

MIKHAYLOVSKY, Boris
Ukraine Witnesses Documentation Project
Russian
RG-50.575*0013

In this interview, Boris Alexandrovich Mikhaylovsky, born on December 2, 1929, in Kharkov, talks about his life in the city of Kharkov during German occupation, as well as about his escape from a labor camp, where he and his mother were forcefully placed by the Germans. He describes seeing several convoys of Jews rounded up into the ghetto and witnessing how they were occasionally attacked by criminals who had been released from prison by the Germans. He also talks about a massacre of Jews that occurred in a synagogue, the evidence of which he and a friend accidentally stumbled upon while searching for firewood. He discusses how he and his mother hid a boy named **Enya**, their neighbor, who escaped from the Kharkov Tractor Plant “Харьковский тракторный завод,” (КТР), where all of the Jews had been taken. Furthermore, he describes an incident when he was mistaken for a partisan and miraculously escaped hanging. He also recalls his escape from a labor camp and talks about the village where he and his mother lived after the escape. Finally, he describes massacres and acts of arson that occurred in this village during the retreat of the German army.

File 1 of 1

[01:] 00:41:08 – [01:] 10:10:08
00:39 – 10:32

He introduces himself as Boris Alexandrovich Mikhaylovsky, born on December 2, 1929, in Kharkov; confirms that he lived in Kharkov during German occupation; says that immediately after the arrival of the Germans, all of the utilities in town were cut off; mentions atrocities and lootings committed by the Germans during the first days of the occupation; recalls seeing the notices ordering Jews to gather at a specific location in town and to act in accordance with instructions issued by the authorities; says that these notices also stated the punitive measures taken in cases of disobedience, or for harboring Jews; describes the procession of Jews walking along Pushkin Street, accompanied by the Ukrainian police; says that the day after he witnessed this procession, he and his friend went to houses bombed by the Germans to look for wooden objects that they could then use as firewood, that they happened upon a massacre in the courtyard of a synagogue and saw many corpses of murdered Jews, and that some of the bodies were mutilated; admits that he and his friend unwittingly took Torah scrolls from the synagogue to use as fuel for the fire; says that when he tried to light the scrolls in the stove, they did not burn, so he simply kept them at home.

**[01:] 10:10:09 – [01:] 22:11:02
10:33 – 23:03**

He explains that two or three days after he and his friend went to the synagogue, a Jewish boy named **Enya Finkler**, his friend and neighbor, came to their house after escaping from the KTP (Kharkov Tractor Plant), while his parents remained there; says that despite the threat of execution for sheltering a Jew, Boris and his mother decided to hide the boy, that the boy lived with them for five or six weeks, and that **Enya** then left to stay with relatives in the countryside; notes that he saw **Enya** after the war and that **Enya** thanked him for his help; recalls how on May 9, 1945, on Victory Day, he met a man in a city park, who was a Jewish rabbi; says that the rabbi told him that, during the war, a few very ancient and valuable Torah scrolls were stolen from the Kharkov synagogue; admits that he realized that he had taken the scrolls and returned only one of the scrolls, because he was not able to locate the others; in response to the interviewer's question, he confirms that he saw notices concerning the Jews living in the city; says that he saw people hanged in the streets, but could not identify them, because many people were hanged for acts of sabotage during that period; remembers seeing a sign with the word "partisan" on one of the bodies; recalls that after the explosion of a building where many German general officers were quartered, the Germans went into several apartments and killed the residents by hanging them out of the windows; describes witnessing a public hanging on Dzerzhinsky Square before going to perform agricultural work [*He and his mother were forced to work by the Germans.*]; says that a German officer announced that the same thing would happen to those who disobeyed the Germans; describes the month-long journey he and many others [*500 people in total*] took to perform work in the Poltava region; in response to a question, he explains that the Germans forced the local population to register at the labor exchange and that he was given the choice to either work in Germany or perform agricultural work in Ukraine; confirms that the young man on Dzerzhinsky Square was hung for the purpose of intimidation; notes that only 200 people survived the journey to the work site in the town of Reshetilovka; explains that instead of agricultural work, they were forced to work on the construction of the Kharkov – Kiev road.

**[01:] 22:11:03 – [01:] 30:57:19
23:04 – 32:11**

In response to a question posed by the interviewer, he confirms that the Jews who were rounded up in accordance with the notice, and who were walking along the street, stayed overnight at the synagogue, and were set to leave the next day, but instead of continuing on, the Germans decided to train their soldiers using human beings and organized a massacre; says that he and his friend saw the corpses of the massacre victims the next day; in response to a question, he notes that most people who witnessed the procession of Jews across the city were very compassionate and attempted to pass food to the children, but were pushed away by the accompanying guards; says that the Germans released all of the prisoners in the town of Holodnogorsk, that those prisoners

would break into the column of persecuted Jews and wrest away their belongings, while the Germans and the polizei laughed; argues that the Germans used these incidents to show that the local population did not like the Jews, although this was not the case; notes that the Germans videotaped these attacks. He says that, at the start of the occupation, the Germans killed and hanged many people, regardless of their nationality; says that he once barely escaped hanging; explains that an order was issued to check the passports of people in the streets, that people without documents were placed in a car [*possibly a gas wagon*] and driven away; recalls that during the period when his family was hiding **Enya**, gendarmes came to his house and asked if there were any Jews present.

**[01:] 30:57:20 – [01:] 39:55:12
32:12 – 41:32**

In response to a question about why he was to be hanged, he talks about how he was caught at a printing house, where he and his friend had gone to take woodblocks (wooden letters), which burned well; notes that a guard mistook him for a partisan and wanted to hang him immediately; explains that right before the hanging, a Polish soldier asked his name, and when the soldier realized that Boris was of Polish origin, he released him; notes that he now works in the same building where he was nearly hanged; talks about his current work, as well as his school years; recalls an incident he witnessed in Blagoveshchenskiy market, when a twelve-year-old boy tried to steal something from an elderly woman, and a German soldier, who witnessed this, cut off the boy's hand in front of all who were gathered.

**[01:] 39:55:13 – [01:] 47:20:23
41:33 – 49:16**

He describes how he and his mother escaped from the labor camp, how a few women from Korzhivka village sheltered them and requested their help with agricultural work [*during the spring*] in exchange for food; talks about how they lived in the village and about how he fed cows; says that as the Germans retreated, they burned his village; asserts that one of the Germans shot the cows on the farm, the same cows he used to feed; says that during the retreat, the Germans also burned about 20 people alive in a neighboring village; repeats the location of the POW camp from which he escaped: Poltava region, town of Reshetilovka.