English translation of Russian transcript

This is the story of Raisa Abramovna Livshits.

Q: Raisa, please tell us about yourself.

A: I was born in the city of Minsk in April of 1919. My father, Abram Woolfovich Livshits, was born in 1896. My mother, Esther Livshits, whose maiden name was Rogova, was born in 1892.

My father was a clerk. We lived as family of average means. My childhood was like the childhood of all Soviet children. I went to school . . . During the summer I went to camp for pioneers . . . We had a comfortable lifestyle. We had few concerns. My parents thought of everything. I did not learn Yiddish in my family. Because the children . . . Our parents did not speak Yiddishg to us. Sometimes they spoke Yiddish between themselves, so that we children would not understand what they wanted . . . wanted to say. Maybe . . . I do not remember the holidays either, because my father was a Soviet clerk his entire life. And maybe another reason that I don't know is because I didn't know either my grandfather or my grandmother.

My mother was born in western Byelorussia which had previously been Polish territory. And her relations remained there. My father had already lost his parents by the time I became an adu . . . more or less to remember something. Perhaps this is why we had little to do with religion. There. Well, later I finished school and was accepted to medical school. All of this occurred without problems. I passed my exams and was accepted. I studied there for 4 years, until 1941. At that point began the most difficult part of my life.

I married during the third year of medical school. My husband was a student as well, but he was a year ahead of me. After I finished 4 years at

the institute, I was sent to train in the city of Leeda. I went there because . . . I could have remained in Minsk. My father warned me, "Raya, don't go, because the times are not peaceful. War may start, and your location is almost at the very border."

And I said, "So what. We will not fight on our territory." And also, I just wanted to see. This was almost a foreign country, after all.

So I came to Leeda. There I trained . . . trained for only a month, a month and a half, perhaps. Well, then the war started. The war started . . . The city was bombed even before war was declared. Already . . . at night, already in the morning the railroad station was burning, and by day the city was already in flames.

The three of us who were girlfriends and students ran to the military registration and enlistment office because we had an obligation to serve as wartime doctors. It was difficult to pass through; there were so many people. We demanded to be taken to the front. We did not . . . with us . . . they did not want to speak to us. They had more important things to worry about. There were so many people. We continued to demand, "No, we have a military obligation. You have an obligation to take us." But they did not take us to the front. They said, "Young women, leave the city any way you can."

Well, we had to . . . we abandoned everything. We abandoned all our things and went on foot as a group; we went on foot with a large group of refugees in the direction of Minsk.

Our path was very difficult. We had to walk around swamps and woods. During the day we took cover in tall rye . . . We were hungry. We tried to appeal in villages so that they would feed us. In some villages we

were well received. They said, "Our sons may be hungry like you in some place." But in others they did not want to speak to us.

And so in the course of 10 days, with great difficulty, on foot, we reached Minsk.

Minsk was already occupied by the enemy. But when we were walking, we were hoping to reach the previous Polish border, and the enemy would not be allowed beyond it. This is how we were raised, that we would fight on . . . not on our territory . . . and we were young and we believed it. There. When we arrived in Minsk, it was burning from every direction. To tell the truth, it was already almost completely destroyed. They said that you could still see the fire. There . . . Soon . . . yes, there I found my husband's parents and my father. My mother and my sister who had a newborn infant (my sister lived in Moscow but came to give birth) had been evacuated. But, of course, I did not know anything about them. My husband had already left. He managed to finish, pass the last government exam and he . . . well, he was evacuated from the city. He was quickly taken to the front, but this, of course, I learned later. I did not know whether he was alive or not, whether my relatives were alive.

Minsk was occupied quickly . . . , as I have already said, and quickly the order was issued for the formation of the Minsk ghetto.

We attempted . . . to get to the front, not to wind up in the ghetto, to hide somewhere in the villages, but we were betrayed. Perhaps it was our appearance, perhaps something else, I do not know, but all in all, we were forced to return to Minsk. And that is how we wound up in the ghetto. Within 5 days we had to abandon . . . the homes where we . . . where we were living and move to the ghetto. . . Those who did not obey the order were to be shot. These notices were posted all over the city. For the

smallest infraction against any order--you will be shot, you will be shot, you will be shot. We saw these signs on all the walls. (Sigh) . . . A special neighborhood was set aside for the ghetto . . . on the Jubilee Square. It turned out that many Jews lived there. Of course, Russians lived there, too. The Russians were moved. We were moved in . . . we took, that is, a pretty big area of space, several streets, but the neighborhood of the ghetto was surrounded by barbed wire. If you were to slide below the wire or crawl through the wire, you would be shot. Many young children were shot there, who were hungry and tried . . . tried to crawl through the wire to their acquaintances, to their friends, in order to obtain some food for themselves, some food products for themselves, for their hungry families, but most of the children were shot and destroyed. (Sigh)

Soon the order was given about the yellow stars. With German precision, the size and where and how they had to be sewn were proscribed. For not fulfilling this order, again, you would be shot . . . Somewhere . . . They began to kill people at once. People died every day. Vans containing gas came in the evening and at night and they took, they took people and brought them to their gravesites already dead. More and more often there was talk of preparation for pogroms. The first pogrom was planned for November 7, 1941. There were rumors of it. We heard of it from the Russian neighborhood. Then the Jews pretty much dug the holes for themselves. It was . . . These ready made holes were dug in the village of Puchinka. . . Later a memorial was placed there. Many Jews are buried there. And part of the Jews are buried in Jubilee Square, in the so called "hole." We went there every ninth of November after the war ended. We commemorated; there we remembered our relatives who had died . . . who had died.

. . . We had to do something, knowing of the preparation for the pogroms. And so we created "hiding places." In our apartments, in the rooms . . . several families lived in one room. We created hiding places. They were called "malini" there. It was a kind of code. In that code the word was "malina." We had to make malini. This meant that in our house there was niche. We put a wardrode in front of it . . . We hung all sorts clothes and things in the wardrobe . . . and we put it front and hid there. It was impossible to breathe. Very many people were crammed in there. Children and women with children were not put there because the children would have drawn attention to us. There was a kind of hope that perhaps the children . . . and women would be spared, maybe they wouldn't take those with children. We did not hold the illusion that we would remain alive, but we had to do something; we had to take steps. So there we were inside those "hiding places," hid . . . we were hidden and this time we managed to remain alive.

The next day we were thrown out of this neighborhood . . . The neighborhood narrowed, and it turned into the Russian neighborhood . . . The ghetto, that is, the neighborhood of the ghetto, became narrower. These streets merged into the streets of the Russian neighborhood.

My father was with us. He was very ill; he could not walk. My friend and I carried him. They forced us to put him on the ground. They began to shoot at us. We stopped close to him. They started to shoot at us. We quickly moved away. They shot at him. But he gestured to me to run. I ran but returned back. They began to shoot at me again. I was in such a confused state that I did not know what to do. My father, who was still alive, gestured me to run. They chased me away from him with the barrel of a gun.

And so this neighborhood was surrounded. It also merged into a Russian neighborhood. . . . I could not acquiesce; I had to know if my father were still alive or not. And after . . . late in the evening; in the evening our walking was severely restricted. Late in the evening my friend and I crawled through the barrier and came close to that place, but my father was no longer there. The Germans detained us and made us face the wall. This meant that in reality we were destined to be shot as well. But somehow they tarried, then some people showed up and we . . . we got a chance to run. Again, this time we were saved by some sort of a miracle.

More and more often we heard about the existence of partisan detachments. We dreamed of leaving the ghetto and joining a partisan detachment. For this we had to do something, take some steps. All of us . . . all medical workers got together and thought about how we could gather some medical supplies and bandages so that we would not be empty handed if we could reach and join a partisan detachment . . . Often . . . small children would take you out of the ghetto. And we also looked for ways to find these children with connections so that we could join the partisan detachment.

Those of us who were ablebodied were taken to work under escort along the pavement . . . on the street. With . . . the escort with dogs was on the sides of the road . . . We had no right to separate ourselves, to turn, to recognize someone we know, to talk to someone. For this we would be shot on the spot. I worked with a group of people in the so called "camp 13," the thirteenth camp. There were workrooms there, storage areas. There we cleaned, washed, and performed various menial tasks. And at times we sorted things. And so, in soldiers' uniforms . . . in uniforms my

friend and I found ammunition one day. We decided to take this ammunition. But how could we carry them out? We were subject to searches. And . . . for . . . We did not have the right to remove anything, even groceries. And if . . . we, we, we would be shot. But we took the risk despite this. We had to hide them so that they would not find them. And we got them out.

Q: Where did you hide them?

A: And we managed to take out ammunition.

Q: Where did you hide them?

A: Where did we hide them? We hid them such that they would not fall out, in our clothes. They would not have looked there. They could not. They undressed us occassionally. Sometimes they made us take off all our clothes and searched. All, all sorts of things happened.

All sorts of areas were forbidden to us. We could not walk out on the street late at night . . . Somewhere a Jewish committee formed, the so called "Judenrab". Ilya Mushkin was selected as the chairman of this Judenrab council. He was such an upstanding, conscientious person. He was selected, but he did not have any desire, but he . . . they forced him, they forced him. But he had to carry out all of the German orders. From the Jews he had to take things, gold, all valuables, everything. People, of course, attempted to hide things. He did not carry out the orders of the Germans completely. And for this he was shot.

And despite the fact that it was forbidden we often gathered by the Judenrab during the day. Well, we talked--to have some sort of contact among ourselves. And so one day a few of us were gathered together and were approached by the new chairman of the Jewish committee, one called Epstein, the one who served the Germans very zealously. Subsequently, he

was shot by the partisans. Incidently, I witnessed it. He and an additional group of people. He detained me, for what reason I do not know. And he took me to the commander. There they took off my clothes, searched me, began to question. I, of course, was very confused. When they questioned me, I pretended that I did not know German, but Jews, in principle, should understand . . . German. But I tell them, "No." To everything I answered, "I don't understand, I don't understand." He became angry, ordered me to dress, and they took me . . . they shut me in a room. What was waiting for me there? I don't know. What was the purpose? Well, of course, they would not let me out alive.

I was living with my mother-in-law, the mother of my husband. She was very brave, able to take risks, a fighter; she reminded me of a Russian woman. She went there, to the guard, she gave, she showed him the gold watch and ring which we were able to hide by a miracle because they took everything away from us: all valuables, all. She prevailed upon him to let me out. And through some sort of a miracle--again a miracle happened--they let me out. This is how I remained alive this time.

"May we take a short break?"-- a request of Raisa A.

The camp was becoming drastically decimated. There were fewer and fewer people. They killed them, destroyed them in pogroms, so often. People attempted to leave the ghetto. They were killed on the way. And so, we also decided to leave, somehow leave the ghetto. We knew that . . . in . . . there was a village--"Staroye Celo." There was a woman there, a Byelorussian woman named Moosya. For some reason all knew her . . . they had heard of her. And they called her the ambassador on the way out of the ghetto to the detachment of partisans. We . . . made an agreement with a 13 year old girl, Simochka, who was a courier for the partisan brigade in

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and out of the ghetto and who got people out. And so we, three women and one man, made an agreement with her so that she would take us out of the ghetto. It was all very risky because we had to go to work with our column daily. And here we decided that we would not come out to work, we will join the column which . . . daily different people were picked there for different jobs, and we would join that column. We had sewn on our stars in such a way that if you pulled a knot, you could easily remove it . . . We . . . we had . . . that is, a little medicine . . . we had ammunition and one pistol among us three. And so we did not go with empty hands. We joined that column. We walked . . . on the side closest to the pavement. We stood behind one another. Simochka walked on the pavement. It must have been spring, perhaps 7 o'clock in the morning . . . People were walking, hurrying to work. We had to leave the column. We ripped the patch off of the person in front of us. We left the column, each one on his own. We thought, now we will be met, some policeman will see us or . . . the people who are hurrying to work. Because there are all sorts of people, and they could have given us away. But it was the opposite: they concealed us and said, "Hurry, hurry, hurry." This is how they concealed us the entire time. "Run, run!" We knew that we had to make it to the brick factory. If we could successfully make it to the brick factory, then the danger has passed. There the Germans do not take the risk because . . . there in the villages you could often encounter the partisans. But the Germans and the police, they were under orders, they were also very afraid, they only went into the villages under orders, or else they were afraid to go to the villages. This is how we made it to the brick factory. The rest of the way we made with Simochka. She took us to this . . . to the Staroye Celo to the Byelorussian woman Moosya. She fed us. She was a very kind woman. She

. . . at her place you could always find a glass of milk, a piece of bread. She would feed you, and most importantly, she would give the pass into the woods, give the directions into the woods. And so she told us, that is . . . showed us the way to reach the village of Shirmontovo. There the partisans would pick you up. There you will join the partisan detachment.

And so on April 28, 1943, I found myself in the Parhomenko partisan detachment, the Stalin bridage. I thought of this as my second birthday. If I should remain alive or not, whatever happens, I am not in the hands of the Germans. I remained in that partisan detachment for a very short time, because I as a medical worker, well, a student, I finished 4 years; they took me to the partisan hospital. In the partisan hospital, it . . . was located in a very dense forest, a forest with a swamp surrounding it . . . It was the Nulevodskaya forest. The forest was very large. Part of the forest was called the Nulevodskaya forest. There stood the partisan hospital. The dugouts had been formed and we . . . We had two surgeons, a few students, then nurses. There were medical attendants. We worked there. There were admitted . . . many wounded from many different detachments were admitted there. And we . . . operated on them. Well, after all, I had already finished 4 years, I already knew a little something. I was both a nurse and a doctor. I helped, I assisted the surgeons occassionally. And so we lived in this partisans' hospital until September . . . until the month of September, 1943 . . . A seige began. That is . . . the German units . . . the enemy units, it would be more accurate to say, surrounded the Nulevodskaya forest and all the detachments that were in it. In addition to this they forced our hospital into the swamp. These swamps were . . . well, a thick forest made of woods and swamps. These swamps were very dense and deep. In one part the depth came up to here,

in another place up to the knee. And so we . . . There were hillocks, there were drier places. And thus we were in that swamp for ten days. We heard gun fire, but the Germans did not reach us. We were hungry. We drank the water from the swamp. The crackers which we were given to take with us were finished very quickly . . . A new born baby which the mother held in her arms . . . Incidently, before the seige I delivered it myself. This was our medical attendant, our nur . . . from our hospital. I had done my first delivery, I delivered this . . . which I delivered. I delivered this child. But soon we were forced into the swamp. And the mother drowned this newborn baby in the swamp. She sacrificed her own child to save the group, because the child was crying from hunger. There was nothing to feed him. This was a big tragedy. We were all deeply affected by it. But there was no other way. But very many people died. But when the seige was over, we emerged from the woods, well, from the swamp. We emerged from the swamp . . . We got under way. We met the partisans. We did not know where we were located, because this was a dense wood. It was . . . you could very easily become lost in it! Well, gradually we found the partisans. Then I found my surgeon . . . our surgeon. We went to our previous camp . . . The heavily wounded (I had omitted this) we had hid in the deep woods with . . . two medical workers, but I hid in the swamp with the rest of the medical workers, with the lightly wounded. And so we managed to save the heavily wounded. We began to restore the dugouts and our hospital became functional again. But the quiet did not last long. Another seige began after a month. We had to abandon the camp . . . our hospital . . . We had to disband our camp, our hospital . . . We left the camp. We had the very ill. We carried them on stretchers. And so, we had the lightly wounded as well. They began to

make their way to their own detachments. But the heavily wounded on stretchers (there were 4 of them) they left in the swamp with me . . . There, in the swamp, there are the dry spots, the hillocks. It was already fall . . . That is . . . the stretchers were placed between the hillocks . . . I . . . They left me some groceries, enough for 2 days. They said that in two days they will return for us. But there were 4 people, heavily wounded. Everything that was warm, these peasant felt coats, we left all this for them, so that they could . . . I had, I had a pistol and a carbine with me. These were my weapons which I never abandoned. I always had them with me . . . They left two healthy elderly men to help me. Well, we cooked what they left us . . . we cooked those groceries . . . they lasted for 2 days . . . Then the supplies ran out . . . we began . . . I began to gather the bones which had been thrown away, cabbage leaves, the potato peels which had been disposed of. I overcooked them in the swamp water. The last remaining box of matches which we had, we tried to save so that it would not become damp . . . We had a way to start a fire because there was dead wood. So, I gathered cranberries; I got cranberries for the wounded. They were already nausiated and I was, too. Later we could not do all this . . . We would rather not have eaten anything . . . Two of those healthy men said . . . they abandoned us . . . they said, "We will die here anyway. We will go. Maybe we will find the partisans." Because we did not know who was surrounding us--the partisans or the enemy? We did not know because the woods and swamps were so dense there . . . In the evening, of course, it was dreadfully cold. We covered ourselves. We froze . . . but there were days . . . there were sunny days, and we warmed up a little. I moved farther and farther away from my wounded because there was one Azerbaijani among us. He tells me, "Raya, you have a gun. We will die.

Give me the gun. You are a woman, you can't manage it. I will kill you and kill myself." I said, "Don't you dare! Don't even think about it." And do you know where I got . . . I am not . . . not a very strong person, but I never cried there. And then one day, it was late, it was twilight. Ten days had passed, and we lost all hope. And then we see some people moving. We arose, even the wou . . . one of the heavily wounded had a broken hip. By the way, I gave anaesthetization shots using nonsterile syringes. And as it happened, we did not have a single complication, not a single one. He arose (from where did he get . . . get the strength) on one leg, he began to yell, see . . . we began to raise our voices. It seemed that they heard . . . heard us. They began to get closer and closer. And when we saw that they were ours, our people, our partisans who,who had to come for us. And we began to wave our arms at them, yell that we are here, we are here. And we . . . we also heard from afar . . . they were so . . . muffled, they began to yell in case we would answer. Indistincly they yelled, "Raya, Raya!" That we, that is, and I . . . And we heard it. Do you understand? We heard them. When we began to yell, we began to wave at them. To be brief, they were approaching us. They got close to us. Then I began to cry for the first time. Well, we asked them, "Give us at least a piece of cracker or something." They gave it to us. They said, "Well, there. We will now get you out of here.["] And there, that is, we had a surgeon by the last name of Odurin. Ivan Mefodevich, I remember him . . . now. He said, "There is Luba the orderly." She was his wife and a partisan. There . . . He . . . said that they are preparing food for you there and everything. We had searched for you for a long time. But the woods are very large. Really, they searched for us; they could not find us. Finally, they were exhausted themselves. Well, they took us to the group that was waiting for us. There they cooked

food for us but fed us very carefully so that we would not eat too much. We were warm. Well, how warm? They made beds for us, that is, we covered ourselves, we had something to cover ourselves with. Well, we spent a night like this. And later we moved . . . moved in the direction of our partisan detachment. Because the detachm . . . the hospital and the detachment were disbanded. The partisan brigade was still in existence . . . We arrived there. There we were met with joy because we were alive . . . They tried . . . to help us. I was barefoot. I had . . . some sort of ripped canvas shoes. Well, they brought to us, the ones that could, they brought to us . . . And we were placed in the brigade. We were not there for long. Later they began to organize new detachments. And so I found myself in the Kirov detachment, the Stalin brigade. The detachment was not large in the beginning. We were all on the move, all the women, there were only three of us. We moved to . . . to the territory of this detachment because the dugouts had been built; they remained. People moved from one detachment to another. And so we moved, settled ourselves, and formed a new detachment. There I played the role of the doctor and the sister and the orderly. I helped in the kitchen when I had to. Well, I did everything that had to be done. I did not keep account of anything. The wounded knew that if they had made any request of me, I would help them always, especially when the bombing began. I am not brave, I cannot say that I am a brave person, but at that moment I acquired a kind of . . . I don't know . . . I was not afraid. And they always said to me, "Little sister, you look out, little sister, if . . . "--in Byelorussian--"if they wound me, do not abandon me, look out, help me . . .," and things like this. Well, of course, I cannot say that . . . they treated me very well, very warmly. If they brought in one who was heavily wounded . . . because there were missions (meaning

the war action of the partisans), we went on the missions. Sometimes they took me, sometimes they didn't. I also participated in the missions. I participated in the liberation . . . of the small town of Radoshkovichi . . . Radosh . . . in the liberation of Ivenetz. I participated in the railroad campaign. Well, that is how we existed in that detachment . . . until July 4, 1944. And on the 4th of July we abandon . . . we emerged from the woods and moved in the direction of Minsk. The way was not an easy one. We still ran into the enemy, there were still exchanges of fire, and people still died. But we made it to Minsk by this route . . . I was awarded the medal of "Partisan of the Patriotic War", the order of the "Patriotic War," second rank, and other decorations. Well, that is how I came to be in Minsk. I had to begin my life over again.

While I was in the partisan detachment, I sent the wounded to the "Bolshaya Zemlya." And so I sent with them to Moscow . . . I had a sister living in Moscow. Whether she was alive or dead, I didn't know. Is my husband alive? I didn't know that either. In spite of this, I sent letters to this address . . . And one of the letters arrived. It arrived . . . My sister by that time had been evacuated. She worked in the Communications Ministry. The letter had been passed on . . . it had been sent to where she had been evacuated. She had by that time returned to Moscow. Someone had kept the letter and returned it to her. And so she read that I am alive, that I am with the partisans. She was with mother. She very carefully . . . told this to my mother, because they had thought that I had perished. Even eye-witnesses had been found who . . . had said that they had seen me dead on the road from Leeda to Minsk. Some eye-witnesses like this had been found. They had immediately informed my husband who was at the front and all the relatives who were still alive. Well, searches for me began.

They began to search for me. My sister, because she . . . worked in communications, she sent a radio-letter, she sent very many radio-letters. Maybe it would reach me, but nothing reached me. When I returned to Minsk, I went and asked . . . we were . . . there was a city park there . . . it was summer . . . we all settled there. I and a friend of mine who was the commander of our detachment (they had not dispersed us yet, had not let us go), asked so that we may be allowed to go into the city. And so we went. We placed our carbines on our shoulders and went into the city. Of course, we went to look for my house and for my relatives. Everything was destroyed. And so I see . . . in one . . . a line has formed before one house. We ask what is going on here. They tell us--they are giving out letters here "on demand" here. I tell my friend, "Let us stand here." She said, "Oh come now, who is writing to us?" I said, "Well, let us stand, I am asking you, let us stand." Our turn came. She . . . that is . . . I said . . . my name is Livshits, and Livshits is a very common name. Well, she began to sort and sort. Livshits Raisa Abramovna. There was a little triangle with an address inside . . . the handwriting of my husband. Well, we were, I don't know, in hysterics. He had written addressing himself to me or to whomever received this letter. He asks to inform me that he is in the army. He is also a doctor in some sort of a field hospital, some sort of . . . number of a field post office. That is, if they find me, I should answer. He indicated that my mother and my sister are in Moscow at a certain address. And I, here began my tie with my relatives. I began to write to them. They found me. They knew, that is, that I was alive; that is, they knew that I had arrived in Minsk. Well, and lat . . . later you had to build your life.

Should I continue?

When they let us go, disbanded everyone . . . that is, my goal was to finish the last year at the medical institute. Until . . . the medical institute reopened, I got a job as a medical assistant in the prisoner of war camp. But the medical institute very quickly returned from evacuation in Yaroslav and, of course, they quickly placed me in fourth year. They all knew me and the director of the institute remembered me, the teachers remembered. And I needed two witness affidavits. Of course, no one denied them to me. It was just the opposite. The director of the institute called me into his cabinet, asked me questions because he also had a son and a daughter--his son studied with me--he was also with the partisans. And the daughter had died. He asked me about everything in detail. There. Well, I finished the fifth year of medical school, I remember, in December . . . of 1945. I lived in a dormitory with my friend, sharing a single cot during the entire fifth year, because there was no room in the dormitory. Well, I finished the institute. At this time my husband was serving in the army in Germany. But all the documents had burned. I had nothing with which to prove that I was married and had been married since 1939. I was sent to work in the hospital for the invalids from the Patriotic War. It was in the city of Borisov, not very far from Minsk. And there I worked until my husband came to me. So he came. He came to us in Borisov, I remember. We were hungry. We bought potat . . . a pail of potatoes for all of us, for all the doctors. And so we gathered in the evenings and cooked these potatoes. We never had enough rations. We always ate it all very quickly.

He brought groceries for us, brought everything. Well, we had a party, and I said good-bye to them. And I left with my husband for Germany. After everything that I had been through to wind up in these

circumstances! I worked there at a hospital where my husband worked as a civilian doctor. There. Well, I worked there. Because my husband was in the service, he was constantly moved around . . . We lived in Zakarpatye. We spent 8 years in Sahalin, in different cities in Sahalin. I worked there as a civilian doctor as well. Then they sent him to Byelorus. And there he was demobilized in 1963. He had certaine privileges as one who is retired. He could choose a place to live. And we moved to Minsk. We suffered a little, living in a private apartment, but later we were given an apartment. Well, and so we lived and worked. I worked in the hospital for skin and venerial diseases in Minsk. My husband worked in this hospital as well, after demobilization. He had been a surgeon, but when the hospital was disbanded, there were very many patients with venereal diseases and they made him a skin/venereal disease [specialist]. Because of this I also came to specialize in skin/venereal diseases. I worked there. So, thus my husband and I lived together until . . .

Q: What was your husband's name?

A: My husband's name was . . . His last name was Tzivis. I am using my maiden name. His name was Lyova, Lev Vladimirovich. He was 5 years older than I. But he finished the medical institute one year, one year . . . this means that he was only one year ahead of me, because there he had been in vocational school. In this way he had become a doctor, got to the medical institute. But I . . . since I was 10 years old and it was all serene. I thought that all would continue as is. There.

Q: Did you ever plan on going to Israel or to America?

A: You know, the answer is no. We never planned to do it. We never planned to do it because my husband was against it . . . He did not even want to hear about it. Well, and no one among us really thought of it. Then

in 1979 . . . I have a daughter . . . I have a son and a daughter. My daughter was already married and they wanted to leave. My husband was very . . . he objected.

. . . They wanted to go to America. My husband strongly objected, but . . . he would have signed for them. I said, "There is nothing that we can do with you. We will sign." . . . My husband's parents said, "No." Under no circumstances, under no circumstances. My father-in-law, his father, he was just recently demobilized, he was also a lieutenant colonel. The father would have never, the parents . . . Under no circumstances. In 1984, in 1987 . . . well, when people began to leave . . . my children, especially the younger, talked of leaving. In 1987 my husband died. Despite this that year was rather calm. Because my older son was not yet thinking of leaving. And then all got the burning desire--that we will leave, we will leave, we will leave. We turned in the documents. We held the summons. And we left. We had relatives in San Fracisco . . . my daughter-in-law's, the wife of my son . . . They had "called" my son . . . We also had a summons. When we had come to Italy, my son . . . my son had come only 8 months before. Well, . . . he made a summons for us. And so we came to San Francisco. We live here. My older son has lived here for 2 years.

Q: Raisa Abramovna, let us return to other events. Your father was born in 1885.

A: Approximately, approximately.

Q: Simply about the events of childhood. Did you detect anti-semitism in Minsk?

A: No, I did not detect anti-semitism. We lived, I remember, in a yard . . . We had a yard some time ago and many, many apartments. And Russians

lived there . . . Jews . . . and we did not feel different. My father was especially respected. Because they turned to him for advice . . . to write an application somewhere, something . . . we did not feel it. And when I was studying, there was never any talk of it. I had girlfriends . . . friends--Russians, Jews . . . Sometimes, as a joke, if the students in school wanted to pass notes, we learned a few Yiddish letters . . . and wrote and passed notes. Well, this was a joke! Never, never from my teachers did I experience anti-semitism before the war. Not I, and I think, not my parents.

Q: What about when you applied to the institute?

A: I was accepted. I applied . . . I finished 10th grade and turned in an application. At that point you needed to have very many courses for some reason. History, the constitution, Russian, Byelorussian, and all the subjects. Well, I passed all my subjects, withstood the competition, and was accepted to the institute.

Q: Were there many Jews at the institute?

A: Very many because Minsk was a city . . . with a very high percentage of Jews, a very high percentage of Jews.

Q: What was the name of your husband's parents?

A: Well, my husband's parents were called . . . that is, his father was Tzivis . . . Volodya, Velv in Yiddish. His mother was Gita Tzivis. They were . . . He was a tailor--the father. His mother was a seamstress. They were not particularly well educated people, but all of their children received a higher education, and they were very modern people. Well, somehow . . . everything was satisfactory within the family.

Q: Let us return to some events. When you returned from Leeda to Minsk, you did not find your father and your in-laws there. Had you all lived together?

A: No.

Q: How did it all happen?

A: That is, this is how it happened. When we . . . we returned . . . to Minsk and when the ghetto . . . we had move to a location inside the ghetto . . . my very close friend had . . . a brother . . . the brother's apartment (it was a terrible apartment, small and horrible), this apartment was in the neighborhood of the ghetto. We moved there--my friend, my father, and I. Well, there were strangers there as well. Because . . . they were placed there. Then we filled these holes [with furniture], slept on the floor and everything . . . And so we lived there. The first pogrom that happened and that "hiding place," that "malina" which saved us, were in that house.

Q: What was the name of your friend?

A: My friend's name was Raya Levinskaya. This was my friend from a long, long . . . from school, from 5th grade. She is coming to America soon as well. We went through absolutely everything together, you know . . . we were friends and students together since 5th grade. We were in the institute together. Then the war happened. Then . . . the ghetto. We were together in the ghetto. Then . . . then the partisan detachment. Then we returned from the partisan detachment together. We enrolled . . . As it happened, it was true that we were in different detachments. Well, we met up with one another quickly. Even while we were in detachments . . . in detachments, we met by accident. The detachments moved from place to place all the time. And so somehow they had passed near our detachment, and we rushed . . . everyone started to yell, "Raya has found

her sister, Raya . . ." It was such a touching reunion. There. We finished the institute together. Then she married. She remained in Minsk. She worked . . . as a physician, but I had already left with my husband. She had said, " . . . Nothing has been able to part us: the war, the ghetto, the partisans . . ." And then you came, she said, and parted us.

Q: And what did you . . . (unclear)

What did you eat, what did you drink, how did you bathe?

A: I will tell you. That is, we ate . . . First of all, we were alotted 200 grams of bread per day. We did not receive these 200 grams of bread . . . We exchanged. We exchanged that which we had left. Then, the number of people decreased all the time. That meant that we had something left over from strangers. Do you understand how we could exchange this? Illegally, we took it to work with us because we worked together with the Russians. The Russians tried to . . . some tried to help us. We brought . . . we exchanged those things for something. Sometimes we came to the barriers. Some of the braver Russians came to the barbed wire; they offered to exchange, that is . . . potatoes for something. It was a big risk for them. But they could come to some sort of an agreement with the Germans. They suffered less for it than we did. If they saw us, it was the bullet immediately . . . but they could get away with it. There. This is how we, that is, this is how, that is, if we could get a hold of . . . a little flour or a few . . . potatoes . . . this went to . . . For example, after my husband had been killed during the first pogrom, my mother . . . we lived . . . after the first pogrom, when . . . Excuse me, it was my father who had died . . . So we were already living with my husband's mother. But his father . . . they took him to work and he did not return. So he was no longer

alive also. So many died. I had . . . many relatives with children, and I lost many members of my family.

Q: In this . . . ?

A: Yes, in the Minsk ghetto.

There. That is, that is how we ate. If we . . . we managed to obtain some flour from somewhere, my mother-in-law . . . She would not . . . bake a loaf of bread for us; she, that is, she was such a disagreeable woman, she would not give us this little piece of bread. For us she . . . she would bake this loaf of bread and sell it. Because people were still working in various places. Some obtained marks. Well, some, you know, managed to situate themselves in some way. She would sell this loaf and then buy something for this money, and for . . . she would bake two loaves of bread. That is how she did it. If we could get a hold of some potatoes, we never allowed ourselves to boil it, but we ate it in liquid form. We would make some kind of soup. And if this interesting, I will tell you of another episode.

While my friend and I were living with my mother-in-law, we begged and asked her to bake us two potatoes. Luckly, the oven had already been lit. We had something with which to light the oven--we took fences apart and lit the oven. And it was warm and the door was wide open. And the oven is lit and in it lay two potatoes, perhaps three, I don't remember. The two potatoes lay there, and we cannot wait until they are done, until they are baked. At least we can eat them with salt. Two women acqueintances came to see us at this time. Well, we were talking. They were so hungry . . . One was already bloated. I thought she was already a bit mentally disturbed. And suddenly she saw the two potatoes laying in the oven. She

rushed to the oven, stuck her hand right into the fire, grabbed those two potatoes and began to run. Such an incident did occur.

But if we . . . my mother, that is, my mother-in-law would cook something and children are starving somewhere, she would share without question.

Well, this is how . . . Of course, we were hungry, we wanted to eat. I had always been so thin, but during the war it seems that I experienced an imbalance in the exchange of chemicals and became heavy. But that did not last for long, until I returned to normal life. I lost weight quickly and became as I had been before. And we always wanted to eat, always wanted to eat. There. Well, nevertheless, somehow we existed. My mother-in-law was able to save herself. This was also an interesting incident. I will tell of it, if I may. On the first of May, 1944, our Soviet planes began to bomb key German strategic objectives. Because the intelligence was in place, they were told everything. They knew what they had to bomb, and terrible bombing began. And a terrible panic began in the city. And the fascists, the police, also attempted to hide. They did not know where and dashed into the ghetto, because the ghetto would not be bombed perhaps. And then the people took advantage of the panic to leave the ghetto. They left the ghetto but did not know where to . . . even though they had heard of the brick factory and the village of the Staroye Celo. They left and they started out . . . Of course, they ripped off the stars and dispersed themselves in the city. Someone knew where the brick factory was located. They went in that direction. But my mother-in-law did not look Jewish, she looked, you know, Russian, like a Russian peasant woman--with light hair and blue eyes. And she went with a big group of people. And they were detained. They detained them by the brick factory.

And they began to shoot, people began to run. But she was carring a little can. She had put in it a piece of bread, a piece of meat, bacon, I don't remember any longer. And she said to the German that she is going home to her children, that she is bringing food for her children. So he tells her, "Loos, loos"--that is, go. They detained the others but told her to go. And she went ahead. Well, some others . . . some had managed to escape. A woman whose two teenage children were shot went with her. She went with her. Her daughter had been with me in the partisan detachment. We were even friends. There. One daughter but the other two--the two younger children were shot on the roadside. They had shot so many. They had shot so many on the roadside. Many did not reach the woods.

Q: Do you remember the last name of the young woman who had been your friend?

A: Yes, this was Paula Friedman. She died soon after from a heart ailment. Yes, she returned to Minsk, she was a dentist, she married, had a newborn baby--he lived but she died soon after giving birth. Paula Friedman was her name.

Q: When you had left the ghetto, what was said? How did you decide to tell your mother-in-law? (unclear)

A: When I was leaving the ghetto, it was a very big risk, because I . . . my mother-in-law and I worked in the same column; they took us around in the same column, and we had to answer a roll call every day. This meant that if someone were missing, they would ask who was not there and why. She could have died, she told me. When we got this chance, this opportunity, she said to me, "You . . . " Even though she was not yet an old woman. I think that she was only 57. She said, "Don't look at me. I have lived my life. If you have the opportunity--go."

"But how can I go? Because here . . . They will destroy you. How can I leave?"

"I am asking you, I am begging you--go, go."

And she found a men's jacket for me somewhere. Because I had a coat, as I remember, the color of brick or terracotta. And it had faded around the star, you see? And when I ripped off the patch, they would have known by that sign alone. She found, somewhere, from someone, for something, for a piece of something--a piece of bread or something, found this jacket on which I lightly sewed on a patch in front . . . so that a string could be pulled and it would come off easily. We ripped it off like this. Well, of course, there were people who went to work at that time that we were afraid of and there were . . . you can encounter people who said "Go, go." They pushed us away with their shoulders, do you understand? They pushed . . . They lost us into the crowd. They lost us right into the crowd. This is how . . . we made it . . . The girl Simochka who was escort . . . escorted us to the ghetto (sic.). I am simply baffled by this! This was a thirteen year old child. Where did she get such courage?! . . . She crawled through the barriers . . . she somehow got into the ghetto, attached herself to some column. She was not the only one. There were other children . . . some of them died. And during the entire time . . . I had known of her the entire time, while I was in Minsk. That is, I was interested in her fate. And they told me that when she came to retrieve her own relatives, they were surrounded . . . they surrounded their house because they already knew everything . . . they surrounded their house and shot them all. I carried this version with me at all times. No one could tell me anything else. And suddenly, not long ago . . . I don't know, someone told me that she was alive. Is she alive or not? I was no longer living in

Minsk. I was living in . . . I was wandered all over the world like a . . . an army wife. And when I returned, there was nothing . . . This was even somehow . . . I don't . . . I don't remember. I think that it . . . wasn't so long ago.

Q: Do you know her last name?

A: Unfortunately, I don't know her lastname. Simochka, that what we called her, Simochka. Some people said that she was really 11 years old, but as far as I know, she was 13. These were such [extraordinary] children! Do you know?! They would bring us some news from somewhere. They brought us news of the defeat at Stalingrad. Children of 11 or 12--you would think--how do they know all of this? But all of this, you know? These were heroic children. Later many of them were in the partisan detachments. When they left their parents took them with them. There were children who made it while their parents had died. There were very many [such children]. We attempted to . . . When we sent away the wounded. We sent away many wounded. The airplanes came to us. They cleared the platforms especially, . . . but this was reported to us by the commanders. The portable radios were already repaired. We met those airplanes. They were sending away the wounded and we wanted to [include] the children. We sent away most of the children but some absolutely refused to go. Absolutely. They wanted to reach the end. Then they took them . . . Well, like the child of the battalion, how do you call it? There were such children.

Q: But how did you bathe in the ghetto?

A: How did we bathe in the ghetto? Well, we had water, after all.

Q: What about the soap?

A: Soap? Well, it was like this. We would exchange for it somewhere, we would find it somewhere. Somewhere we would exchange . . . somebody had a stash. We exchanged for a small piece. For a little bit of salt, for a little piece of bread, if we had the chance. We had exchanged some things for the salt; we would exchange this salt somewhere for a piece of bread. And this is how . . . It seems strange to me at times--how did it all? . . . because . . . I, for example, . . . In the ghetto, maybe somewhere there was something. When I was with the partisans, I did not know what a pillow and a blanket were. We got sackcloth in the villages; it was peasant sackcloth. There. And under our heads we placed . . . gas-mask cases where we kept all our valuables. All . . . all our things were kept in these gas-mask cases. We did not have more; we did not have anything, in essence. And then the winter . . . It was easier, of course, for us in the summer. The winter . . . Well, we lit stoves. There we put . . . Because there were different craftsmen with partisans who knew how to do it. They lit stoves which were like the "bourgeious" stoves. We warmed ourselves. Then we went on . . . some sorts of missions. We were going on military missions, and we also went on supply missions. Well, we would wind up in a vill . . . We already knew where we could go, in which villages . . . the partisans were . . . in which villages there were garrisons of police, in which there were the German garrisons. We knew, approximately. There. Well, we participated in military missions to wipe out these garrisons. Well, I was partially involved as well. There. And so sometimes we would come to a village. We warmed up there and were given food. There. The housewife was making blinis. She would cook potatoes in their skins for us. She would give us her homemade yoghurt, her milk. Some had pity for us. Some pitied us but others were the

opposite. There. At night, we would be moving; we are walking and some . . . we would see a farm, a light in the distance. And we would knock at this farm. And there . . . But the farm is the only one there in the woods, in essence. And the housewife . . . is alone with the children (the husband is not there, the husband is at the front) and she does not know who is knocking--the Germans or the partisans? With what kind of fear does she open the door for us? We could . . . We could understand her only later . . . There.

Q: Were there any infectious diseases in the ghetto or later with the partisans?

A: There were. At one time typhus began but they somehow contained it very quickly. There. Well, we took advantage of it. When the Germans entered certain houses and someone there was bedridden--old, sick, or something like it, we told them, "This is typhus, typhus, typhus." They were really afraid of typhus. And we somehow took advantage of it. There. And with the partisans? Yes, typhus began there as well. This was when I was in the last detachment. There was typhus, yes. We set aside a dugout. We set aside one medical orderly for it. Well, and somehow . . . Well, you know, I don't remember any cases of typhus resulting in death. There. There.

Q: Were there insects in the ghetto? Flees?

A: We had everything. Everything in the ghetto and in the detachments. We fought it hard in the detachments. And we always fought it because if the Germans learned that there were lice somewhere, they would enter that house and shoot everyone in it. We fought with this everywhere. And how did we fight it in the detachments? It was very interesting. First of all, we . . . an anti-itch ointment that we got a hold of. This was at one

time . . . well, we would get a hold of . . . there were certain medicines--so we rubbed ourselves with this ointment. As for things . . . we burned some things, some we boiled. Then we tried a folk remedy. We would come to some sort of village. The stove would be dying there, that is, it is already . . . it is still warm, still giving heat. And we would crawl into the oven and that would be all--and the itch and the insects, all would disappear. This is how we did it. And really, you know, people were not getting sick. People were not getting sick. It was some sort of a defensive reaction. Only, I remember that I was sick with furunculosis. Because I was in the swamp. I had furunculosis. I simply could not get rid of it. I had it for a long time. There. If things were quiet in the detachments, we would be eating pretty normally. Because we would enter a village and give the village elder a list that we need this and this and this and this. The poor peasants had to give to the Germans and to . . . But it could not be otherwise. Then when the airplanes came, they passed groceries along to us. In the long run they passed both groceries and medicines to us, all the essentials. There we had difficulty bathing, especially during the winter. But somehow we adapted. If we were going into a village, they had the village baths (banya) there, they heated up the baths for us. And if not, then we girls, for example, would shut the door, chase everyone away, close ourselves up in the dugout, boil cast iron pots of water for ourselves and would bathe. It was like this. And at times we would be bathing, let's say in November, I remember, Novermber--it's already cold and we would strip in the bushes and bathe. Like that.

Q: In the ghetto how did you deal with the monthly . . . menstruation? How did you deal with it?

A: You know, in the ghetto we somehow managed. Well, we had old rags, old things, everything old . . . But in the detachments we managed with great difficulty, great difficulty. We used everything, everything . . . Paper . . . Well, when they began to send the medicines to us, we somehow, a little bit . . . we were given occassionally. Especially when I worked in the hospitals, there they gave to the women something little. But otherwise it was very hard. We used paper . . . And we could just walk into a village to sleep on the stove and suddenly feel some sort of rag . . . not even checking to see if it were clean or not. It was like that. And it was very difficult. Especially if we were on a campaign, when we were going on some sort of mission . . . You cannot tell the men . . . Like that. And it was practically all on foot, on foot. Some were on a horse, astride a horse. There were horses pulling carts. I tried to ride a horse. I couldn't do it. I was afraid.

Q: Did you have regular periods?

A: No, you know . . . this will be on tape . . . It doesn't matter? You know, there is the term "wartime amenorrhoea" in medicine. And when the exchange of chemicals is disturbed in the organism and the exchange between the iron of the inside and outside secretions is disturbed . . . And so I did not have it for a year. It was at that time that I gained weight because of this.

Q: This was in the ghetto?

A: It began in the ghetto and continued in the detachment. Then it continued like this for a year. And then an ointment appeared. Well, I was still a little heavy. Well, how heavy? I was never really heavy. But in the first month, in the very first month . . . when we . . . when my husband came for me, I became pregnant. And that was all. And I lost 13

kilograms in the first month. There. And with all this, I came to Germany. Immediately after the hunger, after the fact that I had nothing. I had no clothes, was always hungry. All at once we received such good rations. All at once we bought nice things, immediately everything that we . . . Well, both of us worked. And we weren't paid badly there. They paid us the Russian salary and in marks. So the Russian salary went into savings, which, by the way, was lost during the reform. We paid for everything we bought in marks. We bought things there, got clothes there and acquired bedding. Well, all was . . . We acquired all the essentials there. Because . . . we had a child. My son was born in Berlin. But we were living outside of Berlin, 40 kilometers from Berlin. There was the city of Frauberg, a very beautiful resort city. But they brought me to Berlin to give birth. My son was born there. But my daughter was born in Sahalin.

Q: Raisa Abramovna, you said that the Jews were immediately ordered to wear the stars in the ghetto . . . Do you remember the first order given to the Jews or the first order? Which was the order issued by the Germans first?

A: I remember.

Q: Please tell us about it.

A: About the ghetto. Particularly about it . . . That is, when we came to this . . . When we were already occupied by the Germans . . . but no one could run away . . . But some managed to run away. Some found somewhere . . . First of all, there were Russian husbands, Russian wives . . . They tried to leave. But they could not always manage it. And the husband remained in the ghetto and the wife left and the other way around. All sorts of different things happened. There. And we caught every rustle, every rumor was caught. We caught. And they talked about all sorts of

things. They said that they would send the Jews somewhere . . . By the way, they brought German Jews to the ghetto. There. And they together . . . They brought a lot of things. We could exchange a piece of bread with them for a watch, or something, if we had it. So they . . . They did not understand. They thought that the Germans would really . . . They walked with us under escort. They talked with them as they would with friends. They considered them their friends. They were very sad for us, that we would be destroyed. But they would probably be sent to Siberia--that's what they thought. But the same fate befell everyone, strike as did us. They were dest . . . shot just like the Soviet Jews. And I even remember the leader of camp 13 where I worked. He had a secretary, Berta, I remember. She was an uncommonly beautiful girl, uncommonly beautiful. And he was . . . like this. He was a fascist . . . such a severe person and all. But he really protected her. And he . . . when they were destroying the last ones, he hid her. He did not give her away. They forced him to give her up and destroyed her. But this was an uncommonly beautiful girl, uncommonly beautiful. A Jewish girl. There.

Q: A German Jewish girl?

A: Yes, a German Jewish girl. They did not believe that . . . They were friends with the soldiers . . . That is . . . They could not walk on the sidewalks, so they walked in the middle, but they joked with them, talked to them and everything. They did not think that they would be destroyed. But they were all destroyed . . . We had Jews from Czehoslovakia as well. They were all destroyed.

Q: Which was the first order? (unclear)

A: Yes, the first order. That is, there were various rumors going around which had to do with the Jews. We did not know what would happen to us.

And when they began to talk about the ghetto . . . That they would . . . divide us into a separate group . . . that we would be behind a barbed wire and all that, we strongly did not want to . . . Let it be death then, but we will not go into the ghetto, we will not go. We said, "We will not go for anything. We will not go to die like animals." And that was all. And there was the first order. That is, if you did not obey the order . . . to move into the ghetto within five days--you would be shot, you would be shot. Many . . . did not move to the ghetto immediately. They shot many. We also delayed, did not go in immediately. But when we saw that people were dying . . . we, our pare . . . my father . . . my in-laws were . . . they were wiser. They said, well, how can it be thus, how can you? They will shoot us all. This means that we have to go. If we could have left the ghetto, it would have been another matter. But we could not leave the ghetto . . . I mean that we could not have left Minsk. So we came . . . we were in the ghetto. This was the first order with regards to the ghetto. Then there was an order with regard to the yellow stars. Again, we did not want to acquiesce for anything. We delayed, we did not sew them on, we could not, we would become . . . Well, all of a sudden, Soviet girls, women, who did not even understand that they were Jews, what is this and suddenly it was like this--that they were insulting us? No, we are not going to let it go this far, we cannot acquiesce to this and all . . . But gradually--they shot one, they shot another. Gradually we had to do it. What else was happening, what kind of other orders were there? That is . . . they gathered the so called "Oppel." That is, an order is hanging somewhere that on Sunday, let's say, or on some other day, at a certain time, at a certain place there will be organized the "Oppel". This is a big, big meeting of the Jews. This meant that all must come out for this "Oppel,"

absolutely everyone. And if anyone hides . . . But why were people hiding?--Because there were excesses at these gatherings as well. That is, the policemen chased them out. They chased them out and all had to go. And the orders were read out at these "Oppels," that so and so was shot for the unfulfillment and disobediance of some order. So and so did something and he was shot. Someone . . . In summary, all of this. And all of this was really done . . . Among the talented musicians we had, I forgot his last name, a very well known violinist and a very well known Jewish singer . . . They put them in the middle . . . When we had the memorial at Babi Yar recently and a violin was playing, I cried very much. Because it very much reminded me of all of this. And so he . . . that is, they were forced to play Jewish melodies and while they were playing they announced that this one, that one would be shot. And someone had a dirty house. They came and it was dirty. Oh, just try, when there were families . . . Let's say we were sleeping . . . We had one bed and we were across it--three people slept in that bed.

Q: Where?

A: In the ghetto, it was still in the ghetto. It was like this. There was no space, no space. Someone slept on the floor, someone slept on the table. Then we began to make those bunkbeds. And so we managed somehow. There. And so during these "Oppels," during meetings there were always orders, orders, orders. And they brought some out and some they shot. Do you understand? This is how it was. Of course, we did not want to obey much of it. To tell the truth, all sorts of rumors were going around. The men were very afraid. Because there were rumors that the men were going to be castrated. You know? And after everything that we had seen, even this was conceivable. There. By the way, we three women left and

one man. This man died in the ghetto. Not in the ghetto--he died with the partisans.

Q: Do you remember the names of those who . . . ?

A: Yes, Meir Borushansky.

Q: And how were the girls, the women called?

A: . . . The women? You know, I don't remember. Because my friend that I mentioned, Raya Levinskaya, she left a few days before I did. There . . . In this we . . . we took this pistol. We had to carry all of this, carry it through the column, through everything. And then in the yard . . . If they had found this pistol in the yard, the entire yard would have been shot. All those who lived in that neighborhood would have been shot.

Q: Where did you get the pistol?

A: Well, the pistol--this very man got a hold of it somewhere, yes. The ammunition we took out like this. And the medicine we, little by little . . . We had a clinic. But I did not work at the clinic. But our doctors worked there . . . There was always someone somewhere. All of it was very little, we did not have this, it was all scanty, but you know . . . somehow, somehow like this. If someone had managed to save some, found it in some house. And this is how we gathered some.

Q: Why were afraid to go to the partisans with empty hands?

A: Do you know something? . . . They told us that with the partis . . . you could not go to the partisans with empty hands. Of course they took you, they did not leave anyone behind, but we wanted to [give] something of our own. Because you come as a dependent into the detachment, when we . . . How would they perceive you? At least you came with something. And they would look at you somewhat differently. And if we did not have anything, perhaps, maybe we would still have gone, gone just like that.

But we attempted, we tried. We . . . You know, I must tell you that there was fear, of course, a very big fear, but somehow this fear was erased. There was a need, an imperative, that we had to . . . Let's say that a gas car drives up. And we hear where . . . We take off our clothes . . . In essence, I don't remember when we took our clothes off somewhere. Where does it come to? Where? And so some . . . some . . . there is a feeling that . . . We have to hide, and this knock begins on the other bunks . . . Well, how will it be, like this? Well, somehow like this . . . Because, of course, I do not know the percentage, I cannot tell you right now. The relative percentage was, I think . . . Well, 1%? Perhaps a little bit more . . . remained alive . . . There.

Q: How many people, Jews, do you think there were in the ghetto?

A: . . . In the ghetto? You know, I knew the numbers. I forgot them. Well, more than a thou . . . more . . . more than a thousand. I cannot tell you right now. You know, I don't even know why I . . . This has left my memory. I knew this. Do you understand that I knew this? This has left my memory.

Q: Raisa Abramovna, do you remember you were together. Who did everything, who carried orders through? Who did the shooting? Did the Germans shoot or was it the local police auxilary?

A: The local police and the Germans. The Nazis, the "SS." The "SS," the Nazis. There. But I must say that there were instances when . . . Let's say they are escorting a column to be shot, for example. Well, they brought them out during a pogrom. This is how a friend of mine saved herself. She was pregnant.

Q: What was her name?

A: Da . . . Dasha Vapnyak. By the way, she . . . somewhere some sort of Muskovite came and found her. He wrote about her in a book. I don't remember how this book was . . . This was in the Soviet Union.

She went, that is, with the column. They were taken to be shot. And a German came up to her and said, "Loos, loos, loos." She left the column.

Q: He saw that she was pregnant?

A: He saw that she was pregnant. Something that she . . . She took his fancy.

Or there was this incident. I don't know, is it appropriate to tell of it now or not?

Q: Yes, yes.

A: The seventh of April, 1943, was my birthday. And we were working in this camp "13." That is, we . . . We were finishing one job today and another tomorrow; that one would have taken several days. And at this time we were working in the camp . . . at some sort of warehouse. We were sorting things. Warm things for the Germans were gathered there. Well, we had to sort these things, tie them up and everything. Two Germans were guarding us. One was really wild. Do you know, he . . . told us--do you know there are partisans somewhere. These are people with horns. That somewhere there is something like this. But another treated us very well. And at one time he told us, "My father 'rot front, rot front' ". This is what he told us. And so it was my birthday. It was the lunch break. The weather was nice. It was the seventh of April. The sun was shining. We girls went out. What did we have with us. We, that is, are sitting and eating. It is my birthday and I am crying. I remember that my mother always celebrated my birthday and everything . . . He comes over and asks, "Why is Raya crying?" They answered him, "It's Raya's birthday,"

"It's Raya's birthday today." He . . . so there. And he went to eat lunch. He comes back from lunch and brings me a loaf of bread, a jar of ersatz honey, some sorts of canned food and he says, "Raya, I congradulate you (it was my 24th birthday), I congradulate you on your 24th birthday and hope that you will celebrate your 25th birthday with the Red Army." Do you know, we were startled. How did he find the courage? But there were instances when a German took a group of people out of the ghetto. He took a group out, a group out of the ghetto. There were . . . There was such an incident.

Q: Did you know . . . (unclear)

A: I know. Well, we had one . . . when he still a nobody in the ghetto. Then he became a famous oncologist. Maizin, Matvey Lazarevich Maizin? And he also . . . when . . . he was not even in the medical institute yet. He and a group of some people. Then I know another woman who was in this group. I don't remember . . . Vita was her name, but I don't remember the last name. And so he led them out until a certain village and returned. He took them to the partisans. There was an agreement with him. There were incidents like this.

Q: Raisa Abramovna, when you saw the humanity of the Germans, did it change them in your eyes? When you saw the kindness of the Germans, did it change them in your eyes? Did you become different? How was it?

A: Well, we did not get an opportunity. Because they were afraid of us, wary of us. And we of them . . . During the day some sort of little soldier would enter the ghetto whom they would order to shoot, so he would shoot. If they do not order him, he would do the opposite--he would do some kind thing. But there was the incident that I told you about. I think that I told

you about this . . . when we . . . they carried . . . when they tore a child out of its mother's arms? I haven't told you?

That is, when I worked in camp "13," and we were led in the convoy but the children had to left in the ghetto. The children and the elderly had to be left in the ghetto. But at this time there were very many pogroms and the mothers were afraid to leave their children. And so a mother took her boy. The boy was 5 or 6 or 4, approximately. She was just about in front of me in the column. A Ger . . . a fascist came over and seized him by the arm and opened his holster. The boy yelled, "Mama!" And he hugged her very tightly. He did not have time to say anything else. He shot him and the boy fell down dead. And the mother he drove ahead to work. The mother, screaming and crying, went back to work . . . There were such incidents as this.

Q: And you were 24 years old and attractive. Did the Germans pick out girls for, for . . . ?

A: I think that when they detained me . . . I told of the incident when we all had gathered. I think that I was detained for this purpose. I am supposing this. Because they were buildings brothels and everything. And sometimes they selected.

Q: For the Germans?

A: Yes, for the Germans. And they selected . . . but . . . This Epstein, the one that was later shot. He later came with a group. He brought a pile of gold to the partisan detachment. He and I don't remember who else. There were three or four of them. He brought a pile of gold. He thought that he would remain until the end. Yes, they had decided that they would remain alive. If the Germans gave the orders to give them up, the partisans managed to hide some Jews with them. He was wily. There. And when

they felt that they would also be destroyed, they came to the partisans with this gold. And as it happened I was still with this detachment by the name of "Parhomenko." And so they came. I remeber them very well. I remember this entire incident. It was already twilight. They came. We had a director of a special department. I don't remember his last name any more. Well, they . . . It appeared as if they were accepted. They were told that we were going on some sort of military or partisan campaign. I don't remember any more what they were told. And you come with us. Well, they said, "Okay." So they went. And they had barely left the woods, because we heard the shots. We saw later how they were carried . . . Like that.

Q: Did he supply girls for the brothels?

A: Well, I suppose that it is probable.

Q: And when . . . There is this question: It was very lonely in the camp. Do you remember if people fell in love?

A: Yes, people came together. There were those with families . . . they came together. To this day I have a friend, Dasha Vapnyak and her husband Fima Vapnyak, who brought her out of the ghetto, and this is how they got together, how they . . . They had two very interesting, unusual children who are now in France. And they are going to them. They used to go [visiting] every year, but now they are moving there. There. And there were many, very many. There were births, births in the ghetto, yes. There were incidents where after he was just born, the child would be smothered with a pillow. There was an incident even like this. I had a friend . . . well, not a friend but a fellow student. She had . . . She had a child. Her husband was somewhere at the front. She was such a nice girl. She was 8 months old. And a friend was . . . I think her mother, her

mother was already killed. There was a small brother. He was killed when he crawled under . . . in order to leave, somehow to go for some sorts of provisions. So she had this child . . . So she holds this child and tells me, "Oh, if only she would die, if only she would die."

Q: And what was the name of this friend?

A: Her name was Tamara.

Q: Her last name?

A: Tamara Yankileva. She died, yes.

Q: She died and the child died?

A: Well, they were killed. I must have already been with the partisans. I . . . They were destroyed . . . All in all, there were dreadful things, dreadful. There was such torture as this. You are also asking whether some married in America (sic). This Epstein, the chairman of "Judenrat," who very honestly served the Germans, he married there. There was this lovely girl named Rozochka. I don't remember her last name. He married her. And he put on a wedding, when people were hungry, when people . . . were shot here, when people . . . people were destroyed. And he put on a wedding. And there was formed . . . a wedding . . . a song. I don't remember it completely. "A bridegroom, a bridegroom lives in the ghetto and, and . . ." My Yiddish is very bad.

Q: Still, tell us.

A: And most importantly, that is, . . . "The commandant was there as well." Do you understand? And so they made up such a song. It was about this Epstein.

Q: What were the words?

A: So I am saying. The words. Approximately. There is this song: "Bridegroom." I don't remember. . . . And the rabbi or someone was also

there . . . And there was a joyous wedding and everything. So they made up the words for our song. Our song, that is . . . "Bridegroom." There was also this other song which we made up. We had children who had lost their parents. That is, children . . . Let's say the mother and the father went to a resort during the summer . . . They left . . . Well, having left them without concern with their grandmother, left the child or children with aunts . . . And these children remained . . . And the grandmother and grandfather . . . The grandmother and the relatives [were] destroyed. The child managed to hide. And so this child . . . we sing a song. That is, what does he do? He goes . . . He scrapes chalk off the walls. Because chalk has calcium. And --children like to eat this sort of thing. He scraped the chalk off the walls. Then he ate coals, this boy. I remember very well. And later he must have gotten hold of some cigarettes, I don't know, stood and sold them one by one. And he sang this song:

(Raisa Abramovna is singing in Yiddish, and I cannot write it down.)

There was such a song. When I hear these songs now . . . Because, by the way, there were many songs. We had a partisans' song. I don't remember . . . I . . . I cannot sing. Because of this . . .

Q: No, but a little, maybe something . . .

A: I don't remember. Something about the dugout. I don't remember this partisans' [song]. When we sang, I . . . Now I can't remember it. There. So these songs were very . . . they somehow touched the soul. And then we pitied those children. It was horrible . . . These children wandered [the streets] in rags, blackened and dirty. Someone . . . would be nice to them, someone would take them in, some died, but some crawled through this neighborhood . . . Well, various things happened. For example, we had a

doctor, Laura Livshits. We shared the same last name. She was the daughter of . . . the daughter of Professor Livshits, a radiologist. She studied at the medical institute the year below me. And in school she had been a year below me. And so, that is . . . she experienced one of the pogroms. And she and her mother were taken . . . to the location to be shot. It must have been to those Puchinki where . . . There. And they brought them there and shot everyone. And this Laura . . . she had been under those dead bodies . . . She crawled out and remained alive. She emerged and went in the direction of some village. Where? Where is she going? She does not know. Then . . . after all, the Germans caught . . . And she settled in some village. And the Germans were catching girls for removal, Russian young women for the removal out of the country to Germany. And she became one of them . . . and they took her to Germany. She . . . they took her . . . When I returned to Minsk, I met with this Laura. She went to Leningrad and found her uncle there--he also held a high position . . . Those doctors, all . . . She married there. She met some student from our medical institute in Minsk. She finished the medical institute and was a radiologist of the hightest caliber . . . Yes . . . How is she? They gave her a doctorate. Well, she . . . she . . . Then she moved to America and here she died of a heart attack. They left 12 or 13 years ago . . . I believe she died of a heart attack 10 years ago. So there you go. A doctor and in the hospitals . . . And she was almost ready to be discharged. For such peop . . . Many were able to save themselves like this. The wounded saved themselves, those who had been shot, those who had not been finished off saved themselves. All sorts of things happened. Do you understand? How many . . . because the people . . . Well, how else could they save themselves? There really were miracles . . . miracles happened. A person

still saved himself. Well, he, he strove. Of course, if he . . . [thought] what will be, will be--those died in greater numbers. But those who fought a little, those . . .

Q: Who left the ghetto in greater numbers? There must have been few men.

A: Why the men? There were many men in the ghetto. Men left and young people left, those who were younger. The elderly rarely left, of course. There. Well, how did it happen? Their children . . . Those that were . . . those who had children left them with their grandmothers and grandfathers. For example, there was an incident. Also . . . They shut them up in barns . . . They would gather a group of Jews, shut them up in a barn, and set fire to the barn. And so one mother . . . I think that she had a 6 year old boy. She did not have a husband, he had already died. There. And one mother . . . That is, there is screaming and noise and din in this burning barn. And this mother managed to break away from the burning ba . . . She was burned a little . . . But she could break away but the boy was burned. It seems to me . . . she should have gone ahead and remained and burned with her child . . . Well, it was like this.

Q: Do you remember who was the more cruel, the Germans or the police?

A: Do you know who it was? Among . . . Well, of course, mostly . . . First of all, the SS. The SS was the group which was involved in this, so to say. They came--we could see them from afar . . . the SS . . . We . . . We would begin to feel bad because . . . There. The police . . . The ones who came voluntarily were very cruel. Some said, "I did not have a choice.["] Well, of course, when those from our side will come . . . so I . . . the police will . . . the Germans will see me. But they did not understand that our side--this is how they was called then--will not be merciful. And some ran

away later. And some went to the partisans. We had a partisan. He was a very handsome fellow, I remember. He was kind and good. But he, he had served with the police. They forced him or something. But he voluntarily came to the police . . . And when . . .

Q: To the police or to the partisans?

A: He came to the partisans. And when we were already free . . . when we stopped being partisans and we settled in Minsk . . . There was a city park named after Gorky. And they sorted out people there. First of all, part of the people . . . All of the ablebodied were taken into the army. All of the ablebodied. But he was walking around. "They will probably put me into the penalty battalion." We pitied him. He was such a nice guy. They put him into the penalty battalion. These kinds of people were put into . . . All of these kinds were put . . .

Q: Do you remember his last name?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: Ah . . . no. I don't remember. You know, there are so many names circulating . . . There.

Q: Can you remember a day in the ghetto from morning till evening? A typical day. When did you wake up? What did you do?

A: I will remember such a day for you. I twisted my foot. I had . . . It was very swollen. There was some sort of a heavy injury bruise along with a dislocation. Well, probably it wasn't broken. We did not get X-rays. But I could not step on this foot. And I could not go to work. And I did not go to work. Well, they might have said there that I was sick, maybe they accepted it. I was lying, that is, . . . Well, I was lying at my place, that is. Several families lived in the room where we were living. And because I

did not go to work, one mother left her girl with me. She was about 7 or 8 years old, I don't remember exactly. Her name was Sarochka. Well, suddenly panic began. All who had remained in the ghetto, who did not go to work . . . There was panic; a pogrom was starting. And it was put into practice. When people, people . . . They needed the people--a free labor force. And for those who did not go--they staged pogroms. Well, periodically. Not always. This was the twenty-second of May, 1942. Why do I remember it? Because this pogrom was very big. There. And the people began to run, to hide. To hide, to hide . . . Some over there, some over here. And the girl Simochka runs up to me. "Aunt Raya, a pogrom is starting!" That meant that all . . . The children understood everything. A pogrom . . . I said, "Simochka, go hide quickly . . ."

Q: It was Sarochka, yes? The girl--Sarochka?

A: It was Sarochka, yes. Sarochka. Pardon me. I . . . Are you recording all of this?

Q: It does not matter!

A: It does not matter that I mixed them up? There. And I said, "Sarochka, go and hide." We were living at another house at this time. There we ran to the attic. And in the attic . . . We hid in some sort of a pipe . . . I said, "Sarochka, run and hide."

"But Aunt Raya, come with me, come with me."

I said, "I cannot stand on this foot. Well, I can't . . . " But she stayed next to me and pulled.

"Well, come with me, come with me."

I don't know where I got the strength. It happens. With the gravest of wounds one could . . . With the gravest one could get up and walk. You

know, there must be something in the organism. And so I . . . I said, "No, I can't, I can't."

" . . . No, but how can you . . . "

I arose from the bedding, from the bed and went with her and hid myself. And so we sat in that attic, in this concavity, and we watched how they led the columns. This was a very big pogrom. There was column after column, column after column. They were taking them, taking them to be shot.

And we, that is, we sit . . . They did not find us. Again we were able to save ourselves. But my mother-in-law and my friend . . . The three of us were living together, when we remained . . . The three of us were living together and we . . . But they had gone to work. And so they return to the camp. This meant that the pogrom was already over. The people were already taken out . . . They do not touch those who had gone to work.

They had everything planned out. Do you understand, they were working from a plan. They could come . . . Shoot any person. But the mass ones [shootings] were made according to plan. There. Well, they began, they returned, returned home. In addition my friend said . . . This happened to me . . . I had already mentioned this coat, the color of terracotta. It was March. I was still wearing this coat. So my friend had said, "Oh, there, there, there they are leading Raya . . . " She had thought that they were leading me. Well, they came. By the time they had returned, we had left the hiding places. Well, it turned out that I was alive. This was a day that I had spent. There were many days . . . I remember when we as young people wanted to celebrate New Year's. Well, despite everything that was happening, it was still sad. We wanted something. We did not have any food. We did not have anything. But most

importantly, we were not allowed to gather together. You could get shot for holding a gathering. We were not allowed to be together. If they saw that a group of people got together, it meant that some sort of a secret organization . . . that they are doing something, that they saying something. But we dared. Somewhere there was some space. And we decided that no one would enter it and everything. And this is what we did. Somewhere at some factory . . . from some factory somebody brought yeast. And with this yeast we made minced herring (this is what we called it), but we seasoned it with something and ate it. And from potato peels we made some sort of pancakes, some salads from something. Someone brought a beet from somewhere, someone brought a potato . . . And so, we made something, we made something. This is how we met the New Year. And we took turns standing next to the house and making sure that we weren't being watched, that we weren't detected. And this is how we celebrated one New Year's.

Q: Which year?

A: It must have been from '41 to '42 or from '42 to '43. It must have been from '42 to '43. Because we were a little braver by this time. More accurately, we were somehow . . . It wasn't that we were braver, but we already . . . we wanted to undertake something; we had some hope in something. What if we were saved?! Maybe we would have a chance to save ourselves! Like this. So it must have been, yes from '42 to '43.

Q: Do you remember the date on which you left to go to the partisans?

A: Of course. It was on the 28th of April, 1943 that I came (sic.) to the partisans. I . . . It is a day that I will never forget. Because I broke away from the ghetto. It meant that I could possibly remain alive. Well, in any

case they were not taking me to be shot. Of course, I remember this day. I will never forget . . .

Q: How did you sleep when you were in the ghetto? Did you sleep deeply? Did you dream?

A: Well, I slept deeply when I was with the partisans (sic.). I was young and healthy then, all the time in fresh air, all the time in the woods. My sleep was deep. Well, I must have dreamt. I don't remember. There. Even though we were sleeping every which way. In the tent, on hay, and . . . When there were dugouts, in the dugout. Well, you had your own space. There . . . There were men and women. In essence when . . . It was like this in all the detachments . . . If the detachments had been in existence for a long time, they would build dugouts for women only. Couples formed there--and they would build for them . . . You slept where you could. And I thought that it was very good.

Q: But if you return your thoughts to the ghetto. This order about the stars. What was the size of the stars? Where did you wear them? Where did you find the yellow cloth?

A: Where did we . . .? We were supposed to find the cloth where we could. They did not give us this cloth. Well, we found it. In all the families . . . There were rags in every house. We found something. It had to be the right color and everything. There. They were sewn onto the left side. Or was it the right? I think it was the left. Well, the size approximated the palm. There. That was the size. It had to be round. There. And they had thought of the way in which it had to sewn on. So it would not be with a single stitch; rather, it had to be sewn on tightly. If they noticed it otherwise, they could shoot you. They could shoot you for anything.

Q: Which was the most wonderful moment in the ghetto? Was there a moment when you were feeling good?

A: Well, I don't know. There must not have been such a moment. Perhaps, this . . . Because fear followed you the entire time. We were afraid. And we would go to sleep and we would not know whether they would come for us today or not. We, in essence, did not get undressed. Because the cars came every day. And to which house they will come, we do not know. There, there, there, we hear that it coming. We are already hearing . . . we listen closely--they are coming. We listen closely. But no, it seems that the sound is already fading away. They are not coming for us. This means that we fall asleep once more. It was like this. No, the good moments . . . there were none. The [situation] with my father was very scary. This incident. He for me . . . do you understand this one thing--he died. A human being died. And that was all. And they were taking [people] away. Well, it was a mass operation. And here--I don't know--he is lying in this place, alive or dead? It was as if I had lost my mind. I, I was running, I was screaming . . . Already . . . already it was beyond this neighborhood. It was as if I had lost my mind. Then, my friend was over me . . . She said, "It's simply impossible to look at you. Well, let us go." I said, "Well, how can we go?!" She said, "Well, let us go." She was . . . I would say that she was even braver than I. There. And we went. We went. We made our way there . . .

I said that they put us to the wall. And in essence, this is how it was. But at this time people that he was also supposed to detain came out from another apartment . . . These people had hidden gold in the stove or somewhere. They had come to this neighborhood on purpose. So when the German put us to the wall and came towards them, those people, they

showed him--gold, gold, gold . . . And we quickly . . . away from there . . . Like this. We ran away.

With the partisans, of course, there were all sorts of times--good ones and bad ones. We had some quiet moments. We built a fire. We would even dance. There. There were songs. They were from all over: from Byelorussia, from the Ukraine, from everywhere. And there were such moments with the partisans. But, of course, for the most part it was always fighting, fighting, all the time, and orders and everything. If I were not going on a mission, someone else would be. Somebody was always going on a mission. And then you sit and wait. Here they are bringing someone wounded. There was one who went on a mission and was ripped apart by a mine. They didn't even bring him back. And a second one had his nose ripped. At that time I was the only one for everyone--doctor, nurse, orderly. We had called a surgeon from the brigade. He came. There. And we were doing--he was making stitches when he was supposed to be and everything. Well, and I took care of everything else later. It was such, I must say, such . . . How can I put it? His face resembled that of a bandit, a little. There. But after this I took care of him . . . And I do not want to flatter myself, but I gave of myself to the wounded. And I did not keep account of anything. And so he did not know when . . . He was very grateful to me. If someone was about to have an operation, he was requesting that they bring him honey, that they bring this, that they bring that. Somehow someone would always be taking care of this. And as for me . . . We would be going somewhere later . . . But I was very afraid of water. I wasn't afraid when they were bombing from the airplanes. I wasn't afraid. I had some sort of courage. I . . . But when . . . It was a swampy area. We had to cross the swamp and there would be a small

overlay. At this point I would lose my balance and could fall. So our partisans knew about this. So they would . . . "Well, where is Raya, where is Raya?"--to bring me over. So they escorted me.

Q: What kinds of clothes did you have at the detachments?

A: What kinds of clothes did we have at the detachments? Well, I had come in a jacket. It was . . . It was a men's jacket. There. Well, what I had had with me. I don't remember the dress. It was spring. And I had some sort of shoes. I don't remember what kind. There. And later, when we had already come . . . We were already with the partisans and going on missions. When we would go on the missions for the groceries . . . that is, to obtain groceries, then we tried . . . someone would give you something . . . a dress, some sort of skirt, some sort of . . . they would bring, they would bring to us. And then we had a . . . There was a family camp not far away from us. As it happended, my mother-in-law was in this camp. The commander of this detachement was called Zorin. Everyone knows him. He is a national hero. He . . . There. This detachment was . . . He had various workshops. He was an intelligent person. He had various workshops. They would bring him . . . a cow, for example. They would bring it from the detachment so that there would be meat and sausage. So they would process it there. If anyone needed boots . . . They removed the boots from a German . . . When they went on missions, then the weapons and the clothes, their uniforms, their . . . their . . . They took the boots off of them, everything . . . So we needed the boots. So we went to this detachment--they will make them there. So let's say they made boots for me there. I had very nice boots. There. Well, they also brought me a beautifully embroidered leather jacket. Then we laughed. After everything, after free . . . After they had freed us and everything. When

these leather jackets became fashionable, I remembered everything . . . Because I . . . I gave it away to someone when I left the woods. Because it was summer. I thought, why do I need a leather jacket? There was the leather jacket, then there was a fur cap with some sort of ribbon across--a partisan [ribbon]. They also made it in Zorin's detachment. Well, later it was somewhat easier. They ordered from there everything that was needed. This detachment was not very far away. We went there occassionally. It was like this.

Q: I am wondering, in the ghetto many families lived in the same room. How was the air there? Because, I think, it was crowded, that is . . .

A: It was terrible. How can you?! It was crowded, there was nothing to breathe. And then it began. With a nonrelative--families lived together--people were not at all calculating. Perhaps hunger forced them to, I don't know. Someone has a loaf of bread. They held it for their children, for . . . They would not take it for themselves. Or a piece of bread. But all would sleep during the night. Then someone would get up . . . I remember this incident as well. Then someone would get up and . . . take this bread and, and eat it. Because he was hungry. Hunger could force one to do anything. Sometimes we brought the remains of potatoes and we used them for everything. It was a good . . . This . . . this was among the best. We washed them, passed them through a food processor and made potato pancakes. Like this. We accomodated. Because people everywhere . . . And we somehow accomodated.

Q: And when you left for work in the morning, the things . . . Were things ever stolen? The bedding?

A: No, no. Mostly no. We did not have anything [worth stealing]. No. All in all, of course, no. It was a special case--hunger. This was hunger. You

can't say anything about it. But if there happened to be a thief, he could have come in peace time, too.

Q: Tell us, did it ever prove necessary for you to shoot? Use your weapon.

A: It proved necessary. When we were engaged in the railroad war there was one . . . I participated in this war at one point. So I had to. But I will tell you the truth. I don't know whether or not I hit my target. But I had to. I always carried a carbine with me. I had . . . It was a short rifle. It was called a carbine. This was my weapon. There. My, my . . . Well, I . . . We were going on a mission. I could not go without a weapon. So I had this carbine. They had taught us to use weapons.

Q: What was the railroad war?

A: What was the railroad war? There was an order. Because there was the partisan headquarters somewhere in the Soviet . . . It was in Moscow, or somewhere? The one that developed the orders that were given to us. In addition to this, we ourselves . . . had worked out some. And so the railroad war. In other words . . . The trains are going, carrying ammunition, carrying enemy soldiers, carrrying . . . carrying everything. So we had to destroy this. Do you understand? This was called the railroad war.

Q: But how did this incident happen? When you had to fire your gun.

A: So we were sitting there. But on the other line . . . they were waiting for the train. The train passed and . . . they wrecked the train. And they began to hop out. Someone died immediately. Someone was running. Running away. Well, we began to shoot at them. And my shot, I don't know whether I hit the target or not.

Q: Those 10 days, when you were left behind at the swamp with the wounded. Tell us, how did you speak with them, what did you tell them,

how did you comfort them? Or did they comfort you? How did they communicate among themselves?

A: How did they communicate? That is, in essence, at the end there were only the two wounded and I. Because these two men . . . They were simply on crutches--this type of wounded. And they took them with them. They left. I don't know right now whether they really had the goal . . . to find the partisans . . . they wanted to save themselves. Most likely that was it. There. And I was left with these two. Well, it was nothing. Sometimes we just talked, distracted ourselves in some way. There. But later . . . this Ibragimov--the Azerbaijani--the whole time he was . . . I was very afraid that we would manage to crawl up to me. I moved farther and farther away from him. And he would take from me . . . He would take my gun and shoot me. Because he was asking me all the time, "Raya, you are a woman, you can't do it. Give it to me, I," he said, "we will not make it out of here." So there. Ten days. It was true, somehow there was no hope. We would lie there. It would be already twilight. It was already beginning to be cold. We were covered with those peasant felt coats. These big peasant coats. They were called "burka" in Byelorussia. There. Then we hear that someone is coming. Someone . . . someone is moving. But we don't whether they are ours or the Germans. So we were also very careful. We are afraid to give . . . Until we see. We had a very short Byelorussian partisan. So the Azerbaijani always called him "brother Byelorussian." And when we saw the people, he saw him first. And he began to shout, "Brother Byelorussian, brother Byelorussian, come here. Brother Byelorussian! We are here, we are here!" Like this.

Q: But to return to the ghetto. You had communicated there. Somehow you communicated, despite the danger. You later met someone besides your friend Raya?

A: Why, of course I met some.

Q: And which . . . ?

A: I met the partisans. I can only name those whom I . . . Especially those that I was close to over there. Because there were many people there as well. I did not know all of them. There. And I met, that is . . . Well, there was one called Sonya Marshak. [I] was walking down the street and I met her by chance. My mother-in-law was left alive. She met very many because she had been in the "family" detachment. There. This family detachment was . . . There were many from the ghetto there. Well, they met with them. She simply knew them better. Leeza Rapo lives here in Florida. In Florida. We were together in the ghetto. Every two years she came to Minsk. Because all of her relatives . . . Yes. I want to . . . Here I haven't said everything. She and her husband . . . They were . . . he was taken to work. I may not know the details of this. They ran away from somewhere. He was wily. And they ran away. They ran away to Poland. They saved themselves. And in 1946 or . . . Well, I don't know the year exactly when the Poles were allowed to leave, Polish Jews to America. They left. And they . . . Her relatives remained . . . She came here every two years--to Minsk. And my friend, who had always been in Minsk, met with her every year . . . She met with her every time. And later, when I already returned to Minsk, she said--do you know that Raya returned and everything. So she always made arrangements for us, we always met together. And then it turned out that she was the friend of my husband's sister, who has been living in Florida for 45 years. My husband's sister

has already come to visit me twice. There. Even three times. One time she came when [my] son came here. And I had talked to Leeza and she even helped me. I have now received compensation for having been in the ghetto. I needed . . . What kinds of documents do I have? I am . . . The Germans did not give them out. Even though I was given a witness affidavit by those who knew me. There. I met someone here named Sopha Levina. But I didn't know. She is very ill now. She has had a stroke. They told me, you know? Sopha Levina is here. She was also in the ghetto. Well, I called her, and we met. Her father was a professor of pediatrics. He taught in our medical institute. I did not remember her. I think that she was 16 years old then and I was older. There. But she gave me a witness affadavit. Then Leeza Rapo gave me a witness affadavit. Then there is a book. Maybe you will have a chance to see it some day--The Avengers of the Ghetto by Smolar. And my name figures in it in a few places. It does not figure so far as to imply that I was something. But, let's say, there were doctors from the ghetto (well, they were already including me with the doctors) were gathering medical supplies in the ghetto. And then there was the doctor from the partisan detachment, R. Livshits, who helped them and everything. So I pointed this out to my lawyer. I pointed out that my name figured there and there. He wrote me that the papers from Germany stated that we had too few witness affadavits. You had written that you were mentioned in this book. Please find this book and make copies of these places and these episodes. Well, what was it to me? I had guarded it carefully, but I lost it in Leeda, when we . . . when my husband was serving. Well, there is no book and that's everything. And you know, we found this book here. They told me that there is a woman here . . . She had already died. Her daughter is here. My

son knows her. They gave us this book. I made copies and left 2 copies for myself. And I sent them to him. There was nothing there which told of my heroic actions, but I was mentioned and all. There.

Q: Did you manage to save your husband's letter? That one.

A: Ha?

Q: Did you manage to save your husband's letter? The first one--from the war.

A: No. You know, I saved it for a very long time, but later . . . I don't know. We were always moving, we moved and we had neither house nor home; we had only a temporary dwelling. It was not saved. It was . . . such a letter . . . it was written . . . That is, he addressed it to me or to those who knew me, "I ask to inform etc, etc . . . there and there. That is, mama and Olya are alive. They are in Moscow. They are living in their own apartment . . . "--Olya's.["] I think that the address was written there. He pointed it out. "I am a captain (he was a captain then, later he became a major, and later lieutenant colonel) there and there." Well, that is how our letter writing began. The letter writing began like this. There was the post office. How did it happen then? I would get a letter. For four months there would be nothing. Suddenly . . . He wrote me that he will help me, that is, send money. Suddenly I get four thousand. Well, for four thousand I could get a pair of shoes, material for a dress--it was dyed parashoot silk. There. And my friend and I bought ourselves some sort of second hand shirts. And perhaps some sort of gingerbread or a piece of bread. We could buy this for four thousand. Probably we couldn't buy much else. Well, later he helped me all the time, of course.

Q: Could you remember in more detail about the prisoner of war camp where you worked as an orderly? What was it?

A: I can remember. It was later in Minsk, my last, from where I left. It so happened that this place was not far from . . . My apartment was not far away from this place where the prisoner of war camp was located. Now there is a prison there. There. That is, there were prisoners of war there. They kept them there. But I had a first aid post. An orderly and I were working there. We were by twos or by threes . . . We took turns being on duty. And if someone got sick, if someone needed help, no matter who it was, we had to help them. We helped them. I did not work there for long. Because as soon as the medical institute reopened, I returned there immediately to continue my studies. Like that.

Q: And when you came to the partisans' detachment, were there mostly Russians there, or people of other nationalities as well?

A: No. There were different people.

Q: Ibragimov was there.

A: Yes, and Asians were there, and Russians were there, and Byelorussians and the Ukrainians. And the Jews were there. There were Jews who joined the partisan [detachments] when they were first organized. Because they had been hiding somewhere, and when the partisan detachments began to function, they went there. Because with the partisans there were . . . I was in the western part, but how many partisans were in the eastern part?! There were very many of us partisans . . . Byelorussia was famous for its partisan detachments. And the partisans contributed their part. There.

Q: Was your house in Minsk preserved?

A: No, no, no. When I returned from Leeda, from training, our house was already destroyed; my husband's house was destroyed. Nothing was preserved. The Government House was preserved. They had preserved it

especially for themselves. The Red Army House--The Soviet Army House was preserved. These were it from the big projects. Some houses on the edge of town were saved. Private houses. Somewhere they were preserved, somewhere they weren't. Because Minsk was . . . The extent to which Minsk was in ruins! Well, they rebuilt it later. Of course, we . . . When I was studying, they arranged working Saturdays. And we . . . carried, that is, removed garbage, brought . . . Well, we did everything that had to be done. We were very actively . . . All the city dwellers had an active role in the rebuilding of the city. There. And Minsk was rebuilt before all the other cities. And . . . were you ever in Minsk? Minsk was a beautiful city! Very clean and beautiful. Minsk was a very beautiful city. Recently it had become a sad place. Because you would be walking and meeting very few Jews--people have left. And you think that you have stayed in your old age. It was a little bit scary. A little bit. And then antisemitism was already there. Then there was antisemitism in full swing. People were fired from jobs--couldn't find a job. My daughter did not work for 3 months. And . . . All in all, they cut back terribly, terribly. When they would consider you for a job, they didn't reject you outright because you were a Jew, because of the fifth line. They didn't reject outright.

Q: Which year was this?

A: Ah?

Q: Which year?

A: Well . . . the last years--it was really during all of the years. The last . . . during all of the eighties. There. Well, I don't remember if it was happening during Khruschev or not. At that time there was cosmopolitism. There. It happened all the time. After the war it happened all the time.

For example, we were serving at Sahalin (my husband was a serviceman in the hospital) and there were very many Jews there. Because they tried to send Jews who were in the service to Sahalin. Far away. There. We were in Germany for two years and we . . . My husband was there for 2 years and I a little bit less . . . And we were transferred sooner than the others. Because they tried to remove Jews from there.

Q: When you were in the ghetto, did the Jews celebrate any religious holidays there?

A: Yes . . . At that point we celebrated. Because we were grasping at straws. That is, if there was a fast . . . We didn't have anything to eat anyway, but we fasted. It was not that difficult for us at that point. And maybe? We were grasping at straws. We . . . well, at anything. We . . . Then everyone would tell about their dreams. Someone got up today and said, "I dreamt about such and such--Aha, that was a good dream. It meant that . . . Well, maybe something good will happen . . . But another would say,"Oh, I dreamt about such and such--Oh, this means that there will be some misfortune." It meant . . . Because we were grasping at straws. Like this.

Q: Did people pray in the ghetto?

A: They prayed. But I did not have a chance to meet them. I don't know, a synagogue? Probably there was no synagogue. I don't even remember. They prayed. They must have prayed. At their own places during the holidays. Of course, they tried to celebrate holidays there. Well, celebrate how? You couldn't bake what you were supposed to for a specific holiday, something that you really wanted to have. But, in any case, they celebrated. They fasted when there was a fast.

Q: Did you get a chance to save something, perhaps? It would be a miracle but maybe to save something from your prewar past?

A: From my prewar past? No. I don't have anything except this photograph. And I have another one--from when I was 20 years old. But it is tiny, amateurish, very small. And so I have nothing which has been saved. But I had this powder compact with an inscription. My husband had given it to me. It was very valuable to me. I always carried it with me. And when they had detained me, they found this compact on me (I had nothing). They looked at it, turned it over and over. They . . . It was probably rusted . . . It was silver, in truth. But . . . they returned it to me. And for a long time I . . . I think I had it after the war. But later I . . . I no longer kept it because it had worn out. No, I have nothing else saved.

Q: Did they read any books in the ghetto, or was this . . . ?

A: Of course, they read. Because in the houses . . . The houses remained. Books remained in the houses. Thus, we read. First of all, we burned those that were not allowed, because if they found them . . . then what would happen? There. We would find books and read them. We had to do something with ourselves, to distract ourselves a little. Right now I grab Russian books wherever I can find them. And I read. Because I will not be able to do it in English.

Q: Do you remember what your family and your husband's family took with them to the ghetto? What did you take with you?

A: Everything that we had was burned. Nothing. When I came to Minsk, our apartment no longer existed. I was told that a neighbor took away my mother and my sister. My sister had come to give birth in Minsk. Originally, she comes from Moscow. There. Our neighbor took them away in a car. He had worked somewhere in the organs. They had probably taken

dipers. Do I know? For the child. They didn't take anything. From Leeda . . . I was young. I had taken the best things, the most beautiful things that I had--I left everything. I left everything. I remember that we climbed into some sort of cellar to escape the bombing. And later, when we were rejected at the military registration and enlistment office and were told, "Girls, don't bother us. Leave from here," we dropped everything and left. There was another episode. I don't know, is it appropriate or not?

Q: Yes, Yes.

A: If not, dispose of it.

We had our training in Leeda when we came there. Several us had arrived there. So the three of us began to train at labor and delivery and the other three at another hospital. Later we would have had to switch. We had . . . We were treated very well in labor and delivery. They helped us with housing. We were living in the dormitory of the pedagogical institute. There. They told us of a Jewish woman who would cook for us. This was when they had just freed western Byelorussia. Everything there was like it was in Poland, you know. What would she cook for us. She cooked everything for us. They were very good to us. There was one young man. A Jew. A young doctor. He was the head doctor. The other was an elderly Pole. There. Well, there were others, I don't remember. And when we . . . And when everything was happening, the bombing, where were we to go? First of all we ran to labor and delivery. They gathered us there. And we said, "What are we to do? We have to go to the registration office." And the head doctor said, "Girls, leave the city. Leave. You have nothing to do here. Here you . . . Here you will burn with everything else. Leave the city!" And the second crossed his legs, smoked a cigar and said, "What's wrong with you, young Komsomol members?! You are not going to defend

your homeland. Stalin is waiting for you over there." And the other said, "Don't listen to him. Leave. Leave the city quickly!" And we don't know anything else about their fate, because we left and the city burned.

Q: Did you have a chance to meet the doctors with whom you worked in the partisans later?

A: Yes, we met. There was one Maria Abramovna Kerzon. At that time she was already . . . I was still a student then. She was already a dermatologist and venereal disease specialist. And I became [this kind of doctor] when I arrived at the hospital which had this specialty. And later when we returned to Minsk, she also worked at the dispensary. And we would meet. We had very warm meetings. I know that she later died. I believe that she died in the eighties. She was older [than I]. Her two sons were killed when they were teenagers.

Q: The surgeon under whom you worked in the detachement? What kind of a person was he? And what happened to him afterwards?

A: In the hospital, yes?

Q: Yes, with the partisans.

[A]: We had two. One was the head of the hospital. Yuliy Anatolyevich Altunin, I remember. And the other was Ivan Mefodeyevich Oduri. I had a very good relationship with this one. He was a very kind, sincere person. He always gave you hints, always, he was a very good person. He had an orderly who was also his wife. Then it was called the PPJ. There.

Q: What was the PPJ?

A: Pohodno Polevaya Jena (a field wife). You haven't heard of this? He and she . . . He and she . . . We were friends. He was very . . . They were very good to us and everything. Well, the second one was the surgeon. This was the head of the hospital. He was not bad as well, but he was an

aristocrat, you know. He must have come from the . . . There. He held himself very high. He was always on horseback. With an aide-de-camp. Well, there were all sorts of things there. But you can't tell everything.

Q: Tell us.

A: Well, it was like this.

Q: Tell us. Your children will be interested, your grandchildren will be interested. You were such a beautiful young woman then.

A: No, I can't . . . Well, he took me into the detachment because he thought . . . He was attracted to me. Well, nothing ever developed for him because to me . . . He did not seem handsome to me and, in truth, in the detachment . . . Like this. This is all that I can say about this.

Q: How were the Jews treated in the detachment?

A: There one began to feel the antisemitism.

Q: In the detachment?

A: There one began to feel the antisemitism, yes.

Q: Tell us.

A: Well, how? They . . . were not insulting or something like that. It was the opposite--the partisans--the Jews--they participated in intelligence and in all of the missions. But there were jokes. They could needle you. And for example, there is a 15 or 16 year old boy whose name was Abrasha. So they could say, "Abrasha, where is your chicken?". Like this. This was a guttural pronunciation. You know, they tried to catch you out. But there were no fallings out. I can't say that there were. There were no fallings out. Because the Byelorussians, I can tell you . . . Those of the Byelorussian village were not antisemitic. And when we . . . That is, I am returning. When I emerged from the column and went past the brick factory, the first village that we happened upon was called Medvejina. We

were going to the Staroye Celo but on the way . . . we happened upon the village of Medvejina. They had a tradition in this village. When they walk, they take off their hats and say hello. And so the three of us are walking--there were the three of us and Simochka. And the women are standing there gossiping. You know? Someone went for water, someone for something else. So they say,"Oh, the little kikes (jidki) are coming, the little kikes are coming." And we say, "No way. What kind of little kikes are we?"

"No, no, go ahead. Many little kikes go here. Go. Because even if they are little kikes, they want to live."

Do you understand? They to us . . . Byelorus . . . In Byelorussia, all in all, there was no antisemitism of the darkest kind.

Q: But how did they know you were little kikes? Because of the hat?

A: Well, they were already experienced. No. What hat? I didn't have anything . . . I was . . . I tore off the star and went in that jacket. We were all like that. There. But they . . . They knew that all were passing. Many Jews passed through that village of Medvejina and that all were going to Moosia. Because all had heard . . . All in the ghetto had heard of the Byelorussian woman named Moosia. There. And so they recognized us. But it was said in a well-meaning way. They did not have anything [against us]. They would not have betrayed us. "Go, go. There is no police here. Go."

Because the police--they would come, they were already afraid. They came on orders. Because they were afraid of the partisans. As the partisans feared the police, so did the police feared the partisans much more. Because it was an example of "ours and theirs." The partisans

would have dealt with them like the Germans would not have dealt with. There. There were times when partisans shot other partisans for looting.

Q: Were there cases of looting?

A: Well, you would go into a village . . . They would go into a village. They would go . . . Someone bursts in and begins to . . . Do you know how? Like it is among all people. There were some like that as well . . . Well, they would begin to take various things . . . things that they were not supposed to, things that were not planned. Because how can you . . . Every partisan could come and take away from the peasants. They were already poor--they suffered from the Germans and from the partisans. There. Well . . . For this they shot them. There. They shot them, like they did that Epstein. He was shot with that group. Then some police came, I remember as well, but they were . . . Aha, they came, but someone from the partisans already knew about them, what they had done. Do you understand? And they said that these have served the Germans. They had served the fascists, and things were ended quickly with them. Like this.

Q: Were the adults in the ghetto able to get out into the Russian part of the city?

A: No. They couldn't do it under any circumstances. This was . . . we . . . when we were taken to work, the column was formed, the gates were opened, and we were let out. Then the gates were closed again. And they all . . . and all of this was behind barbed wire. Why did so many children die? Very many children died. Well, there are some boys, you know, who were so desperate, so brave. They ran away, they saw that [people] were shot. They ran away. They thought that they could save themselves somewhere. Maybe somebody somewhere would take them in. Maybe they joined the partisans somewhere. Maybe they were raised somewhere in a

village. Because when some left to join the partisans, they gave their children over to be raised in a village. Some took [the children] very willingly. Some very willingly took these children. And then tragedy occurred. The mother would come to take the child. But the child would hug this mother and shout,"You are my mother, don't give me away! You are my mother!"

And, and--Oh, my God!--They would begin like this in Byelorussian. But the mother wants to take back her child. And this was their tragedy.

The wife of the commander . . . the commander of one of the detachments. She had already married him. And she left the child in this village. And when the war ended, they came . . . came to take away the child. There was such a tragedy that I cannot even convey it to you. How this child cried! And I was in the house with this woman when the foster mother brought the child there. She brought her. And stayed with her there. She must have lived there for a month. So that she could get used to it--not to sever her from herself. She cried terribly. How that mother cried! The foster one. And how that girl cried! And she was crossing herself and she . . . Well, in Byelorussian, she only spoke Byelorussian and everything.

Q: And what was the nationality of the girl?

A: Jewish. The Jewish mother went to the partisans and took the girl . . . came with the girl, and when all sorts of missions began, they tried to give the children away to the villages. And some villages took very willingly. There were those without children. And they brought them up well. They . . . We watched many films about this in the Soviet Union. I remember very well.

Q: Do you remember that woman's last name?

A: No, no. This was not in my detachment. Then with a friend . . . They lived in Baranovichi then. And we were going with her to my mother-in-law. She lived in Dyatlovo. There. Also in western Byelorussia. So it was through Baranovichi. We stopped there. And . . . We were going to my mother-in-law. She fed us, because she also married in the partisans. She was 50 years old. And he was a western Byelo . . . he lost his entire family. And he had a house that remained in Dyatlovo. He returned to that house. Then he found his cow. Then he found his pig. Do you know how it was there? And they gave it all to him. Well, and she . . . He was a shoemaker and she was a seamstress, but she was concerned with housework. So she . . . We came, she fed us . . . I don't know how we would have lived if she had not fed us. Because we wanted to eat! Shamelessly. Always. The war was already over . . . already we students . . . we already . . . it was already victory . . . Victory Day, but we . . . we all wanted to eat. We could not be satisfied.

Q: How does it feel to be hungry? How is it?

A: Well, you know, how it is. Well, it's bad. Well, just bad. Your heart gets heavy. Well, just bad. Well, you just want to eat. And-and I don't know. Now some often say that they are going on a hunger strike. I don't understand this. I couldn't do it. I eat very little. But I couldn't go on a hunger strike. You just want to eat. Your head spins and . . . And you feel depressed, and-and-and, well, bad, all is bad, all is bad when you want to eat. Hunger is very terrible. Well, we . . . Everything that we could we transformed into food.

Q: Well, for example.

A: Well, for example, before we were going into the ghetto, well, when Minsk . . . the Germans were already in Minsk, but the ghetto was still not

announced, so there were warehouses, there were stores and-and . . . without an owner. And people went there in throng and took. They took. They took what they could. I remember that we dragged in a big, big bag of powdered eggs. We didn't know what this was. Only later did we guess, find out, that these are powdered eggs. It really saved us . . . at that point. What else did we bring? I believe that we brought a little bit of salt. Probably nothing else. There. So it was like this. So we had a lot of powdered eggs and someone else had a bag of flour. And someone else had something else. So we exchanged. This one will give you a little . . . People made due. You had to live somehow. You needed something. You couldn't gather berries or mushrooms here--they didn't allow you anywhere. I remember that they would take you out to work . . . This was before I was in camp 13. We had the Cheluskintzev Park. There they prepared logs . . . Something--I don't remember. Well, then they brought us back. And I remember how our imagination would run wild. I was still . . . What if we ran away right now? There are Gypsies around here . . . Maybe we could join the Gypsies. Well, you know, the imagination . . . This was simply grasping at whatever you could. Of course, we couldn't run away anywhere, because they would have finished us off right then and there. And we returned. We got into this car and returned. There would be times when my fellow students would approach us. Someone . . . The Russian students. They tried to give us something. But this was very rare, because they were afraid. There was an incident in which one of our students began to serve the Germans. They were two friends, one Russian, another Jewish. And this Sonya Edelson, she didn't even have a chance to go to the ghetto. At once she . . . There was a prisoner of war camp where our prisoners were. And she was there . . . There was a whole group of

them. They, well, helped. They brought some sorts of things so that they could somehow run away. Someone took away, someone brought out, someone . . . something . . . Like this. And she . . . This went on only for a few months, perhaps. Because . . . And they were hanged. They were hanged. There is a square in Minsk. Yes, there is a small memorial there. There they hanged several people. And-and she even sent a note to her mother, that Mother, don't cry for me, and things like that.

And her other friend was Sonya (Nina in another place) Barbarchuk. We were walking down the street. They were taking us to work. And suddenly she saw us. A long time had already passed. It already passed. Many pogroms had already occurred. It was probably '42 already, maybe '43. It must have been '43 already. So she saw us and she . . . You can't blame her. She couldn't approach us because they also . . . But she saw us and shouted, "Girls! You are still alive?!" Do you understand? From her side, it was probably not out of malice, but she hurt us very much by this. My . . . my friend, the one that we were living with the entire time, said, "Yes, we are alive. And to spite our enemies, we will continue to live." She said, "Oh, girls, girls, I will get passports for you. Don't lose touch with me. I will guard you. I will bring you . . . everything . . . "

Did you see her? We saw her thus. And later, when they freed Minsk, when our medical institute returned, she finished the fifth year with us. But there were various rumors going around about her: she served the Germans, she finished some courses with them and all. They allowed her to finish the institute. Also, I remember our professors talking, "Well, it won't be me, if I don't fail her on the government exams." Well, they let her finish the institute, and later, when I . . . I had not been in Minsk for a long time. When we returned to Minsk, I was working and a doctor who

worked with me told me. She knew her, Nina (sic) Barbarchuk. She said, "I know. Nina was in prison for five . . . ten years. For collaborations with the Germans. With fascists. There. Then they let her out without giving her the right to live in Minsk. Then one of our students who had spent the entire war at the front visited her. She really gave it to her!

Well, there were such singular episodes. There were many of them.

Q: You could not talk very much in the camp, but do you remember the people? Well, the faces. Do you remember that someone was beautiful, someone was not beautiful? How was this, all in all? What do you notice when . . .

A: Well, somehow they were remembered. First of all, there were many that you knew. There were people from my year in school, my classmates. With whom we . . . Well, we had a lovely student called Rozochka Barek. How she died. She lived . . . That is, there is the border . . . and there, the ghetto, and there, the Russian neighborhood began. And here was the guard where the police kept the watch. And so . . . But she was very lovely. And so one policeman got to know her. Like this, through the barbed wire, how else? He said, "I will save you. I will save you." Well, and she believed him. All of it. And she . . .

"Well, gather some . . . Don't gather many, but gather a few people and I will take you away to the partisans."

Well, she told us all of this--that girls, at such and such a time, but don't tell anyone. And the policeman, that is, will take us out and maybe we will be . . . we will have a chance to go to the partisans. That's all. She disappeared without a trace. And he . . . he didn't . . . anyone . . . Well, again, so they say. We don't know. But they said that he didn't take them to the partisans. He gave them up to the police . . . Gave them up to the

SS. There. Well, there were such . . . There were those that I knew, those that I remembered, those that are no longer alive. But many faces . . . I know that there was, I remember a last name, but I can't remember the face. Because you know, we have somehow lost our memory.

Q: What about from your classmates? What were their fates? What do you remember? How was it in the ghetto?

A: With my classmates in the ghetto? Well, there was Raya, we were together. Because we were . . . either in the institute . . . I believe that there were no others. You know, there were no others.

Q: What about from the institute?

A: There were many from the institute.

Q: Tell us what you remember about them.

A: Well, what can I tell? I don't know about all of them. Two students who worked with me in camp 13. They took them away during the first pogrom and shot them.

Q: Do you remember their names?

A: One was called Luba, the one that was in my year. But her sister, one year below, I don't remember. There. These. Then, I remember a student . . . What was his last name? I have forgotten already. The one who studied with my husband--Gordon. Grisha Gordon. There was such a one. Maybe they are here somewhere, in America. I don't know. Because I don't know anything else about them. Well, I remember these fellow students. We knew that they will destroy us because they were destroying the entire ghetto. We . . . rumors reached us from other neighborhoods, other cities, that there the ghetto is already destroyed, that there the ghetto is already destroyed. There was still some glimmer of hope, despite this. This was hope in the partisans . . . Before everything on the par . . . on the

fact that we would get to the partisans. There. Well, and our wish came true. Like this.

There were different sorts of times with the partisans. There were times when it was not bad for us, when it was good. Especially during the summer. They were so friendly. We helped one another. And everything . . . Especially if a person . . . For me, as one in the medical field . . . If he had been lightly caught somewhere . . . Even a small wound or something else . . . They tried to treat them very warmly. Because they knew . . . Well, I wasn't conceited. You know, there were such . . . For example, in our hospital there were those who weren't especially loved. Because they had their caprices. But I was okay. If I had to feed, I would feed. If I had to wash, I would wash. If I had to remove the bedpan, I would remove the bedpan. At least the orderlies were there. I didn't take this into account. Like this.

Q: What was your worst day with the partisans?

A: Well, perhaps the worst day was when we were in that swamp. Those ten days. This was one case. There was another very scary day when we . . . It was during the first blockade and we lost one another in the swamp. We had lost one another because this swamp . . . Maybe you have the wrong impression of our Byelorussian swamps. In our Byelorussian deep woods there grow . . . trees stand . . . well, not trees but tall, deep bushes . . . Dead wood is there, dry trees grow there and all. If you step, it's up to here to you. If you stepped in another place, it's up to here to you. If you step . . . Then, you couldn't see people beyond this dead wood. You don't know where you are behind these hillocks. And so it was the last day of the blockade, when we emerged from the woods, but I still didn't know that we would emerge. I was completely alone in the woods. In the

swamp. I was completely alone in the swamp. With my own carbine. And when I . . . I, I don't remember what I felt then. There. I sat somewhere behind a bush. Because it was also dangerous to splash in the swamp. Perhaps someone . . . And it was already dawn . . . And I saw that people were coming, people were coming. I saw that . . . Yes, I heard that people were coming. I thought well, this is the end. This could be the police, or what? What should I do? I took my carbine and put it here . . . I don't know if I could do it. I don't want to praise myself that I am so brave and I could do it. But since I knew how to do it . . . I put the carbine into my mouth in such a way that if they were Germans, I would shoot myself. This was with the foot . . . we knew how to do this. There. I don't know. I don't know if I would have dared to or not. I don't know. But I see that it is the partisans who are coming. So I became happy, but they don't know who I am. Who are you? I say that I am from the partisan hospital.

--From which hospital?

And they continue to wander and all.

--From which hospital?

I said, "Well, we have a partisan hospital in the brigade by the name of . . .

--"I don't know this hospital!" one said.

--"Finish her off. Finish her off, we aren't going to let this pass," he said. Like that. Well, and I began to explain that . . .

He . . . One said . . . said . . . shouted . . .

--"Finish her off!"

But the other said, "Why are you stuck here? Well, come with us. Well, here is a piece of cracker or . . ."

I remember that they gave me a handful of buckwheat . . . to chew on. After all, we were so hungry. There. Well, then he calmed down. And I

went with them. I went with them. We emerged . . . This blockade was already over. We emerged into the woods. And there immediately I . . . I sat with them, I remember; we even ate something. And I met my surgeon. And it seems that we shed a tear. Both of shed a tear.

--Well, let's go, he said, to look for our own. I went with him. And we went in the direction where our own were located, to our hospital. People were already beginning to pour in, the wounded, and . . . the heavily wounded were there already . . . We had hidden them and left them. There. Well, it was like this. This was, of course, very scary. If you can imagine . . . I don't remember if I was very scared at the time or not. I don't remember. Because . . . just like this, to close ones eyes and imagine the woods . . . the cold . . . not a living soul, except for the animals. There were very many animals. There were very many animals. There were very many wild animals. Because when I sat there for 10 days with those wounded, we saw them pass from afar . . . So we said, "If we had known . . . If I had been some sort of a fighting man, I might have shot a wild boar and we . . . we would have something to eat. But we couldn't do this. I couldn't do this. There. So there were very many animals. Wild boars . . . And there were various . . . wild goats. There were various wild animals. So you were there in the night, alone, not knowing where you are, who is surrounding you, and you hear how these animals are splashing. It could approach you right now and that is the end. Do you understand? As I said, I don't even remember that feeling of fear. I had it, of course, but I don't remember it now.

This must be the end. No? You still have . . .

Q: Did you wish for anything during the war?

A: I wished all the time.

Q: What did you wish for?

A: What did I wish for? That I . . . While I was in the ghetto?

Q: In the ghetto, yes, and . . .

A: Well, I wished all the time. I wished that . . . that I would remain alive, that I would finish the institute, that I would meet my husband, that I would meet my mother and my sister. I lived on this the entire time. Wishing. I wished all the time.

Q: Were you lonely for your husband?

A: Well, of course. But I had, to speak the truth, very little hope that he was alive. But I imagined to myself like this. He is at the front . . . Well, it is still 3 years, right? Still three years at the front, always under fire! Well, how can a human being remain alive?! I, I didn't count on it. That's why when there was this letter, we were in hysterics, my friend and I. We . . . we didn't know how to read it and where to read it. We hid in some corner, then we ran, then I ran to . . . Then we returned to this . . . well, to the city gardens, where we . . . Gorky Park, where we were still located. And we . . . I was beside myself . . . I enter the garden and I wave, I wave, I wave with this letter. And there they pass it on to one another. From where? No one knows yet. But they guessed that . . . All shouted: Raya got a letter from her husband, Raya got a letter from her husband! And all . . . All, all surrounded me, and this letter passed through their hands. All read it. There.

So we lived only on hope. If there was nothing to wish for, then . . . And life would . . . We would not have clung to life. My friend and I talked only like this: When we were . . . let's say, studying at the institute and going to take exams. How we would shake! How we would worry! If we remain alive and will be taking exams, we will never worry again. And

later when we were in the fifth year, everything repeated itself. My God, what fools we were! Why did we worry? We worried because we had to take exams.

Q: At some point did you thank God or fate? In gratitude that you were saved. Or how?

A: Well, if it's like this, it wasn't automatically, not consciously--simply "Thank God!" Because we . . . Belief we . . . We were not inculcated with any faith. Regrettably, no one inculcated us. We didn't know the language. Not this . . . In the ghetto, in essence . . . I began to understand the whole business. Even now I cannot speak, but I understand--I understand everything. I began to understand in the ghetto. Because there, for the most part, they spoke Yiddish. I began to understand the language there.

Q: But, all in all, what do you think? You were, after all, surrounded more by . . . Did you meet more, how should I say, good people who helped you or, for the most part, did you yourself somehow . . . how should I say?

A: Well, in the partisans, for the most part, we made our way through ourselves. But, all in all, I think that there are more good people. And in the institute, when I was studying . . . Well, in school--it was, for the most part, a carefree childhood. And then later, after the war, when I was studying, we were treated with much sympathy. And somehow . . . Of course, there were good people. You simply tried not to have business with the bad ones. Perhaps there were some bad ones. But somehow I managed to select my friends. And later we had very many friends. My husband was in the service. We had friends in Germany. But already someone had died. Or, or he, or she. Almost . . . One couple is left, yes, a husband and wife. They were younger than we. To this day we are . . . We had friends everywhere and we maintain contact everywhere. In the

summer we even went to rest at Yevpatoria--three families. The Sahalin friends were writing to one another. And we came together. This was also interesting.

Q: But how did you find these people, the ones with whom you left the ghetto for the partisans? Or did they find you? Generally, why you? Or? . .

A: Well, how? How did I find them in Minsk, or what?

Q: No. How did your group organize itself in order to leave the ghetto for the partisans?

A: Ah, from the ghetto to the partisans? We, the three of us, were friends, that's all. And . . . The friend of . . . was his closest. She had left a little bit earlier. She had hinted to this Simochka. So that she would find us there. Well, we also . . . guarded this Simochka. And we . . . This we had in common. She--that friend--she left with nothing. Somehow she got a chance and she left. Because all of this belonged to us. And to her as well. And when we . . . She had already left and we . . . so we . . . There were the three of us. Do you know something? I remember him. I remember another one well. But I can't remember the third (the third one must have been R.A. herself--from the margin). I can't remember and that is all. Well, it wasn't like we were friends . . . We discussed this question together. And how we should do this, and how to leave, how Simochka . . . and all such things.

Q: What kinds of instruments did you have when you worked as a doctor in the detachment?

A: In the detachment. Well, since we had organized a hospital . . . They had dropped down medical supplies to us using airplanes. All that we needed. For the most part. So we had . . . We had a pharmacy in the

hospital. We . . . Well, of course, some, you know . . . If we got a hold of, let's say, a few tubes of Strepbotzit at one point or Sulfodemizin , this was something . . . We conserved it very carefully. And all the same, we had instruments. We had syringes. Of course, they weren't disposable. We boiled them. There. We had syringes, we had . . . well . . . The surgeons had orderlies for surgical procedures, in order to do the operations. Later, when the hospital was dispersed, we had somehow made one cart. And we carried all of that out. And there they must have dispersed it among the detachments.

Q: But when all of this began, when you . . . You had . . . How should I say, the training and the war began. Did you acquire skills which were later useful to you?

A: Well, we were already . . .? Well, we could already do some things. We had finished 4 years at the medical institute. We could do everything. We could administer shots. Administer shots. Well, let's say we couldn't operate, but we could put in staples. We could do all the binding. We could administer any shot. There. Well, because we . . . our training had begun in labor and delivery, it was useful to me. I delivered this girl. A girl was born, a girl. Our medical attendant was . . . I said that I had never delivered a baby, and here are our two surgeons. And I said, "Well, you should at least stand close by. Or," I said, "I could . . . Some sort of complication can occur and I can't handle it." He said, "We will be close by, but you deliver it (they were uncomfortable), you deliver it." And she--this medical attendant said to me, "Don't you worry. I will also give you hints." Well, it was all normal. We delivered. We got everything ready. Everything--scissors in order to cut the cord. This isn't hard when you have to learn it.

Q: And after the war, when you were friends, were you friends with good people for the most part or did you choose Jewish friends particularly?
A: No, no. We didn't choose Jews. We were friends with . . . When we . . . That is, the war ended, and I immediately began to live where my husband was living. Well, in Germany. We had friends in Ge . . . in Germany. Well, until the last years. Perhaps we had lost touch with them in the last few years. With one--particularly. He even came to visit us. He happened to be Russian. We were friends in Leeda. We had Russians and Jews. There. Even though . . . more, nevertheless, somehow you got close to, somehow you tried with Jews. And at Sahalin we laughed at the fact that they had practically sent only Jews to these hospitals. But not only [Jews]. We had Russians as well. We gathered together very often. We had good times together. Because this was a remote place. In a foreign land there were no relatives. So we were like a family. We are . . . to this day we are like family. Those that are alive . . . I just now got a letter, I just sent a small package to Kiev. She thanked me. It is her granddaughter already. It is her granddaughter already. There. So it is . . . well, just to do it . . . Well, of course, there were [friends]. We had Russian friends. Especially we . . . Well, of course, there were . . . Well, you would meet antisemites. We met those that you could clearly see were antisemites. We tried not to have any business with them.
Q: When did you come to San Francisco?
A: We came to San Francisco on November 13, 1989. It will be two years. I came with my daughter, my grandson, and my son-in-law. And my son already met us here. He already . . . He even had a job already . . . He had been here for 8 months already. There. Well, that period was kind of difficult. They didn't know the language. They couldn't find work in their

fields. There. They had to complete courses. My son-in-law finished one kind and she finished another kind. She worked as a dental assistant. It was been only 2 days since he went to work as a programmer. He finished courses. So there is still much ahead for them and . . . I have a very nice apartment. I got a one bedroom apartment. I was on the waiting list for a year and a half, but I got it. There. Well, my pension is enough for me. I can even help them. But they don't especially take help from me. Somehow they earn for themselves. There. My granddaughter is at the university, in her third year at Berkley. There are two boys in 11th grade. This is my daughter's son and my son's son. And they all work part-time.

Q: When you were in the ghetto, did anything funny happen?

A: Well, it happened. The Jews are a people with a sense of humor. There were, of course, funny . . . They told anecdotes, and . . . They tried, many tried to make one another laugh. Especially those who had a sense of humor, this humor remained with them until the last minute, until their last breath, you could say. It . . . There were many like this among them. And at work you had a chance to laugh--somebody would say something and you would laugh. We had one, I remember . . . She cursed terribly. It is not appropriate to say . . .

Q: Tell us.

A: She always cursed terribly. We sat there and worked. We were folding or sorting something, I don't remember. There were very many of us Jews sitting there. And each one was doing his own thing. And that one was saying something, cursing, cursing. I said, "Sonya," I said, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?!" She said, "Well, here is the intelligensia! Look, look, at this member of the intelligensia! Think about it! She doesn't like the fact that I am cursing!" I remembered this.

Well, there was much. And my mother-in-law had this sort of humor. She would say something to support us. Well, like this.

Q: Tell us some more about your mother-in-law and your father-in-law. How did they live in the ghetto?

A: Well, we lived . . . Well, how? He was taken to work immediately. And he did not return. It must have been, what kind of job, we were thinking. Well, some sort of job that we weren't supposed to know about. Or they were digging holes . . . for themselves, for us, for everyone. Or what? . . . But many . . . There were many people who were taken away and did not return. There. Well, and she worked with us in this camp. She could do everything. She even . . . They even tried not to give her the dirtiest jobs. To fix something or something like that. So she . . . Well . . . Then for my friend and me she . . . She was the housekeeper and everything . . . Maybe we could not make due but she could make due. We were hungry, but still we managed to eat something, we got some things. And she . . . And the Russian women really loved her. They always tried to bring her something, to feed her. Like this. This also took a great deal of risk. They weren't allowed to do this. Well, when we got a chance to leave . . . for the partisans . . . when they were bombing Minsk, she was even a leader. Like this. Let's go and leave and all. She grabbed something . . . Because all was left behind. She took a jug . . . To me she . . . [said] that she is going to a village . . . the jug . . . In this jug was a piece of bread, a piece of bacon. I don't remember what she had then. And we went. We went, we went, we went. There. And she was good at the partisans, as well. She was a good housekeeper. She cooked there . . . in the kitchen. Then the deputy commander had twins. But his wife . . . She had twins. They took her for themselves to be a nurse, to help. She helped them.

Well, because she was a wise woman . . . she . . . they treated her with respect. Well, so she . . . She kept in touch with many because she was in a family detachment, the Zorin. She kept in touch with many and everything. But I don't know all of them, of course. Later I . . . we didn't live . . . we came, we were from '46 . . . from '45 even . . . Well, from the beginning of '46 until '63, we didn't live in Minsk. We came to Minsk in '63. My husband was demobilized.

Q: Did she marry a Russian in the detachment?

A: A western Jew.

Q: She married a Jew, yes? You had mentioned that he found his cow, his pig.

A: Well, yes. Yes, he had a farm. He had livestock. Do you know how Jews behaved recently? They prayed to God and ate pork. There.

Q: Do you remember any jokes from the ghetto? Your mother-in-law's jokes? Or some other jokes?

A: Well, I just can't remember right now. I can't remember right now.

Q: Some sorts of words? Favorite words?

A: Well, you know, she was something. She talked with a Yiddish accent. In appearance she was . . . But if she began to talk . . . In appearance she was a typical Russian woman. But if she began to talk, you would know immediately that she was Jewish. Well, it was okay. Well, simply, she was this kind of a woman. She wasn't bad. She really, really supported me, she fed my friend and me while we were already studying. She thought of my friend as her daughter and of me as her daughter-in-law. We all lived together. We had to present it in some way, so she said that to everyone. So she . . . all the time . . . what didn't we bring . . . many groceries from there. Sometimes she would come--she would bring. Well,

for three people. My husband's brother lived in Minsk by this time. There. So she brought for the three of us. All for the three of us.

Of course, when I was in the 5th year . . . I was already studying. Well, that my husband was alive? I knew that already because we were exchanging letters. When I was studying in the 5th year, before we were living in the dormitory, we lived in some sort of a relative of my friend and she gave a couch for the two of us. Her parents had been killed. She herself was probably from the front, she had been at the front. Well, she occupied . . . Well, she let us in. Well, we even paid her. I don't remember how it was. There. This was somehow behind the railroad. So their house . . . this street.

Well, my husband knew my address, where . . . where I live. There. And so we came back from the institute in the evening. She was also studying. She worked and studied at the pediatics institute. We came from the institute. We ate together, some sort of kasha or . . . We always ate together. Suddenly, we saw the face of some serviceman in the window. She screamed . . . she didn't know him. My friend and I knew him, but she didn't know him!

So he is looking in the window. He went . . . The private homes were close to the ground. He went about, he searched. First of all, it was already dark. And, and she sees the face of some serviceman. She screamed, "Oh," she said, "Lyova has come!" You know, like this.

Well, we were flabbergasted. We opened the door--and really, my husband had come. Well, you can imagine.

I didn't go to the institute the next day. There. But my friend went. She told everyone . . . In the institute . . . we all studied together. In

truth, he was a year ahead. All . . . all knew us, that we were a couple who were married and all . . . But our friend . . .

"Why is Raya not here?"

She said that Lyova has come.

--Oh, oh . . . Let her be happy! She is so lucky. We wish her happiness. This is such good fortune!"

Well, really. For so many years to pass and then to meet each other again! Because some found others for themselves. All of this . . . Well, but we met and again . . . There.

In the beginning we exchanged letters for . . . Well, so he came then. He came on a pass. That is, for him . . . They gave him one day Minsk to sort himself out. I think that they were going to Romania. There. Well, so that meant I had him. Then he took me to his train car. Where all of his . . . medical unit was. He was the commander of the medical unit at that time, I think. Well, there were his doctors, nurses and all. We met one another. They began: one would give a loaf of bread, another some canned food or something. They all began to give this to me.

Well, he later left, of course. There.

Q: Where did you spend the night?

A: There . . . In that room, which she let us have . . . There.

Well, is this all? No? Or are you interested in something else?

Q: How did you meet him? Tell us how . . .

A: We were students. He was one year ahead. I was a year behind. There was a demonstration somewhere--Students' Day, I think. We met there . . . From that time . . . I was in second year, he was in third. Well, when he was in fourth and I in third, we got married. Because he was older than I by five years, almost 6 years.

(There is unintelligible talk by the questioner)

Q: You said something . . .

A: I no longer remember.

Q: During the fifth year . . . about your friendship, perhaps, or about . . . something new . . .

A: But I already don't remember what it is. Well, it is something immaterial because I . . .

Ah, what did I want to say? That I married in '39. This meant that we had studied for 2 years. There. I had a son in '43 . . . in '47. There. Because we did not live together. We didn't know anything about one another. If we were alive or not?

And so?

(unintelligible talk about the photograph)

Q: You have to go a bit lower. The corners. By the corners of the photograph . . .

A: The corners?

Q: You said with a friend, and then cover up the face of the girl in the photograph . . .

. . . . . .

Who else is in the photograph with you?

Q: Ah, this is my friend from school. My friends from the beginning grades--Luba Pakova . . . I don't know if she is still alive or not. Later there was no longer a friendship between us.

Q: What year can this be?

A: So. This is first grade. It meants that I--born in '19 . . . I was 7 years old. It must have been '26.

Q: Show me the photograph.

. . . . . .

Seven years old, the year 1926.

A: It was 1926.

Q: (unclear) . . . . . .

Later . . . . .

A: In 1946 . . . In the year 1947 I had a son.

Q: Who is on the photograph?

A: I am, my landlady . . .

Q: Who is she?

A: Frau Gerhold. The landlady . . . from whom we rented the apartment . . . in Germany. There.

Q: But she was a German?

A: A German. Of course, she was a German. There. And-and-and, and the child that she is bathing.

. . . . . So. Now I will remember . . .

. . . . . I had Natasha in Sahalin. This must have been . . . '53 . . . '53 or '54. Just like this.

Q: In Sahalin.

A: . . . If I had known, I would have brought other photographs. This is just by accident--but I had some. Is that all?

Q: But what is this?

A: So. These were also times . . . Also . . . forty . . . this . . .

Q: 1954?

A: What did I call it?

Q: 1953 or 1954.

A: Yes, it must have been '53 or '54.

Q: In Sahalin? When?

A: In Sahalin, yes. So . . . Well. This is my . . . My husband with my daughter. That is, she was born in '53. It must be around '56, '57, '56. . . . . This is where? It must have in Leeda. Well, approximately, also fifty . . . maybe '55, like that. There. Perhaps he has more hair, more hair.

Q: What was his rank?

A: Liutenant colonel.

Q: Liutenant colonel of the medical . . . ?

A: Liutenant colonel of the medical corp, yes.

So. This is '63. They are seeing me off. There is even a date there--6.11.63. We were leaving Leeda for Minsk. My husband was demobilized. He came to me in the dispensary, where I worked and was photographed with us . . . . . .

(unclear) . . . . the chief doctor was taking the picture . . . . . .

Here I am in Minsk in '64 or '65 already. The clinic at the "Radio-Factory." I am working there.

That is all. Well, and this is now. This must be unnecessary.

San Francisco?

San Francisco. We went on . . . We went on a tour of some flower company . . .

That is all.