

RG-50.589.1094

Witness 229R, Novochoerkassk

Interviewed for Yahad in Unum, 11 July 2011

Summary

The interviewee, a Russian man, was born on September 10, 1930 in Novochoerkassk, capital of the Don Cossacks. (the interviewee is a Cossack.) His father was a mechanic on the railroad. His mother was a housewife. He also had a sister. The interviewee describes the prewar factories and the ethnic composition of Novochoerkassk – Cossacks, Kalmyks, Tatars, Armenians. He describes the prewar repression of the Cossacks.

Before the German invasion there were many refugees from the west. They told horror stories of the invasion and then moved on. During the invasion of Novochoerkassk, the interviewee and his family hid in a cellar. The interviewee describes the occupation of Rostov, Taganrog and Novochoerkassk. The Germans treated the Cossacks well and brought phonographs and magazines. There were no public executions or hangings. Russians became policemen and told the Germans who were the Communist party members. [the interviewee does not say, nor do the interviewers ask, what happened to them.] Everyone had to register at a labor exchange. Some went to work in Germany, at first, voluntarily, but later forced. The interviewee sold wood at a market. One time he was taken to the police station for stealing a cow. Schools and churches remained open during the war, and Cossack traditions were not interfered. POW's worked at a nearby German casino. The interviewee says that the Cossacks fought on the German side at Stalingrad; he describes photographs he had seen of Cossacks in full military dress alongside Germans. The interviewee declares that none of his relatives fought for the Germans.

In September 1942, the Germans arrested his father for sabotage – an explosion on the railroad [a critical German supply route to Stalingrad]. The interviewee and his mother inquired about his father at the Gestapo station and were told that his father had been sent to a labor camp. In February 1943 when Novochoerkassk was liberated, bodies were found behind the prison. On May 18, 1943, a commission, chaired by a man named Khalatov, declared that his father had been executed. He was reburied in a common grave and a monument was erected.

After the war, the interviewee was not admitted to school in Odessa because he had lived in occupied territory.

Summary by: Joseph Bradley