

Summary of Oral History: Arkadii Veispeiper

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Arkadii Veispeiper, born in 1921, is Jewish. He was born and lived in Ukraine's Kherson region (now Mykolaiv region), Kalinindorskyi district in the village of Bobrovyi Kut. It was a Jewish neighborhood, the family was not religious.

The interviewee says that in 1939 they forced him into the Red Army, he was wounded and sent to a hospital in Kyiv. There, their sambat was captured, and he was sent to a concentration camp in Minsk. There he became friends with three prisoners of war, they helped each other. He mentions the case when a Ukrainian polizei promised to take out several prisoners, but betrayed them, and all of them were shot. In 1943, the concentration camp and ghetto inmates were taken to Sobibor and everyone was executed (3 echelons), only 80 men were left to build the north camp and barracks. The men organized an uprising and fled. 7-9 people were involved in the organization, the leaders were Oleksandr Pecherskyi and Shloiman Laitman, Shubaiev, Polian, the interviewee himself and several others. He says that the concentration camp was guarded by Ukrainian polizei, there were also 20 German work supervisors, the camp was surrounded by barbed wire, there was a minefield around it, and houses of the Germans stood nearby. The insurgents broke through the barbed wire near the houses. At first they had planned to kill the Germans and then the polizei. The interviewee recalls that he killed two Germans with an ax, which was a terrible feeling.

Then the interviewee and his (seven) comrades went north through Belarus, crossed the Bug River and fell into the partisans. The rest, who escaped, immediately crossed the Bug and were killed there by the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

Later, the interviewee had to serve in the Soviet army, in the partisans, conduct training for new recruits. He was also on the front line, participated in the fording of the Oder River. He did not notice a negative attitude towards him. Other Jews also fought, there was a Jewish company.

He recalls that while still in the partisans, O. Pecherskyi contacted Edinburgh, talked about Sobibor, and even an article was published in the newspaper. The interviewee himself did not share his participation with anyone.

After demobilization, he looked for relatives in his native village, learned that his entire family had died, found his brothers in Zaporizhzhia, and his brother helped him find a job.

Once he received a letter from a girl from his village, all her relatives had also died, later she became his wife.

After the war, O. Pecherskyi found him, then Semen Rosenfeld (from another group), Vaitsen, Plotnytskyi appeared. They met and kept in touch for many years.

He remembers that he worked at a factory in the city of Artemivsk (now Bakhmut). He could have become a director, but he was not accepted into the party, because in 1938 his father was repressed (they claimed that he was a Zionist in 1920), that is, he was the son of an "enemy of the people." He remembers it with great reluctance. Apart from that, he did not experience any oppression or discrimination. He went to work in Donetsk, his sons also successfully built a career. And later he received rehabilitation for his father.