

Alexei Shtern	Duration: 57:40	Russian Vets, Interview date Mar 15/2011
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- 00 00 (Your name and date of birth) **Alexei**: I was born in Odessa in 1922, 24th June. My name is Alexei Shtern. (Your rank and what you did) on May 12th '41 my year of birth was called up. The war began 1.5 month after I was drafted. 00 51
- 00 51 I was dressed as a civilian. Those who had a secondary education were selected to enrol in a tank college – 2nd Kharkov Tank College. I studied there for 7 or 8 months including combat experience, I'm not sure for how long. 01 13
- 01 13 We were told that on graduation we would be given an officer's rank. However we were only given a rank of a sergeant major. The graduation paper said that we are to occupy platoon commander's posts. 01 26
- 01 26 (anti-Semitism) During my studies at the college we were several Jews there. College commander... college deputy commander was a Jew, a lieutenant colonel, I don't remember his name. 01 53
- 01 53 I didn't encounter any anti-Semitism in the army. I was stronger than them in all... in terms of knowledge. Like all my soldiers I carried heavy pieces of wood to tie up to tanks, as well as heavy shells. 02 18
- 02 18 I was very well respected. (The Battle of Stalingrad experience). Stalingrad was in ruins with German air raids day and night. Some of residents stayed in basements. 02 44
- 02 44 Stalingrad was completely in ruins. Our brigade was stationed near the Tractor-building Plant, the Stalingrad Tractor-Building Plant. We were dug in the ground, in the defensive. 03 05
- 03 05 We were bombed. We shot back. We didn't let them advance to Volga in our section of the battle field. (Interviewer). When I was wounded? I was wounded when my tank was bombed. 03 30
- 03 30 We were 4. 1 men disappeared I don't know where – he was killed or burnt in the tank...The guys dragged me out of the tank. They dragged me by my collar... it was freezing cold...03 54
- 03 54 They dragged my to the river Volga. I don't remember much. I couldn't speak. I was contused and wounded. I was hospitalized to Ufa. The hospital was in the mountains. 04 14
- 04 14 I remember seeing oil rigs there. Afterwards we were transferred... more or less... we were put on trains and taken to the south...someplace... I remember a small town named Kata-Kurgan...don't know what republic it was in. 04 39
- 04 39 As far as I know it was in Kazakhstan or someplace else. I stayed in the hospital for 1.5 months, altogether 5 months. In the summer I was sent to Nizhniy Tagil, the town of Nizhniy Tagil, where a Tank-Building Plant was. 05 12

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05 12	The head of the Plant was a Jew, twice Hero of Socialist Labour, ex chief engineer of Leningrad Tractor-Building Plant. I forgot his name. He later became 3 times Hero of the Socialist Labour. 05 28	
05 28	Stalin transferred him to Chelyabinsk to raise Chelyabinsk Tank-Building Plant. I saw him there on 2 occasions. (Why was he a Hero?) He evacuated Leningrad Tractor-Building Plant. 05 50	
05 50	He moved it to the North. In a short period of time he opened a new metallurgical plant in Nizhniy Tagil practically from scratch. They started making tanks practically under the sky. 06 04	
06 04	The tanks were the 34 Model. That's when we started producing the 34 Model tanks. Stalin awarded him the title... he was a chief...er...design...plant director...he was a Major General. Stalin awarded him a title... this...er...Hero of Socialist Labour. 06 27	
06 27	After a while, for manufacturing a significant number of tanks...the second title of Hero of Socialist Labour. Afterwards he transferred him... I forgot his name... 06 40	
06 40	Everyone knows this man... he transferred him to Chelyabinsk... I have already mentioned this. He received his 3 rd Medal of Hero of Socialist Labour for production of heavy tanks "IS" which stands for "Iosif Stalin". 06 57	
06 57	152.2 calibre guns. (Was he in the army?) No, he wasn't. At that time the whole nation was in the army. The whole nation worked for the army. He was... in production... the main person responsible for tank production. 07 22	
07 22	To tell you the truth, after the war Stalin didn't touch him. He was a 3 times Hero of Socialist Labour and he returned to Leningrad. People know that he didn't do anything to him. 07 40	
07 40	Just because he was Jew. He was general... as far as I remember colonel general. (Was he the top one in tank production?) During the war he was the top one in tank production. 07 58	
07 58	those were 2 plants that he opened from scratch: in Nizhniy Tagil and the other one he was sent to where he started manufacturing 30 tanks a day. 30 tanks every day! 08 14	
08 14	I visited the plant on 2 occasions when I came to accept tanks for the front. I met him in person. He was a handsome man and a good one too. He treated his workers well. 08 27	
08 27	He walked around the plant monitoring the metallurgical section, the mechanical section...the entire USSR tank building industry worked under his leadership. 08 41	
08 41	(Please give more details). They evacuated from Leningrad... from Leningrad...he evacuated a tractor-building plant...he build a new plant in the North. 09 08	

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09 08	I can't give you more details...All I know is that he started the production from scratch to open the metallurgical production under the sky. He did it all. I forgot his name...I knew his name. 09 24	
09 24	The whole world knows his name. (Do you remember his name?) No, I don't. I knew it very well. It's easy to find out. Everyone knows his name. Just consult any book and you'll find his story. 09 41	
09 41	Everyone in the Soviet Union knows his name, just ask around, everyone knows. (What did you do at the plant?) After my discharge from the hospital I was sent to the Tank-Building Plant, there was an order #03 signed by Stalin...10 04	
10 04	...ordering that specialists must work in their line because retraining would have taken a lot of time. I was sent to a plant in Nizhniy Tagil where the formation group was. 10 22	
10 22	Formation groups were at any tank-building plant. They trained the rest of specialists: mechanics, loaders (заряжающий) and artillery commanders. Officers and commanders were trained at tank colleges. 10 46	
10 46	At the plant I was given a group, not just I, I was a platoon commander in charge of 3 tanks. We went to the front. We loaded 30 tanks and went to the front. 11 04	
11 04	To Rzhev and Velikiye Luki. We were sent to Rzhev and Velikiye Luki, those were the towns. I got a mild injury and stayed at a medical battalion for a month. 11 23	
11 23	Which was a field hospital. I recovered at the medical battalion and was sent back to my unit. I was sent back to my unit which wasn't far away, just 80 km away. 11 41	
11 41	I was hospitalized to the medical battalion. I found the unit... regiment commander, and his assistant, HQ chief, combat commander... his name was Shapar. Sonya was the head of the medical battalion. 12 08	
12 08	We were friends with Sonya. That's how we went on. We went as far as Riga and on across the border to the Eastern Prussia... I forgot the name of the city there. We crossed a small river. 12 33	
12 33	We fought our way to Konigsberg where there were ancient forts... where our... the former our soldiers defended along with the Germans. They were Vlasov's army soldiers. Our guys weren't right... they were going to surrender, but our guys killed them all the same. 13 09	
13 09	I was shocked... they were shouting "We're Russian, we're Russian, guys, don't shoot..." but our guys shot them all the same. I wasn't involved in that. On the contrary I tried to stop them from doing that. 13 27	

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13 27	But even if our guys hadn't shot them, they would have been executed by a court marshal all the same. (b/g conversation) (Tell us about the defectors and the battle). 14 02	
14 02	The defectors? Vlasov's army soldiers... Vlasov was the army commander. He surrendered, he was surrounded and he surrendered. When he was a POW the Germans made him make up an army allegedly from volunteers who volunteered to fight against the Soviet power. 14 24	
14 24	To fight against the Soviet Army. All they wanted was just to survive, just to get a piece of bread. They got trained...Many of them... it's embarrassing to mention... were the Caucasians. 14 38	
14 38	They were POWs and they defended the Konigsberg forts. The forts were the largest fortification on the avenue of approach to Konigsberg. They were ancient fortifications. They were executed for high treason. 14 54	
14 54	They were traitors who were shooting at their compatriots. That's all I can tell about them. After Konigsberg we went to the Spit (коча) (small point of land running into sea). 15 07	
15 07	Into the Barents Sea. The Nazis consolidated a position on that Spit. They were real Nazis, a heavy German brigade. They didn't surrender. They were encircled but didn't want to surrender. 15 29	
15 29	Our soldiers... they [the Nazis] made a wire fence during the night. Our soldiers crawled up in the night and hung signs saying "POW camp". That was a joke. "POW camp". 15 46	
15 46	Afterwards 3 men were sent to capture them without a fight just to spare the lives on both sides. They didn't want to surrender. They agreed to received the interpreters... or rather parliamentaries...16 08	
16 08	There was a Jew, a captain among them. They had almost reached the border when they were killed – all the 3 of them: a major, a Jewish captain, don't remember his name and one more man. 16 23	
16 23	They killed them. When they were killed our troops... we were heavily armed, heavily! We attacked and totally exterminated them. Very few prisoners survived the attack. 16 40	
16 40	It was a Spit, I don't know what it's called now. We were few...(b/g conversation. Where did it take place?) Where the Germans held the line? (Yes). On the Spit in Kaliningrad region. 17 12	
17 12	Konigsberg region. That's not too far...30 km away... there's a spit, half of it is now in Estonia or Lithuania, not sure...and the other half is in Kaliningrad region. 17 31	
17 31	There's an ocean... and what country? Some capitalist country, close to Finland. We moved from there. We turned left and started moving towards Germany. 17 52	

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- 17 52 We were part of 3rd Belarusian Front. We went towards Danzig, that's a city I don't know it's current name. We called it a Polish Corridor. We advanced to the left part of the city. 18 10
- 18 10 The rest was moving on the right side in order to capture the city. Entering tanks into a city was a very difficult city battle – the Germans used to throw grenades from upper floors. 18 21
- 18 21 They didn't have problems knocking down our tanks. We intended to encircle the city from both sides in order to force them to surrender. I was wounded there and hospitalized for a month. 18 38
- 18 38 After the recovery I returned to my unit, it's a long story of my return to my unit. (Tell us about the battle of Danzig). They held the line in Danzig. There were many 12-13 years old young children among them. 19 02
- 19 02 Just young boys, 13 years old. They wore uniforms. They cried and shot. When captured they said "Heil Hitler!". They shouted "Heil Hitler", having been brought up accordingly. 19 21
- 19 21 They didn't have a right idea what was going on. Their parents were dead, the kids holding the line. We captured lots and lots of POWs. (b/g conversation)20 02
- 20 02 (Did you fight against children?) We didn't know that kids were hiding in trenches. We didn't fight against children. When captured... we didn't capture prisoners, that was the business of infantry. 20 22
- 20 22 Tankmen didn't capture prisoners. Many our tanks burnt down there. Infantry captured prisoners... I saw with my own eyes 12-13 years old children – boys in uniforms. 20 35
- 20 35 Wearing Nazi uniforms. They cried and shouted "Heil Hitler" after all. That's how Hitler raised them up. He sent children to fight in the war. (Rephrase) When we came to Danzig, we didn't know...there were many trenches near Danzig... 21 13
- 21 13 ... artillery and so on. Our aviators bombed and destroyed..., we advanced and there were incidents when we were bombed by friendly fire. I saw kids...when we captured and stopped...they surrendered... little kids. 21 31
- 21 31 12-13 years old kids wearing Nazi uniforms. They were sent to fight... it's not clear why he acted like that. Hitler was inhuman. That's all I can tell you regarding your question. 21 46
- 21 46 I don't know what our authorities did to them. (Your role in this battle) In this battle? (Yes).My role was... I'm going to tell you openly...I was scared... we knew those were the last battles. 22 06

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22 06	I was so eager to see my parents, so much! In '41 and '42 and '43 I didn't thought much about that. I thought about my parents and brothers, but the last battles... I knew we were close to the end (tears in his voice)...22 30	
22 30	(crying) Sorry...It was so hard...All I wanted was to see my parents even if I had to lose my arms and legs. (crying).22 46	
23 00	(What year was that?) It was, let me see, it was in '45, April or even earlier, in March, or between March and April. We knew it was coming to an end. At the end of the war we were transferred to another unit... 23 27	
23 27	We didn't have tanks, we were transferred to another unit to unite with other tank crews...fresh forces...I was on a truck... an American truck Studebaker. I lied under the tarpaulin next to tank aiming circles and other tank equipment. 23 53	
23 53	The date was May 8 th , I remember as if it was yesterday. There were weapons lying there too. I decided to lie down to hide from a pouring rain. I turned on the radio. 24 16	
24 16	I heard "Achtung, achtung!" Meaning "surrender, surrender". "Attention, attention, surrender". The capitulation act was signed. A German radio station's broadcasting, to surrender, many didn't surrender. 24 34	
24 34	That's what I heard. I wasn't in any combat any more. Our unit didn't participate. But there was fighting going on in many places. Fighting was going on. Many German divisions didn't surrender. 24 52	
24 52	But by that time Berlin had been captured. It was May 8 th . Why was the 9 th considered in the Soviet Union? I have only realized it here. It was because in Europe it was still the 8 th , while in the Soviet Union it was already the 9 th . 25 12	
25 12	You see? That's why... I have only realized it here why the difference. Here's the 9 th , while there's... or rather here's the 8 th , and there's the 9 th . My story is kind of superficial. How we were in the army... how we slept under tanks... getting out covered with black all over... 25 50	
25 50	I was well respected by my subordinates just because I was with them all the time, I never avoided carrying logs when we were in the swamps... we had to hook... to cut 2 big trees and to tie them on both sides of the tank... 26 09	
26 09	Just in case there was a swamp, we tied them up to the track... during the war... it was a joke...that was a wrong decision. But I was together with my guys, sawing, tying up and lifting logs to tie them up to the...to the tanks 26 27	
26 27	We took off fuel tanks and tied them up to the tanks. We starved. We didn't starve during the last battles. The Americans used to give us... I received 1100 roubles plus I was given 2200 occupational marks. 26 52	

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26 52	Germany... America was giving us what they had captured... that's what we were explained. They captured gold and they were giving us so that we had larger amount of money. 27 04	
27 04	2 marks per rouble. They were kind of printed squares of paper. We didn't eat from the common pot. We baked potatoes. We didn't starve at that time, absolutely not. 27 25	
27 25	There were many trophies. I didn't drink or smoke. I gave the smokes away to my guys. We always had alcohol in the tank. I didn't drink. I didn't drink then, but now I can drink ok. 27 44	
27 44	Although I am 89 (smiling). That's a superficial story. (The battle of Danzig). Yes, the Germans were heavily fortified. There were Polish troops on one side... I don't remember the commander's name... also a tankman. 28 26	
28 26	He was a Jew, a Polish Jew, then in Poland... Poland's forces HQs chief commander...a Jew...his son stayed... he went for an excursion to Germany...by a ship, he stayed there... 28 44	
28 44	His wife, a Polish women, left him...he was dismissed from the post of Poland's forces commander in chief...I don't know... I don't remember his name...he was given a gift – a restaurant in Poland. 29 00	
29 00	He was the owner of the restaurant. I was in Poland... after the war... with my wife. I made a reservation for a New Year party. When he heard me speaking Russian... he was a graduate of a military institution in the Soviet Union... 29 23	
29 23	He spoke Russian...he gave me his table for the New Year party. He gave me his table. He sat at our table and told me this story: his Polish wife left him because he was dismissed from the post of the Poland's forces commander in chief... Poland's tank forces commander in chief 29 44	
29 44	His son stayed in the west. That's all I can tell you about Danzig. I visited Danzig on one occasion after the war. I visited Danzig, Warsaw and Łódź which is a big city and Zakopane.30 06	
30 06	I was in Zakopane. We entered the area from Zakopane. It's in the mountains which is a health resort currently. We entered the area from the lower level. That's what I can tell you. 30 26	
30 26	(b/g conversation) (Why is the battle of Danzig important?) It was important because we were moving westwards. We had to enter Danzig from the seaside. Danzig is an ocean port. 30 57	
30 57	I don't remember where it is. It's near the ocean. There was a ship-building facility there. That was a port and a ship-building enterprise. It had been a German city. 31 18	

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31 18	It was given back to Poland. It was called... I don't know... I can't say... the Gdansk corridor. You ask me why it was crucial, the battle of Danzig...We fought for every village, for every hill, you see? 31 34	
31 34	So many people were killed. We had to liberate... the Germans held the line because it was a port. Their warships were in the port of Danzig. We had to liberate it, you see? 31 47	
31 47	I hadn't been in the port. I came to see the port in the peace time. During the war I never was in the port, we entered the city from the other side. 31 56	
31 56	That's what I can tell you about Danzig. If you ask me about my brothers I can tell you a lot about them. They told me everything; I was interested in hearing their stories. 32 10	
32 10	(b/g conversation) (Why was the battle of Konigsberg important?) the battle of Konigsberg was important because it was a German stronghold, you see? There was a heavy concentration of troops. The city was crammed with troops. 32 50	
32 50	We had difficulty passing by the places there because of population density. They hadn't evacuated their population. Maybe just some were evacuated. Endless crowds of refugees, women and children, were moving towards us from there. 33 11	
33 11	... endless...so many people were moving along the road towards us, you see? The city... entering the city... fighting in cities was very difficult. They held the line; they threw grenades at us and what not. 33 29	
33 29	Our tanks burnt like matches. The tanks used to be small, with 2 engines. A T30 model had 2 GAZ-2A engines. They burnt just from knocking at the wall. They went on gas. Once a small shell hit a tank it caught fire at once. 33 57	
33 57	It was I don't know what. The small models: T30, TB6 or 7 even smaller. T30, T36 and IS152.2 those were big tanks. My last model was IS - Iosif Stalin. (your most difficult battle) Difficult for me? (Why Stalingrad was the most difficult battle?) 34 52	
34 52	We were bombarded all the time. We starved. And every shell and every bullet was like gold for us, you see? We were not provided with anything. We didn't see anyone beside us. 35 09	
35 09	We were like standing and defending ourselves while we were bombarded day and night. The river Volga was not far away behind us...behind us. The troops were advancing. They were crossing the river on boats to help us. 35 32	
35 32	That was so hard! Afterwards, in the winter time, our troops surrounded...surrounded and captured so many people, the Germans, including the army group commander Paulus. 35 48	

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35 48	They went to the negotiations, a Jewish captain who spoke German and 3 more persons. He received them. He spoke with one of Paulus' assistants who was a German Jew serving the Germans. 36 16	
36 16	He was also captured as prisoner. He was captured as prisoner. He was a high rank officer and a Jew. He told our Jew that he was a Jew, you see? That was in a newspaper later on. 36 30	
36 30	I read it myself. The author's name was Erenburg, a writer. Haven't you heard this name? You see. How come you haven't heard of him? I'd like to tell you about my brothers, if you don't mind. 36 48	
36 48	(b/g conversation) It won't take much time. (Tell us about Jewish war heroes, including your brothers). Yes. We were 4 brothers in our family: Senya, Boris, I and Lenya. We served in the army. 37 28	
37 28	Lenya was drafted in '44. He was on his own. Our parents were evacuated to Central Asia or Kazakhstan, not sure. My older brother was a major; he was a regiment commander on the Western Front. 37 51	
37 51	He was awarded Order of the Red Banner and Order of the Red Star. Erenburg wrote an article where he mentioned my brother's name in connection with his being awarded a title of Hero of the Soviet Union. 38 04	
38 04	When the Germans advanced to Stalingrad he was in anti-aircraft artillery. Instead of shooting at airplanes he shot at infantry and tanks advancing to Stalingrad. 38 17	
38 17	All of his men were killed. He operated an artillery gun firing at airplanes and infantry at the same time. He was heavily wounded. His right back side was torn off. 38 36	
38 36	He was evacuated and hospitalized. After the discharge from the hospital half a year or a year later he enrolled in an academy. He went back to the front. Afterwards he was sent to the Far East where he fought against the Japanese. 39 00	
39 00	My second brother was a pilot. He fought from the first days of the war. He was heavily wounded in the last days of the war. His name is Boris. In January '45...'46 my father went to the hospital in Ukraine to take him home. 39 21	
39 21	He walked with crutches. I came back from Zagorsk... the first formation group for tank forces commanded by Stalin...his personal aid was a major general and a Jew, I don't remember his name either, that would be easy to find out...39 39	
39 39	I found out that my parents were alive. When I was in the hospital the last time, my girlfriend sent a letter saying that I was killed on the front and my mother ran to hang herself in the attic. 39 56	

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39 56	Lenya... 2 weeks later they got a letter from me and my father convinced her that I was alive and all that. I came back in '46 after the parade. The parade... the Victory Parade in Moscow...40 15	
40 15	After the parade I was given a month leave and I came to spend my leave with my family. I knew where my parents were. My younger brother came back with my older brother. The older brother took the younger one with him. 40 24	
40 24	That's how we got together, all of us. When the neighbours came to our house, they said: "Don't let your kids go in the street together, let them out one by one". 40 37	
40 37	"Don't let them out together, so people won't see that all of them are back", despite the fact that one of the brothers walked on crutches. We wore our uniforms with the medals. 40 49	
40 49	We were so happy! Many people came to visit us at our house. We were invited to speak at a school and to be guests at the City Hall and the regional committee. They invited us together with our parents. 41 05	
41 05	That's a superficial story of my life and of my brothers' lives. (Tell us about your brother who was a pilot). My brother Boris was a pilot. He was wounded twice. 41 23	
41 23	True, once when he was wounded, his partner left him and he revenged himself upon him. He hit him so hard that he became a cripple. The second time, he was wounded... he was in the south, not far from Vienna. 41 51	
41 51	He was in that area, he was bombing...Being heavily wounded he landed in our territory. He was picked up and hospitalized. He lived in Canada. He passed away 3...4 years ago. 42 15	
42 15	He was recognized as a WWII veteran. He had numerous medals. He was married. He worked for newspapers: Izvestiya and TASS. He was responsible for Kaliningrad region. 42 38	
42 38	He was responsible for Estonia, Denmark...rather Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. His wife was head of a department in a hospital. She was a doctor. They are both dead. 42 59	
42 59	They were buried in a cemetery not far away from here, on Bathurst. That's what I can tell you about him. He was survived by 2 children and grandchildren. 43 11	
43 11	As for the Jews, so many Jews fought in the war. Jewish population in the Soviet Union was 3 million at that time as compared to 200 million total population. Out of 3 million of Jews, 400 000 of Jews were killed in battles. 43 37	

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43 37	Officially, and according to a book I read, Jews occupied the first place in terms of holders of the title of Hero of the Soviet Union as compared to other nationalities. 43 54	
43 54	Jews occupied 2 nd place in the Soviet Union in terms of awards, not in proportion but according to the factual number of medals. I know many Jews, some of them are my friends, who fought, who were 2 years my seniors, they were promoted to high ranks. 44 24	
44 24	They served till the end. I have several books by a writer who was a colonel, I didn't know him, I have several of his books in which he writes about our family, saying that when we came back home children and teenagers were roaming around to be able to look at us. 44 55	
44 55	He describes the history in his books. Many of my Jewish friends were killed on the front, fathers and sons, many were killed. I knew many young girls who participated in battles as aviators. 45 15	
45 15	They were young Jewish girls, some of them were Heroes of the Soviet Union. They served in flight units in Caucasus flying the so called Kukuruzniks, small and rickety planes. 45 26	
45 26	They were young Jewish girls, Heroes of the Soviet Union, I knew of many Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union who were killed in the war. More than 100, rather 120 Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union. 45 42	
45 42	That's how many people were awarded the title in the Soviet Union. Several... 2 Heroes of the Soviet Union currently live in Israel, Heroes of the Soviet Union. 45 55	
45 55	What can I say? The Jews sacrificed their lives not only for their country. fighting against Nazism was like paying their debt for the Jews they killed in pit-holes. I know many places where my parents lived, where there were pit-holes where the entire Jewish population was murdered. 46 23	
46 23	I know of an incident...a neighbour in an area in Odessa region where my father lived after the war...the neighbour had a Jewish wife, a beauty, he was a former soldier...she was from a poor family, a real beauty...46 44	
46 44	I remember her as if it was yesterday, he had 3 children. When the Germans came into the village, he went to a police station asking "Why don't you take this Jewess?" He was drunken. The Police chief was a former investigator, a communist. 47 02	
47 02	The prosecutor... in the city... what was he called...occupational...secretary of the Komsomol organization was on the team. When the Soviet troops entered the village... they hung 10 people, former communists...47 25	
47 25	... the German collaborators. The man came to the police station asking to take his family away. They said to him "What has your wife to do with it?" "If you won't take her, I'll do it myself". He killed his wife, grabbed his 3 children by their feet and hit them on a tree. 47 46	

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- 47 46 He killed his 3 children. This is not an anecdote, this is a true story. The neighbours told me when I returned. I knew the man. He was a former soldier (inaudible). 48 04
- 48 04 There were other incidents. One Russian soldier married a Jewish woman. They had 2 children. He said they would have to kill him, otherwise he would never turn in his family. 48 20
- 48 20 He didn't turn his family in. That's how it was. But the majority were of course... my wife told me...she was in occupation...she was in a ghetto. She told me about her German girlfriend whom she had helped with her studies at school... 48 38
- 48 38 ...she had helped her with her studies and all... she was on a cart driven by 2 horses, giving away stuff...Jewish stuff... she was a German...she saw Fira, my wife, sitting in a ditch, cleaning the ditches... 48 57
- 48 57 ... in the ghetto, right? She yelled at her "You Kike, I should have killed you long ago". That's how many people acted, you see? What can I say? Some were good, but some were... very few friends... 49 16
- 49 16 Just for being Jewish! That's why the Jews... the Jewish soldiers, men or women, they sacrificed their lives to protect themselves and their country. That's all I can tell you just superficially...49 37
- 49 37 What I remember, what I saw...it's hard to tell... (Do you know any female pilots in Toronto?) No, I don't. There are books about them. (b/g conversation). 50 21
- 50 21 (Do you have a story about Jewish female pilots?) Yes, and they were awarded a title of Hero of the Soviet Union. They fought very well, shooting down lots of German airplanes, despite the fact that they were flying Kukuruznik airplanes. 50 40
- 50 40 They flew at night, diving down and throwing grenades with their hands. They threw grenades and shells down at German trenches, you see? That was why they were awarded a title of Hero of the Soviet Union. 50 57
- 50 57 They were real, real combat comrades. They were good pilots. That was the reason they were given a title of Hero of the Soviet Union. They were Jewish. They were many, there were regiments, you see? 51 12
- 51 12 (do you know the exact numbers?) I don't know how many were there in a flight regiment, I just read about them. I read books after the war. I read a book about the numbers killed in the war: 400 000 Jews and 600 000 or so Jews who fought in the war... 51 41
- 51 41 Jews made 3% of the population. Of course there were incidents in the army, including me...I'll tell you a story. We stood in a circle before a fight, it was in the Eastern Prussia... we stood in a circle... 52 00

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- 52 00 We were several men. They were: a Tartar, a Ukrainian, a Russian among us. The Russian said "No way you're a Jew: you don't have horns (shows horns)". That's what the Russian said. 52 17
- 52 17 He didn't know what a Jewish nationality was. He was a young guy. The Ukrainian said, it was embarrassing what he said, that he lived with all women, all nationalities. 52 31
- 52 31 He was a talker. They asked him "Which woman did you like most?" He said "The Jewess". (Chuckling). "Why is that?" He said "She has different..." I can't say it. The Tartar standing beside him put his hands together and hit him with all his strength. 52 57
- 52 57 He fell down as if he was dead. He made fun of Jews, Tartars, Georgians, everyone. He was worthless. I sent the Tartar to the detention room for 3 days. He said to me "Listen, boss, you're sending me to the detention room for 3 days while he's the guilty party". 53 27
- 53 27 I said "Another commander would have sent you for a longer time. I'm not going to put you in prison, because tomorrow we start an offensive". The Ukrainian who made fun of the Jews was later killed. 53 42
- 53 42 That's how it was. He didn't realize that... "The Jews do not fight. The Jews shoot from the side with a crooked rifle". They invented such a gun in Israel; you shoot with a crooked gun seeing what's going on behind the wall. 54 03
- 54 03 At that time Jews were made fun of, you see? "The Jews don't fight". There were a commander of 101st regiment in our brigade a Jew by the name Nelubov, a colonel. 54 17
- 54 17 A regiment commander in our brigade. He was a remarkable commander and a very handsome man. Sonya who was a medical facility head in our regiment. Myself. That colonel had one more Jew, but I don't remember...54 40
- 54 40 He was also a commander. I knew Jews. (Thanks. b/g conversation) (Close up of medals.) This was a medal for Stalingrad (shows). (B/g conversation) (Which medal are you most proud of?) 55 32
- 55 32 Medal for Courage. At that time nobody was given orders and medals, nobody. I and another lieutenant colonel or a major received this medal. We were handed the medals in a hospital after Stalingrad. 55 40.
- 55 40 End of interview.