kalinin, another commander told them that they had to cross the swamp to get closer to Soviet Army. It was at the end of 1942.

Many people from the brigade were picked for the army, Nikitin was arrested and received 10 years of camps, because he apparently, refused to return to the woods.

Many members of the brigade were sent back behind the front line.

Vladimir with some other young people went to Ufa, the place where people evacuated and there he attended the technical school, but he and a couple of his Russian friends left after two months, because of starvation and cold. They wanted to get back to the army, but were

stopped at another station and the policemen sent them to the drivers' school. In August of 1943 they finished the program and he was sent to the Reserves. He was picked by the army commander and joined a battalion as a driver and was involved in liberation of several towns all the way to Berdichev. In Berdichev, which was a well-known Jewish town, Vladimir found that all Jews were gone, the majority were killed, some ran away. He saw a local policeman hanged on the Main Street.

10 kilometers near Berdichev his car ЗИЦ 42, got broken, and he was asked to wait in that village for another car. He waited for two weeks, he slept in the car, but when he ran out of food he went to the nearby village, he washed, got more food, and went back to wait. After almost two weeks, he returned to the village but the brigade already left, but when he went back to the car, it was gone - the passing army brigade took it.

Vladimir started looking for his brigade and after some time he found them. He was ordered to go to his car that now was located on the airbase in the village not far away. Later he was assigned to the airbase brigade and received a tractor to work at the airport.

Later he was sent to a different brigade and he became machine gunner. His brigade went all the way to Rovno, and then in 1944 they were sent to Finland front.

At the end of the war his brigade was sent to capture anti-Soviet groups that were hiding in the woods of Estonia and Latvia. England was helping them with weapons, local people supported them, they had a lot of money. There were a lot of confrontations between his brigade and local people.

In 1945 the whole brigade was sent to Astrahani and from there Vladimir was supposed to go to the Far East. Vladimir didn't want to continue military services, he went to the hospital, showed that he really could see only with one eye and he was released from military services. He only received 100 rubles as a soldier and went to Kuybashev to his aunts, and then returned to Minsk.

He didn't find anybody from his family, just one distant cousin.

He came to his old house, but it was occupied by a police officer and his family. They let him in and gave him a couch in a small room. However, after about one week, they locked him out of the house.

Vladimir went to the local authorities, went to court, where he was told that he has to prove that the house belonged to him. He found many Russian witnesses. He was very upset and told the policemen that he had nothing to lose, that he lost everybody. In a couple of days that policemen came to the house of his cousin and apologized. Vladimir moved back to a small room.

Vladimir started working as a driver and soon after met his wife. It was very hard for him to live in his old house, so eventually he moved with his wife's' family. He worked as a truck driver for 10 years.

After he returned his neighbors treated him very nicely, and tried to help him.  
In 1953 he got a job painting houses, he had that job for 19 years.

He heard about Stalin's repressions but it didn't touch him as he was a worker.  
After the Six Day War in Israel people started talking with more respect towards Jews.

In 1972 his older son in law decided that he wanted to immigrate to Israel. He had two uncles in Israel. When they were leaving many people came to say good bye. Vladimir had no problems getting his exit visa, while his son -in-law who was an engineer had many difficulties and threats.

In Israel he started working as a house painter. In 1973 when the War begun he went to the military plant in Haifa and became an auto-mechanic.  
In 1987 he had a heart attack. By then his older daughter moved to Australia and he with his wife followed their children. He had a heart surgery in Australia. He is grateful to that country.

Vladimir wants his grandchildren to always remember the terrible suffering that he and all Jewish people went through.

Vladimir visited Minsk after 25 years. He was surprised that people look much older than their age, he thought that older people in Belarus had a very hard life.

The majority of Vladimir's friends immigrated to Israel, to America and to Australia.

Vladimir shows his documents.

The document states: that Vladimir Aronovich was a partisan in 1942 In Nikitin's brigade in Minsk district. He came to the brigade from Minsk.

Second document: the organization Guilt for Jews who were captured in Minsk ghetto, confirms that Vladimir Aronovich, born 1925, lived in Minsk Ghetto with his family.

Vladimir Aronovich also brought a book: *Tragedy of Belarus's Jews 1941- 1944*.  
This book was published in Minsk in 1995 in Russian.