

BARČS, Jazeps  
Latvia Documentation Project  
Russian  
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Tape 1

In this interview, Jazeps [**Joseph**] Barčš, born in 1928 and a native of Chervonka in the Bebren region of Latvia, talks about the plight of the local Jews, and discusses a specific event in which a group of local Jews were shot during World War II. He also talks about the current situation in Latvia.

**[01:] 00:30:00 – [01:] 02:14:25**

He gives his name as Jazeps Victorovich Barčš, date and place of birth as July 14, 1928, Riga; mentions that before the war his parents divorced, his mother married another man, and they moved to Chervonka estate he [*his stepfather?*] co-owned; recalls a local concert that he and his brother helped prepare for that was canceled because of news of war.

**[01:] 02:15:00 – [01:] 07:19:25**

He describes the retreat of the Red Army, and says it was disorganized; notes that the Germans stopped by Chervonka before splitting into the directions of Daugavpils and Riga; describes German tank troops and recalls a sense of awe they inspired; says that a few days later local policemen appeared, they had white stripes on their sleeves and were armed with rifles; talks about evacuation of some Communist Party officials and Jews earlier; describes witnessing a group of Jews escaping on horse-driven carts, a low-flying German plane shot at them killing a horse and wounding a man; mentions roaming in the woods with friends finding a rifle and a map case.

**[01:] 07:20:00 – [01:] 16:44:25**

He relates how a car loaded with furniture, sewing machines, and other household items once came to their house in Chervonka; estimates that there were about five or six armed locals in the car, mainly plain-clothed; says that two of them, **Boleslav Chekis** and **Apelis** [*first name unknown*], were personal acquaintances and that they asked for some food; says **Chekis** told his mother about shooting Jews from Akniste; recalls **Chekis** explaining that shooting was scary at first but as they drank [alcohol] it became easier; remembers the guests giving his mother a set of dishes before leaving; says that later **Chekis** was sentenced to 25-year imprisonment after the war; mentions **Apelis** escaped abroad, to perhaps Canada or the United States, from where he sent presents to his son in Bebren; mentions that local Roma, Communists, and POWs were also persecuted and killed during the war.

**[01:] 16:45:00 – [01:] 19:54:25**

He talks again about a group of retreating Jews being attacked by a German plane; says there were few Soviet planes, recalls how eight Soviet planes were destroyed in Bebren on one day; surmises that Jews in that group were of the poor, as more affluent were escaping in cars.

**[01:] 19:55:00 – [01:] 29:59:25**

He talks about the murder of a group of Jews in Silene as witnessed by his father; relates that the Jews were first gathered in a school and then tricked into coming out on the pretext of being taken to a ghetto in Braslava; mentions that local residents were forced by Germans to provide horses and carts; reports that the shooting took place by Lake Smilginas; notes that pits had been dug before; mentions that a few Jews hid in the lake; describes the shooting; names local collaborators killing Jews: **Moskalyonok**, **Masterovoy**, **Anton Krukovsky**; relates how a few local residents ran away with Jewish belongings; talks about the post-war fate of collaborators: **Moskalyonok** was sent to prison, **Krukovsky** ran off to Poland; tells about one Jew from Silene surviving war: he worked a short time at the post office and then left; mentions attempts of local tramps to dig for valuables in the pits; tells that the Jewish graves were later marked and fenced off; mentions that in the early 2000s, he bought land and a lake adjacent to Jewish graves, and sometimes goes and brings flowers there.

**[01:] 30:00:00 – [01:] 34:06:25**

He mentions that there were no Jewish stores in Chervonka; talks about the current situation in Latvia, the spread of historical revisionism, an attempt to rewrite history, to erase Latvia's involvement in the Holocaust and shift responsibility for wartime atrocities to imposition of Soviet rule.