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| Alexei Litvachuk | Duration: 56:36 | Russian Vets, Interview date Nov 30/2010 |
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- 00 00 (interviewer) **Alexei**: My name is Alexei Isayevich Litvachuk. (Interviewer) I was born on July 22, 1921. I was born in the city of Vinnitsa, Ukraine. (Interviewer: how did you learn that the war began?) I was drafted on March 15, 1940. 0036
- 00 36 I was drafted for military service in the Red Army as it was called at that time. We were put on a train and taken to Kishinev. We arrived at Skulianka Street where there were Romanian barracks. We occupied the barracks after the Romanians left. 01 12
- 01 12 We were young. We wore civilian cloths. We had to go through quarantine. I was assigned to serve in 262nd detached communications battalion, 148 rifle corps, Odessa Military District. I served there until the war began. 01 44
- 01 44 We stayed at the Kozhushno camps near Kishinev. Those were our summer quarters. We were trained in shooting, handling grenades, etc. We were also instructed in politics – learning the communist party leaders’ names. The camps were surrounded by fences. But we were young, and that didn’t stop us from jumping over and going to Kishinev. 02 27
- 02 27 Kishinev looked to me like a foreign city. We used to buy local wine for Soviet currency: 20 kopeks equalled 40 Ley. Our salary was 8.50 roubles per month. We were called Red Army men, not soldiers. We were excited to see the city which looked like a foreign city. 02 51
- 02 51 Everything went well until June 22. On the night of June 22nd we were watching a popular movie “The Circus” starring Lubov Orlova. After the movie we went to bed in our tents. We were wearing blue undershirts and blue sateen shorts. 03 17
- 03 17 Suddenly, in the middle of the night we heard an explosion, as we found out later the time was 4 am (None of us had watches, so at the time we didn’t know what time it was when it happened). We saw black smoke dispersing from a place 300 m away from our tent. 03 35
- 03 35 Our rifles were outside of our tent arranged in pyramids. My rifle was a 1891 model. It had a long bayonet. It was an outdated rifle used during the civil war of 1917-1921. I heard the command “fall in”. I put my boots on without socks and rushed out of the tent. 04 11
- 04 11 I thought it was a training alarm. We got on a truck and went to Kishinev, where our winter quarters were. At noon we heard a radio broadcast of Molotov’s speech. That’s how we learnt that Nazis “treacherously attacked the Soviet Union”. 04 37
- 04 37 We were listening with mixed feelings. What was the war like? What was going to happen to us? Right after the radio broadcasting we were ordered to go to the warehouse where we were given waterproof cape-tents. We had never seen them before. 04 57

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| 04 57 | We were given ammunition and grenades, each soldier got 2 grenades. So we got everything and felt puzzled: what it was all about. We were confused, we had no idea we would have to kill people. Our unit commander an Azerbaijan men Alibekov was replaced by Vasiliev. 05 30 | |
| 05 30 | Vasiliev was an interesting personality. He was a Finnish war veteran. We were lucky to have him as our commander. He never lost his composure. After being given the ammunition we got on trucks and went... where? We had no idea. It turned out we got to Gancheshty by mistake. 06 00 | |
| 06 00 | That was a place near the Romanian border. We stayed there for a couple of hours until someone said "Look, here come the hominy eaters!" "Hominy eaters" was the nickname for the Romanians. They were called corn-eaters or hominy-eaters. Later we saw real Fritzes. At that time the Germans were not called "Fritzes". 06 25 | |
| 06 25 | Someone said "Look, here come the Germans". It was June 22 nd , 5 or 6 pm when we saw the Germans in the daylight. As is turned out, first the Romanians were marching with the Germans following them. We were hiding behind a hill, watching them approaching us. 06 45 | |
| 06 45 | They were marching upright, we could see their jackets and belt buckles as they were approaching us. They had submachine guns in their hands. Their submachine guns looked different from our "Degtyarev" model submachine guns, with cartridge drums beneath. 07 11 | |
| 07 11 | Vasiliev started yelling at us "The Germans are coming! What are you waiting for? Fire!" We started shooting desultorily. I shot in the air. I was so confused. "Aim and fire at them, they are drunk!" We started aiming and shooting. That's how the war began... 07 32 | |
| 07 32 | We stood up until the dark. It was a beautiful June day. There was a bloodshed around. The Romanians scattered. We saw lots of dead Germans. It was only later into the war that we started calling them "Fritzes". I was shooting without aiming, I was shaking all over. 08 03 | |
| 08 03 | What was going on? I had no idea. I was shooting with my eyes closed until someone hit me. I wasn't even scratched, they shot over our heads, the Fritzes did. That's why we didn't sustain casualties. At some point close to 8 or 9 pm our commander gave an order to retreat, otherwise we would be surrounded. 08 31 | |
| 08 31 | We rushed to our truck which was waiting for us. We went back to Kishinev, where a total evacuation was being prepared, rather a total retreat. Kishinev was on fire. We headed towards the river Dniester. Many people wanted to cross the river. 09 06 | |
| 09 06 | There was no bridge there, only the pontoons. Many Gipsies and Jews were there. But first the military were let on the pontoons. After that we got on a train... the year was 1941, end of June. We got to Smolensk – Yelnia, Andreevsk – small villages near Smolensk. 09 41 | |

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| 09 41 | I heard someone saying that Vyazma was not far away. We were communication men, we got an assignment to lay a wire, probably to the Front HQs. We could hear a cannonade as we were laying the wire. Very soon we started a retreat leaving everything behind, as the Germans were advancing fast. 10 14 | |
| 10 14 | By that time I came to realize what the war was about. It was not an easy thing. But we were young, all we wanted was sleep and eat. We had seen a lot, we have learnt a lot what the war was like. We started retreating, the area was near the town Andreevsk. 10 45 | |
| 10 45 | The retreat was horrible. (interviewer asking Mila how to translate "Intercept". Please tell us how you intercepted German communications). Let me finish what I was saying, OK? Everyone was running. We were running day and night. We ran to the town Serpukhov, we didn't know that those were the suburbs of Serpukhov. 11 32 | |
| 11 32 | I saw machine guns and M1 trucks abandoned in the ditches. I saw crowds running away from the Germans. I remember one night in August. I saw Fritzes in front of me. They didn't fight at night. I said "Look guys, there are 3 Fritzes who stopped over there, in the village". 11 57 | |
| 11 57 | We were watching the Fritzes who were taking off their uniforms, as it was very hot and they were sweating. They didn't shoot. We were just watching them. That's how I saw the Fritzes at war. Remember I told you about those who were drunk? Those were in the past. 12 24 | |
| 12 24 | We were retreating. It looked like a marathon – crowds running away. I saw machine guns, ammunition and vehicles abandoned in the bushes. It was a major retreat, only later did I find out the name of the town – Serpukhov. At that moment we were stopped. 12 49 | |
| 12 49 | There was a fresh unit located there. Every running person was stopped, given a shovel and instructed to dig. We started digging trenches. A senior lieutenant was giving orders to dig. That was my second encounter with the Fritzes, near the village Shatovo. 13 31 | |
| 13 31 | The Germans were throwing down leaflets, saying "Tomorrow at 2 pm we are going to bomb Stalin Street". And exactly at the time indicated in the leaflet 40 German planes appeared from nowhere bombing our units – that was a massed air raid. 13 54 | |
| 13 54 | That was dreadful. But we were experienced soldiers, we didn't run away. I was sound, not a scratch. The Fritzes fired from machine guns, suddenly the shooting stopped, there came silence. A day or two later we were sent to cross the river Oka. 14 32 | |
| 14 32 | Oka was Volga's inflow. As it turned out our battalion had already moved to the new location and a new communications regiment was being formed – 94 communications regiment, 49 th army. That was the beginning of my service in the 94 communications regiment, 49 th army. 14 59 | |

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| 14 59 | My job was called a line supervisor, job nomenclature # 48. What can I tell you? At the war like at the war. We were doing our job. I was a private soldier, I was young just 19-20 years old. (interviewer: Please give us the details of your job). 15 24 | |
| 15 24 | I didn't shoot down any planes. I wasn't sent on reconnaissance missions. I was given different assignments. My job was to provide safe communications in complicated conditions of retreat when the Germans captured our communications devices. 15 45 | |
| 15 45 | One day I was given an assignment to capture German wires. It was a cold weather in October and November. There was a German communication line under the deep snow. As during the retreat we had left our communication lines behind, we now had to make up for our loss and steal German wires. 16 27 | |
| 16 27 | Germans were scared to go outside in the night time. We pulled out German wires from under the deep snow – each drum had 250 m of wire. The wire was triple-core non-inductive and waterproof. No comparison to our cables. We pulled out several drums of German wires. We decided to make the utmost use of the stolen cable. 17 15 | |
| 17 15 | I was a private with a heavy-cable platoon. One day I got an assignment to go to Klinzavod village and restore the communications. (Rambling) One of the groups laid the cable along the road, while my group laid the cable in the forest. 18 09 | |
| 18 09 | I was using the stolen German cable. It was an excellent quality cable, 250 m long wire in a drum. The year was '43. We entered the village. We were wet. The squad commander's name was Kardash. He was rushing us to finish the job fast. (Interviewer). I want to finish. We tripped on a landmine. 18 54 | |
| 18 54 | The guys who were laying the cable along the road were killed, nothing left of them. We were in the forest and could watch what happened. Nothing left of them, nothing! We entered the village of Klinzavod. There were 2 storey wooden houses along the road. 19 18 | |
| 19 18 | I saw a tank in the nearby bushes. I was with my friend Liosha Ananiev from the city of Gorky. I told him: "Let's go to the forest and search it for food". We were experienced soldiers at the time. We weren't called "Red Army men" any more, instead we were called "soldiers". We were experienced. 19 46 | |
| 19 46 | We knew that we could find food and other things in dead Germans' knapsacks. We were looking for Norwegian canned meat and rum flasks. Although we were given 100 g of vodka each time...I was very experienced at the time. 20 03 | |
| 20 03 | At that moment I heard and saw one of the wooden houses blown up. I knew that our guys had walked into the house to get dry from wet snow. It was already dark. I was in the forest searching dead Germans for food. I saw a dugout with bucks and pumps outside. We called them torch men. 20 37 | |

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| 20 37 | We knew it was a sign: if a village is on fire it meant that the Germans had retreated. They sent 3 or 4 torch men into the village, with fuel bucks and pumps to put the houses on fire. When I heard the explosion I knew our guys were inside the house. 21 09 | |
| 21 09 | It was a land mine. I was scared and mad: we had just lost our cable men and now those guys in the house. (sighs). I said to Liosha: "Are the torch men working on the dugout?" I saw the fuel bucks near the dugout. All of a sudden a lieutenant came up saying "Are there torch men?" 21 44 | |
| 21 44 | "Take them as POWs!" I made a mistake. I said to Liosha: "Who is going to bother taking them as POWs?" I threw a grenade into the dugout. I heard them screaming inside the dugout. After that we left. But someone obviously complained to the special department. 22 03 | |
| 22 03 | They complained that I threw a grenade instead of capturing POWs. I had no idea how many damn Fritzes were inside there. I didn't have any pity for them. They had just blew up our guys. That's what was happening day in day out. We didn't have pity for them. 22 20 | |
| 22 20 | I saw Fritzes in '41 and in '42 and '43 near Moscow. They were stopped near the village Shatovo. They weren't let to move a step towards Moscow. We had changed: we were skilled soldiers and we were smart too. I saw many dead Fritzes in the fields when they were retreating from Moscow. 22 46 | |
| 22 46 | We were near Serpukhov, south of Moscow, 60 to 70 km south of Moscow. The Germans were 18 km north of Moscow. They could see the streets of Moscow in their binoculars. We were south of Moscow, near Tula and Serpukhov. 23 10 | |
| 23 10 | South-west of Moscow... At that time I was an experienced soldier and smart too! Some guys used to say "Let's go to Fritzes, grab a little rum!" I knew a soldier by the name of Kiriukhin. We went there in the night time. Fritzes were freezing, they used to shout "Hey, Ivan, I'll give you my submachine gun, and you give me your winter boots". 23 38 | |
| 23 38 | They were as freezing cold as dogs. The Germans were so different then. There was the river Ugra near Yukhnov. We took water from that river and so did the Germans. When the Germans were taking the water they were yelling and laughing at us. 23 49 | |
| 23 49 | They were offering us their submachine guns in exchange for our winter boots: they were freezing. When we saw them we were disgusted so dreadful they looked. We wore appropriate winter cloths: padded coats for the soldiers and white sheepskin coats for the commanders. 24 06 | |
| 24 06 | We wore padded coats and padded pants, with warm underwear. We were getting 100 g of vodka each. Our food became better and better. We were already experienced soldiers. Once we were in the village Pushchino. We craved for some borsch. We were getting canned meat all the time. 24 25 | |

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| 24 25 | (Interviewer: was it during the war?) Yes, it was during the war. You know, we were already experienced soldiers. We weren't afraid of anything. When we wanted borsch, we decided to go to the German area to pick up some cabbage for borsch. 23 47 | |
| 24 47 | The Germans were in the village. We crawled on our stomachs to steal some cabbage from our Soviet kolkhoz kitchen gardens. We weren't scared. We were experienced by then. We knew the Fritzes wouldn't get out because it was too cold. 25 03 | |
| 25 03 | The temperatures were down to minus 40 degrees near Moscow. (Interviewer: weren't you afraid that the Germans...) God saved me as you can see. I had no fear. We crawled up to where the cabbage was. We used our knives (everyone had a knife) as the cabbage was as hard as stone. 25 27 | |
| 25 27 | The Germans used to hang lamps making it light as the daylight. They used rockets. When the rocket was up in the sky, it was light. We could see every little detail. We didn't have anything like that. (Interviewer: wasn't it a little weird that despite the war the Germans didn't shoot at you?) 25 56 | |
| 25 56 | Why would they shoot? They were in defence. Once we were called to the political department. The commissar asked us "Why do you fraternize with the Germans? They are our enemies." I was reprimanded as a Komsomol member. Why fraternize? I take water, and so does he! 26 17 | |
| 26 17 | We were on the opposite sides of the river... what was it called? I don't remember. He shouts: "Hey Ivan, I'll give you a submachine gun, give me your winter boots!" They used to wear ersatz winter boots. They didn't have appropriate winter cloths. They were cold. 26 34 | |
| 26 34 | They used to wear shmatas, women's scarves. They were disgusting. We were young, healthy and strong guys. There were also Siberian divisions. (Interviewer: tell us why you were selected to intercept German communications. Did you intercept anything interesting?) 27 05 | |
| 27 05 | No, I didn't. (Interviewer: Did you intercept German communications?) Are you talking about the war? (Interviewer: Yes, I'm talking about you intercepting enemy communications). I don't understand your question. (Interviewer: I'm talking about you intercepting their radio communications). 27 32 | |
| 27 32 | Oh that! (why did they select you?) First of all, because I was Jewish. I would have never defected to the Germans. There were defectors when we were retreating. Every night 5 out of 10 men defected to the Germans during our retreat. The Ukrainians used to pick up German leaflets and defect. 28 01 | |
| 28 01 | First of all I was a Jew and a Komsomol member. I didn't want to defect to the Germans. A lot of Ukrainians and other nationalities defected to the Germans. Many men were missing. We joined 90 th regiment or rather 94 th regiment communications. It happened because the battalion wasn't any more. 28 33 | |

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- 28 33 Why did they select me? It just happened so. Besides, I could speak German. (interviewer: please repeat) I was a Komsomol member and an editor of our unit's newsletter and a Jew to boot. I had a high school German. When the Germans spoke between themselves I could catch about 50% of what they said. 29 18
- 29 18 I was able to differentiate between the Central German, Bavarian and Lorraine dialects. "When did you arrive? What is your unit #? Who is your commander?" This kind of conversation was of some interest for the army intelligence. Our task was to handle an interception radio station. 29 50
- 29 50 We were behind the enemy lines and we wore civilian cloths. That's how it was. Once the Germans detected us. They baited us with dogs. The dogs smelled us. We had to throw grenades, that was the only way to fight back. The Fritzes kept their dogs on long leashes. 30 21
- 30 21 They sensed we were there. We were close to a German communications centre. They sensed we were close. We ran away. They threw a grenade at us. The German grenades were like this: a white handle and a ball. You take out the ball and you throw the grenade. 30 41
- 30 41 When on the ground the Germans grenades were spinning. At that moment I grabbed and threw it back. That's how I got my arm wounded. On another occasion we crossed the front line and found out that there wasn't our group any more. Our group was 12 men. 31 07
- 31 07 Half of them didn't come back. So that's how it was: a normal hard job. (Interviewer: did you intercept any important communications?) No, just minor, everyday conversations. They didn't discuss important matters over the telephone. Nobody spoke openly on the phone. 31 30
- 31 30 Private soldiers... they talked about where they were from, etc. (speaks German) they were just exchanging simple words. I could deduct about reserve forces. They were private. Sometimes intelligence could deduct some information. 31 49
- 31 49 We used to write everything down. You are looking for something like capturing a prisoner or a Yazyk (a prisoner who talks)? No, I didn't. I had a different task. (interviewer: what was your most important contribution to the war?) 32 12
- 32 12 My contribution? I was just following the orders. The situation used to change from day to day and even from minute to minute. Now you are alive, next minute you're dead. We used to know very well what was the front line like. I'll tell you a short story. 32 38
- 32 38 One day we were ordered to move to an area close to the village Nikitino. There was a frozen river nearby. We were hungry and cold. We saw German dugouts – there was no comparison. They were 4 layers, probably made for their commanders. They were well equipped, with wooden walls. 33 10

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| 33 10 | We got closer to the German dugout. At that moment our field kitchen came in bringing the kasha. We took out our mess tins and ran into the dugout. All of a sudden a shell hit a corner of the dugout. That was a mess! There was some grass between the layers. We rushed to cover the kasha, to save it from the dust, grass and debris. At that moment I didn't think about the shell. All I thought about was kasha. 33 55 | |
| 33 55 | Those were funny moments. Besides we knew that the second shell wasn't supposed to hit the same spot. Just keep the kasha away from dust. When we went out we saw that the second shell had hit a house nearby. You see, this is what service was like. 34 16 | |
| 34 16 | We just did our job. At the war like at the war. What can I say? Today we have one assignment and tomorrow – another one. I was just following the orders. (Interviewer: do you know any stories about Jewish heroes?) 34 41 | |
| 34 41 | (sighs). What can I tell you? We read newspapers, "The Red Star" newspaper, and the division's newsletter. Jews? In our battalion, in our platoon, there were 4 Jews. One guy's name was Tsekhmeister, another one's... only 3 or 4 Jews, not many. 35 10 | |
| 35 10 | We didn't differentiate, we were the same. We had same feelings, same life. Here's a short story. Once we were in a forest. I was the editor of the unit's newsletter. The motto was "Proletariats of all countries, unite!" and "Kill the German occupants". 35 35 | |
| 35 35 | A newsletter... My duty was to write down who killed Germans and how many Germans they killed. I was hanging the newsletter on a tree in the forest where we stopped for a snack break. I was talking to a guy named Kozlov. He was from the town of Morshansk. 35 53 | |
| 35 53 | He was a teacher, a Russian guy. I am a Jew, but we never differentiated between the nationalities. That's how it was in our unit. I can't tell you about how it was in other units. I asked Kozlov to write an article for the newsletter, as he was a smart guy. 36 12 | |
| 36 12 | He was a medium built guy. Suddenly we heard a sound of a shot. It used to happen often. There were also stray bullets. I fell down and so did Kozlov. He was on my right. The bullet hit him in the temple. I saw him falling down with his submachine gun on the ground. 36 43 | |
| 36 43 | I saw white lather coming out of his nose. As it turned out there were the "cuckoos" there, that's how we used to call the Finnish snipers who were very dangerous and loyal Nazis. I tried to shoot back. Other guys started shooting too, but the cuckoo was gone. 37 03 | |
| 37 03 | Wasn't I lucky? He was hit in the temple and dropped dead, while I didn't get a scratch! That's how it was. I can't say anything about the Jews. There were very few Jews in our unit. 37 24 | |
| 37 24 | Of course, not a single Jew defected, while other nationalities did. (Interviewer: did you face anti-Semitism during the war?) No, I didn't. That | |

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| | | never happened in our unit. Once we entered Kaluga, on the 5 of 6 of December. 37 51 |
| 37 51 | | It was an all-round offensive. We were in the second echelon. When we entered Kaluga, I found 250 people Jews... Kaluga had been occupied by the Germans for only 1 or 2 months. I remember the Chubar Club and a church. I found 250 Jews in the church. 38 15 |
| 38 15 | | We entered the church and saw the Jews there. They were lucky we liberated them. Kaluga had been occupied for 1 or 2 months. The Germans didn't have time to kill them. There wasn't any anti-Semitism in our unit. There might have been hidden bastards. 38 33 |
| 38 33 | | I didn't see any open Anti-Semitism. It was strictly punished by special departments. What can I tell you? A Jew is always aware of anti-Semitism. (Interviewer: tell us more details about saving the Jews in the church). 38 53 |
| 38 53 | | (Interviewer repeats the question). What about the Jews? I don't understand your question. (Interviewer repeats the question). That was our total offensive near Moscow. We pushed the Germans 250 km from Moscow. The North-West and the South-West army groups were involved. 39 21 |
| 39 21 | | We approached the town of Yukhnov, and the villages Olkha and Trebushinki. What about the Jews? Jews or gentile, who cared? (Interviewer repeats her question). When we entered Kaluga we saw a horse stable in one of the churches. 39 48 |
| 39 48 | | They were bastards and swine, the Germans were. You are too young to fully understand. (Interviewer: tell us how you found 250 Jews in a church). When I entered the church I saw many Jews there. Someone told me they were 250. That's how I know how many they were. 40 24 |
| 40 24 | | I remember the Chubar Club and the church. After that we went on and on – to the fields where we saw many frozen dead Fritzes. (Interviewer persists: how did you save 250 people?) Eh? (Interviewer repeats). I can't tell you. That's what the Fritzes were doing with civilians. 40 51 |
| 40 51 | | When the Germans occupied a town they recruited local collaborators to serve in the Police. (Rambling) The local Polizei used to search for the Jews. The Germans made announcements for the Jews to report to a certain check point. First they robbed the Jews and then murdered them. 41 26 |
| 41 26 | | That was their procedure everywhere. There were few Jews in those small Russian townships. Sometimes it was difficult to see the difference between the Jews and Gentiles. Everyone spoke Russian, being loyal to the Soviets. (Interviewer: what were your feelings, being a Jew and saving the Jews?) 41 55 |
| 41 55 | | When I was drafted, my official name was Abram Isaakovich. When I was in the hospital they changed my name to Alexei Isayevich. I was in 44/46 hospital in the town of Mossalsk. I met a doctor there who told me I was in for a lot of trouble my name being Abram Isaakovich. 42 21 |

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- 42 21 He left me my initials "A. I.", he wanted to change my patronymic to Ivanovich. I said "No, let's make it Isayevich". When I was drafted my official name was Abram Isaakovich. The doctor said "You are in for a lot of trouble". He knew what he was talking about. 42 44
- 42 44 I was too young to realize what was in store for me. I was so loyal to the Soviets, I was born during the Soviets. And so he said "Let's change your name to Alexei". I liked the way Alexei sounded. I had comrades by the name of Alexei. Every day the Germans used to throw down leaflets: "Kill Jews and Commissars". 43 05
- 43 05 Thousands of people read those leaflets, which played their role in dissemination of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism had always existed, although at times it was hidden. It used to be hidden before the war. (Interviewer: what were your feelings as a Jew seeing 250 Jews in Kaluga?) 43 34
- 43 34 Kaluga was a regional centre. (what were your feelings saving the Jews?) Listen, at that time I wore a regular uniform. I had a helmet on my head. I had an SVT submachine gun. I was just following my orders. When I entered the church and saw... that was not my first visit to Kaluga... 44 10
- 44 10 I liked Kaluga, that was a nice town. I had no idea there were Jews in Kaluga though, no idea. I was a young guy. I didn't care whether or not there were Jews there. That wasn't my concern. I just saw the Jews gathered there... We didn't know that the Germans killed Jews. 44 34
- 44 34 While at the front I didn't know what they had done to my mother, my uncle and 60 persons of my mishpokhe. My entire mishpokhe was murdered... He [my uncle] thought the Germans wouldn't kill him because he had been in prison for handling the gold... 44 49
- 44 49 They thought that the Germans wouldn't be worse than the communists. My mother, my sister, my niece and many more – all of them were murdered, all the 60 of them were murdered, the entire big family. We didn't know about that while at the front. 45 05
- 45 05 We didn't know...but the leaflets were so straightforward: "Kill the Jews and Commissars!" The leaflets were thrown down every day. Some defected to the Germans. We can't judge all the Ukrainians or all the Belarusians. But local residents knew where the Jews were hiding. 45 29
- 45 29 They were following Germans' orders to turn the Jews in. (Rambling) I didn't suffer... I had the same arms, ate the same food... (What were your feelings when you saved the Jews?) What were my feelings? Those were people doomed to die. They didn't cry, they were just waiting to be killed... 46 05
- 46 05 That's what I felt later. At that moment I didn't have time to contemplate or analyze. I had seen a lot of atrocities committed by the Germans towards the Russian population. There weren't Jews in the Russian villages near Moscow. 46 23

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| 46 23 | I wasn't a Jew at the moment – I was an ordinary Soviet soldier. I spoke Yiddish. I still do. I spend 10 years studying at a Jewish school. I didn't care whether they were Ukrainians or Russians. (Interviewer: today, do you percept yourself a Jew? What are your feelings now thinking back to saving so many Jews?) 46 54 | |
| 46 54 | I am proud to be a part of the Jewish people. Sometimes I wore headsets... There were radio stations...my friends gave me headsets... I heard "Achtung, achtung, Lafung!" I didn't know that Lafung was the name of a Jewish designer, had no idea, you know... 47 18 | |
| 47 18 | I heard the Germans... They warned "Achtung, achtung", they warned: "Here comes...Lafung". "La" stood for Lavochkin – a Jewish aircraft designer. I am proud, you know....I learned that so many Jews were awarded the title of the Hero...47 42 | |
| 47 42 | So many Jews sacrificed their lives. (Explain how Germans warned other Germans about planes designed by the Russian Jews?) During the war... you are a modern day young lady and you ask your questions from the point of view of a modern young person. 48 06 | |
| 48 06 | Had you been there at that time, you wouldn't have differentiated between the Ukrainians and Russians... we were the same. We didn't undergo anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism was hidden. That was complicated. (Please tell us about your feelings when you heard the Germans saying "Achtung, Achtung" warning about the planes...)48 30 | |
| 48 30 | I didn't know at the time... I knew what Lafung was, I knew that LA were the first letters of the designer's name. I was just a boy, a young guy. All of my friends were Russians. The Russians were my comrades. My best friend's name was Alesha Ananiev from Gorky. 48 54 | |
| 48 54 | Those were great guys – Lebedev and Dubinin. We were friends, we shared our food. We didn't care about nationalities. (Interviewer: please repeat what you said earlier). The Fritzes spoke plain text. Once I was at a radio station. The operator let me listen to communications. 49 29 | |
| 49 29 | They spoke plain text, guiding their squadron. I didn't know what was Lafung. That was similar to TU-104 or TU-154. We still don't know what it stands for. I didn't know at the time. I was proud when I learned that general major Lavochkin was a Jew. 49 52 | |
| 49 52 | He was a Jew from the city of Kalinin, a taylor's son. I was proud for my nation, proud for the Jews. It was scary what the Germans wrote, scary! We were... We never hated Russians or Ukrainians. We saw, we understood... but in the army... I was in the acting army. 50 17 | |
| 50 17 | (Interviewer: were you proud when you killed the Germans?) When I saw the Fritzes I had no mercy for them. I hated them. I saw what they did to the Russian population in small villages – burning down villages, torturing people – I saw what they did. 50 43 | |

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| 50 43 | I saw what they did when we entered the territories near Moscow previously occupied by the Germans. I saw what they did: turning churches into horse stables, running naked in front of Russian women – they didn't see the Russians as human beings. 50 59 | |
| 50 59 | As for the Jews – they annihilated the Jews. We didn't know the scope of their crime against the Jews. It was only after the war that I found out about their atrocities. I came home to Vinnitsa just to see there was nobody left there. I heard horrible stories. 51 30 | |
| 51 30 | They were killing people just for their nationality. I hated and despised the German bastards. You have no idea, how we hated them, my Russian comrades hated them too. (Interviewer: are you proud today for killing the Germans who killed so many Jews?)52 09 | |
| 52 09 | My dear young lady, please listen to me. During the war nobody boasted about how many Germans they killed. We were doing our job. The Fritzes were our enemies. We knew what they were like, what they did to people, including the Russian people. 52 34 | |
| 52 34 | After the war we found out what they had done to the Jewish people. Please understand: we were soldiers, we weren't commanders, and we didn't know much about what was going on. We saw people in the territories previously occupied by the Germans – they weren't Jews, they were Russians. 53 01 | |
| 53 01 | The Jews had been annihilated – either by the Russian or by the Ukrainian Polizei. We were in the Russian land. I know what was going on in those villages and district centres. That was scary! I witnessed a massed air raid in Serpukhov. 53 24 | |
| 53 24 | I saw it from a distance. They send 40 planes to bomb Stalin Street in Serpukhov. That was scary. There were few Jews there. The rest were Russians. The Russians are a great people. They were many while Jews were few. That's why we are so proud now. 53 57 | |
| 53 57 | We are proud Canadians now. There is no anti-Semitism in Canada. Anti-Semitism was in Ukraine, West Russia and the Baltic states. We live in a different country. At that time I was young, I didn't see any difference. When I heard insults I ignored them, I didn't care. 54 23 | |
| 54 23 | That was a hard time for us. (Interviewer: do you see yourself as a Jewish hero?) What do you mean "a hero"? A hero means that a person was awarded for outstanding merits – winning a battle, sacrificing one's life, committing Matrosov's heroic deed – throwing one's body on an enemy's gun-port, etc. 55 12 | |
| 55 12 | That's a hero. We were rank and file soldiers doing dangerous job day in day out, doing a hard and mortally dangerous job. That's the war. There were also cooks, logistic men, barbers, gunmen – they were also involved in the war. Taylors, laundresses – they were also involved in the war. Were they heroes? 55 40 | |

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| 55 40 | | Everyone contributed to the victory. How can I say "I'm a hero"? I was just one of them. Would I be able to commit a heroic deed? I think I wouldn't have chickened. I would have been able to do it. I was disciplined and had no fear. Day or night – I didn't have any fear. 56 04 |
| 56 04 | | Telephone operators, communication operators... What do you mean "a hero"? I see myself as a participant in the slaughterhouse. Nobody boasted "I have killed 2 Germans"... Artillery men were shooting indirectly, not seeing the Germans! 56 36 |
| 56 36 | | End of interview. |