

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Dumer, Lev

Date of interview: 2/26/1991 & 5/5/1992

Summary: (Engineer in the Red Army, History, In Russian, of his parent's murder by Nazis in Odessa)

Lev Dumer was born in Odessa, Ukraine in 1919. Before the beginning of the war Lev lived in a predominantly Jewish community. In fact there were over fifty Jews living in his building. Prior to the war Odessa was the center for Jewish culture. Between 1925 and 1930's there were 41 synagogues, 3 Jewish theaters and various Jewish schools open to the community. Before the Russian Revolution, there was also a Jewish encyclopedia in print. Lev felt anti-Semitism before the beginning of the war. His mother's parents died during pogroms. There was an anti-Semitic family that lived in his building.

Prior to the beginning of the war Lev finished his university education where he received his degree in radio engineering. He was working in Kirovograd when the war began. By the end of the war he made his way back to his hometown of Odessa. The tragedy of the Russian Jews began when the Nazi troops entered Kiev on September 29th. In Kiev, more than 100,000 Jews were destroyed over a period of 4 days. As the Nazi troops moved forward towards Odessa, the Russian government didn't warn the Jewish population of the danger that they would soon face. Much of the Jewish population was unaware of the danger that they were in, many didn't feel an immediate need to evacuate, and others didn't have the means to leave. Lev's family and grandmother evacuated to Chelabesky(?) in August 1941(?). Lev's grandmother, Pena Gershova Dumer, died while evacuating later in 1943. On October 16th, the Romanians entered Odessa. The following day all Jews were called to register. The anti-Semitic family living in Lev's building betrayed the Jewish families and revealed those who were attempting to hide. Foodim, Lev's mathematics/physics professor in college was unable to make it to the registration because he was ill and handicapped. The Nazis dragged him out of bed and hanged him in the streets. On October 23rd, Jews were called to come to various points. From there the Jews were forced into the city jail. Around 10,000 people were shot at the jail. Around 25,000-30,000 Jews were forced to walk 7 kilometers to the armory. The elders were unable to walk and were shot along the way. The people remained in the warehouse overnight. Alexander Sepino was one of the people in the warehouse who was able to escape overnight by digging a whole in the ground. In the morning the Germans lit the armory on fire murdering the people inside. Lev later put cables along the trail leading to the former armory. For five years everyday he observed a minute of silence as a prayer for those who perished. Those who did not perish in the shooting or in the armory were sent to a ghetto in Srabodka. Lev goes on to mention various righteous people who risked their lives to save Jews. One of them is Oleg Krist who risked his life to hide 15

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

families. Jora Temoshenko helped Jews by trying to provide food for them. By the end of the Holocaust over 225,000 of Odessa's Jews had been destroyed.

Lev also goes on to tell the story of his aunt, uncle and two cousins who lived in Pervopol. On August 26th/27th the Jewish women and children were told to gather in a church. There they were told that they would go out to the field to gather potatoes. In the field the Nazis murdered 200,000 women and children. Among the dead were: Riva Voloshen , Genia Voloshen , and Fina Voloshen. Moses Voloshen was taken away a day before because of his writing abilities. He was killed 15 days before liberation.

Lev goes on to describe the difficulty of living during, and the years immediately following, the Stalin regime. He talks about the growing anti-Semitic trend in Russia during the years following World War II. He also talks about the Russian government hiding the evidence of the Holocaust from the people. Although Lev wasn't in Odessa during the Holocaust he spent many years gathering information from survivors and witnesses in order to preserve the memory for future generations.