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The Holocaust in Ukraine – Christian Leaders

Translation: D10 The Orthodox priest Aleksei Glagolev recalls German murders in Kiev, 1945

A. Glagolev

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FOR ONE'S FRIENDS¹

[Editor's Preface]

By penetrating into the USSR, the last world war unexpectedly led to an improved position of the Church in the socialist state. Before 1941, there were around a hundred acting churches left in the entire country, and five bishops serving in freedom. In a city like Kyiv², for instance, only “one-and-half” churches were in service (one of them, the St. Nicholas Embankment Church, got by with only a deacon, without a priest).

On the territory occupied by the Germans, the people, still unaware of the essence of the newly-arrived regime, tried to return to the free working life from which they had been forcefully wrested for decades by the communist tyranny. These hopes were soon crushed by the cruel reality. But the urge of the multimillion national organism towards change and spiritual rectification turned out to be so strong that everywhere on the territory seized by the Germans, a spontaneous religious revival commenced.

The occupational authorities did not obstruct this process, so that the lands they controlled soon saw the opening of around six thousand Orthodox churches and dozens of cloisters. In Kyiv alone, over a dozen churches and five monasteries resumed their activities (by comparison, today, after the partial return of the Lavra, there are only three monasteries).

The expression of the people's will, so clearly reflected in the pursuit of a religious life, was so evident that it forced the Soviet leadership to hastily redesign their anti-religious policies. Dogmatically, Stalin based this new version on the concept of “patriotism”, as demonstrated by the Church and the faithful. Since that historic moment, the postulate of the clergy's “patriotic position” has become the main, if not the only, official justification of the existence of religious organizations and open manifestations of religious life within Soviet society, and is so to this day. What exactly is hiding behind this blurred formula?

A tank column named after Dmitry Donskoi and a squadron of combat aircraft named after Aleksandr Nevsky, paid for by church resources – an example that keeps popping up in propaganda brochures; unclear references to certain priests, said to have helped the partisans, and some dramatic shots from documentary films: grannies in churches, lighting candles for victory – that is, perhaps, all an ordinary Soviet citizen or a specialized historian might learn about this question.

¹ John 15:13 – translator's note.

² Names of cities, villages, streets, etc. given according to the Ukrainian spelling and transliteration – translator's note.

Priesthood “under the Germans” is an equally under-researched aspect of this classified subject. The same brochures that refer to the patriotism of nameless representatives of the clergy pour a tub of slander and accusations of treason of the motherland over a large number of concrete clerics. They could at least say something about those who carried out missions in the enemy’s rear. I have seen pictures of a priest from Moscow who was detached to the partisans of Yugoslavia: next to the hefty fighters with red stars on their papakhas, he looked like an intelligent zampolit³ with a neat beard. But even if one leaves those who carried out missions aside, it is safe to assert, on a conservative estimate, that the clerics reestablished churches and community life in the occupied land, and sought to aid the people in its new misery.

A short note from the priest Aleksei Aleksandrovich Glagolev⁴ is both genuine and scant evidence of the behavior of an ordinary cleric who sought to help those persecuted by Hitler’s punitive machine. The note was written in 1945 at the request of the church authorities, with the events fresh in memory, as they say, for a “report” to the top: the then first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Khrushchev and the commissioner for affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church Khodchenko.

Given the dry description of events, one might not notice and, so to speak, overlook the brave persona of the author. Which was, its bears mentioning, highly extraordinary and contradicts not just the picture painted by the atheist propaganda, but also the mawkish image of a patriotic “religious figure” which was created in the postwar era within the circles of the Moscow Patriarchate.

A short, slender figure in a long coat and a wide-brimmed straw hat, on top of a church dome: the roofing is under renovation. A delicate face with glasses on, behind which two sad, slightly bulging eyes are peering.

He was born in Kyiv on June 2, 1901. He spent his childhood in ancient Podil; his father was the famous archpriest Aleksandr Glagolev, prior of the St. Nicholas the Kind Church (where Mikhail Bulgakov got married), and a professor at the Kyiv Spiritual Academy, an authority on the Old Testament and Jewish history. Archpriest Aleksandr gained Russia-wide renown as an expert in the trial of Beilis, who was accused by Black Hundred circles of the ritual murder of a Russian teenager, during which Aleksandr Glagolev authoritatively testified to the utter absurdity of the accusations. Almost ten years later, in 1922, during another trial, of the Petrograd metropolitan Veniamin (Kazanskii), a man of the sacred life, accused of resisting the Soviet authorities’ orders, his lawyer Gurovich told the red judges that he, as a Jew, was happy to attest his respect for the Russian clergy, which, in the person of priest Glagolev, had defended the truth at the Kyiv trial.⁵

It is not surprising that Aleksei Glagolev, who was raised in a religious-academic environment, with its own specific atmosphere, absorbed the best of its beneficial influences: shrewd erudition and clear faith. When playing as a child, Lesik, as he was called at home, would always take on the role of priest and build churches in which he would “baptize” his peers.

In the early 1920s, he was in the last class to graduate from the Kyiv Theological Academy (the name under which the Kyiv Spiritual Academy was able to prolong its

³ Deputy commander for political matters – translator’s note.

⁴ Names of persons given according to the Russian spelling and transliteration – translator’s note.

⁵ Professor archpriest A. Glagolev was shot in the cellars of the Kyiv NKVD in 1937.

existence a little). However, because of his social background, and despite his excellent education (he was proficient in the main European languages as well as ancient Greek), Aleksei Aleksandrovich was forced to work as a manual laborer at factories, a seasonal worker at the Sugar Industry Institute, and an accountant, until he was finally able to enroll in the mathematics faculty of a pedagogical institute in 1936 (which he finished in 1940).

At the request of his father, Aleksei Aleksandrovich initially decided to postpone his ordination as a priest until he reached the canonic age of the Christ, but by then, the times had changed too much... In 1927, metropolitan Sergii (Stragorodskii), who was the acting Patriarchal Locum Tenens, published his famous "Declaration". After its publication, the ninth wave of persecutions, longer than all the previous ones, struck the faithful.

Aleksei Aleksandrovich was part of the community of the remarkable Kyivan priest Anatolii Zhurakovskii, which consisted of intelligentsia and youth. Its participants sought to revive the ancient Christian way of life, retain the cultural traditions of the destroyed Russian society, and preserve the freedom and sublime dignity of the Church. It is not surprising that father Anatolii and his consecration broke with metropolitan Sergii, stopped lauding his name during prayer (the movement of the "non-mentioners"), and were among the first to defect to the Catacomb Church.⁶

Glagolev and his wife, Tat'iana Pavlovna, née Bulashevich (died in 1981), made their apartment on the second floor of a dilapidated two-stock house on Dehtiarna Street available for secret services. The underground Kyivan church was rather well-attended, at certain times (on high days and holidays), service might be held in three or four places simultaneously. In the 1930s, the prominent elder and schema-bishop Antonii (Abashidze) was commonly recognized as the spiritual leader of this church group. In a distant past, David Abashidze, rector of the Tbilisi Seminary, had featured on a well-known painting by court artist Brodskii, depicting the expulsion from the seminary of the young Stalin. Eyewitnesses say it was at the behest of the Party emperor himself that the elder was in possession of a Kremlin-issued document protecting him from arrests.

When the arrival of the Germans made it possible to emerge from the underground, Aleksei Glagolev, with the blessing of the archbishop, was ordained a priest. The head of the Kyiv Eparchy, Bishop Panteleimon, appointed father Aleksei as prior of the Pokrov Church⁷ in Podil. Around this church most of the events described in [Glagolev's] recollections unfolded. In his short "Autobiography", he just briefly mentions that "with God's help, I saved a number of Soviet citizens, Russians and Jews."

What was his further destiny? "During the German evacuation of Kyiv," father Aleksandr writes in the official note, "I was forcibly deported, robbed and beaten up by the fascists." Fortunately, he was able to escape.

In the end, Kyiv was liberated, the exarch of Ukraine, Metropolitan Ioann, affirmed father Aleksei in his function as prior of the Pokrov Church, reports of his heroic deed were sent to the authorities. But the joy of victory could not obscure the bitter situation of the Church, which now found itself under the dismal guardianship of the Supreme Commander in Chief.

⁶ See the book "Sviashchennii Anantolii Zhurakovskii. Materialy k zhituu," YMCA-PRESS, 1984, with my preface and commentary.

⁷ *Pokrov* means protection and refers to the Intercession of the Theotokos (Mother of God) – translator's note.

New difficulties arose. Under the Germans father Aleksei had opened something of a school for aspiring priests in his own house. When, in some places around the country, spiritual education institutions started opening their doors, in particular a seminary in Kyiv, the church authorities refused to admit father Aleksei as a teacher.

The youth was drawn towards this rather dull-looking priest, they knocked down the door of his apartment, and until the very last days of his life, he secretly home-taught those interested: when, during the umpteenth persecution of religion, this time under Khrushchev, the seminary had to close down again, he continued his teachings – and thus many of his students were eventually ordained and are still serving today. (For some of them he had to pay a price: their parents wrote denunciations and the sentinels of state security tormented the ailing priest at interrogations).

During his years as prior, the Pokrov Church (a monument of 18th-century architecture from the architect Hryhorovych-Barskyi), which the consecration had received in a state of disrepair, was completely renovated, its brick fence rebuilt. But in 1960, the church was once again wrested from the faithful. After that, father Aleksei would never have the chance to serve as a prior again.

He died on January 22, 1972, in the dignity of archpriest and was buried at the Baikove Cemetery.

The church leadership was not fond of him, even to his colleagues and confreres he was a stranger, but in the Kyiv of the 1950s and 1960s, he became a spiritual center for “former” people, for what was left of the old church intelligentsia, a pillar for the offshoots of the new faithful youth (who, in turn, are now the elderly fathers of Christian families).

When people speak of the severe moral illnesses of Russia, I recall several names, one of which is that of priest Aleksei Glagolev. At the thought of him, one senses a person, reliable and modest, who, amid the storm of life’s sea, kept true to Christ. His humble love of God and boundless pity for humankind served him as a beacon. Perchance, the light emanating from such people will warm up and revive Russia.

P. PROTSENKO.

On September 28, 1941, an order appeared on all intersections of Kyiv, saying that “...all Jews in the city of Kyiv must appear on September 29, at 8am, at Dehtiarivs’ka Street near the Jewish cemetery.”⁸ People were encouraged to take valuables and warm clothes with them. It was announced that not only Jews who did not comply with this order would be shot, but also all persons who dared to hide them. Dread came over peoples’ hearts – not only of those who were directly affected by the order, but of everyone who had some sense of humanity left.

No one knew what exactly awaited the Jews, but one thing was clear: nothing good was to be expected. The designation of the Jewish cemetery as gathering point, and the utter silence about the need to bring food supplies or not, were in itself bad signs. The condemned were alternately sinking into total despair or grasping at a straw like people

⁸ Glagolev quotes from the poster in Ukrainian, even though the largest text on the announcement had been in Russian – translator’s note

drowning, fostering a faint hope that a railway train would be conveyed to the Jewish cemetery, which would be used to deport them from the city.

Deportation, hard labor, even a concentration camp – all those things appeared less horrifying than a violent death, for after all, “*dum spero spiro*” (while I breathe, I hope). As long as a human breaths, hope of deliverance from this slavery burns inside him, hope that both his life and the lives of his children and close ones will be saved.

To walk towards your own execution, and to carry and lead along your children with your own hands and, before dying, see them get wrested from their mother and killed before your eyes – the thought of it was so horrifying that everyone quickly dispelled it. That is why everyone wanted to believe that nothing but deportation from the city awaited the Jews. But it was hard to believe, and those twenty four hours of ominous uncertainty were so unbearably agonizing and horrifying that the entire city was filled with the terrible perimortem wailing of people awaiting their doom.

After a horrible night came an even grimmer morning.

Obedying the German order, a incessant current of tens of thousands of Jews extended in the direction of the Jewish cemetery. The crowd was made up of blossoming, healthy youngsters and girls, hunching, decrepit elders, men full of strength, weak, frightened women, and children of all ages, even weeks-old babies.

Many of them wore luxurious clothes and brought whole mountains of costly possessions with them on carters, those who were poorer transported their possessions themselves on carts and baby carriages, others dragged their belongings with them, having loaded them not just onto themselves but onto their little children, too, and others yet were leading or carrying along their ill or crippled relatives. They were overtaken by carriages, used by the most famous Jewish professors, doctors and lawyers of Kyiv for their last earthly journey.

Like small streams, all these people flowed from various ends of the city into one massive, never-ending current, drifting towards the Jewish cemetery.

What a fearsome spectacle!

What to do? How to avert the imminent evil? These questions went through my tormented mind. And suddenly a pitiful woman approached me through common acquaintances, begging for me to save her and her child. This was Izabella Naumovna, née Mirkina, daughter of a well-known Kyiv dentist.

She hoped that if I would plead for her before the mayor and testify that she was married to a Russian, they would allow her to disregard the German order of September 28. I immediately wrote a letter, and my wife hastily delivered it to the city administration. We were all hoping the mayor would take my request into consideration, trusting a testimony of the son of professor and archpriest Glagolev, whom he respected and in whose parish he was born and had spent all his life. But nothing came of it. The mayor at that time, professor Ohloblyn, entered the anteroom pale and distressed, and said there was unfortunately nothing he could do, because the German authorities had told him the Jewish question was a personal matter of the Germans and they would not allow the Ukrainian authorities to interfere in it. Meeting one of the representative of the German command turned out to be utterly impossible, as all doors were shut tight that day.

Having lost her last hope of receiving the right to a legal existence, Izabella Naumovna hurried to catch up with her family, to share with them a common fate, but

neither her father nor her sister or stepmother were to be found at the agreed place next to the cemetery – they had already crossed the boundary after which there was no return, for, as we found out afterwards, over 70 thousand Jews were brutally shot in Babyn Yar behind the Jewish cemetery on that day and during the following days.

The poor beings were placed on the edge of the ravine, shot with machine guns and covered with earth, not only the dead but also those still alive, even if they were not fatally injured.

According to other information, the adults were killed with electricity and the children were simply hurled into the pit alive.

Already at the beginning of the first day, many Jews understood there would be no trains and they were going to be slaughtered.

Quickly, terrible rumors started spreading among those gathered at the Jewish cemetery, and from there through the entire city, making everyone shudder of horror. They say many lost their mind while awaiting their fate and started dancing or laughing insanely, right there outside the cemetery walls. Some preferred to take their own life. Many sought shelter in the Church, begging the priests to quickly baptize them and their children, so as to save themselves from the death to which they, as Jews, were doomed. And some were indeed baptized, but it did not save them, because the Germans considered them to be Jews even after baptism and did not grant them a better fate.

It was already evening when Izabella Naumovna arrived at the Jewish cemetery for the second time. Suddenly a woman yelled at her: “Where are you going? Don’t go there, do go, for you will not return!...”⁹

It was late at night when she, absolutely wrecked, made her way to the apartment where her mother and husband’s sister lived. What options did they have? In that house, the janitor [dvornik] and all the residents knew she was Jewish. Staying there would mean certain death for her and others. And then Izabella Naumovna’s relatives turned to us again, begging for us to save her. Me and my wife lay awake all night, fretting and fruitlessly searching for a way to rescue her. What kind of Christians would we be if we would repudiate the poor woman, reaching out to us with such expectation and begging for help?

And suddenly a desperate thought came to my wife’s mind: to give Izabella Naumovna her own passport and metric certificate of baptism, and to send her with these Russian documents to our Christian acquaintances in the countryside.

Of course, it would be very unnerving and elusive. It was clear to what kind of danger my wife would subject herself, left without a passport at such an anxious time, when the Germans held every resident of Kyiv for a runaway Jew. Moreover, we would have to replace my wife’s picture in the passport with a picture of Izabella Naumovna, taken from her passport. Was that even feasible? But I firmly hoped God would help us in this good cause. And so it was. Fortunately, my wife’s passport had been soaked in water during a fire in our house, rendering and the printing completely unclear and blurred. This made it possible to peel off Izabella Naumovna’s photograph and glue in place of the other one.

⁹ Quotation in Ukrainian – translator’s note.

Early in the morning, my wife ran out to look for Izabella Naumovna, whom we had never seen before. She found her in a cupboard under the stairs, hidden under a pile of firewood, where she was crying over the death of her father, her dear sister and her stepmother and was awaiting a similar fate for herself and her daughter at any moment. You can imagine how she rejoiced at the unexpected arrival of my wife with Russian documents. That evening, she set off for [the village of] Zlodiivka, where she spent two months living with peasants.

During this period, my wife nearly paid with her life for her courageous act. Some Gestapo agents who were knocking on doors with the aim of requisitioning goods demanded to see her passport, and when it turned out she did not have one, they declared they would take my wife to the Gestapo as a suspicious individual. Few people ever returned home from the Gestapo. I barely persuaded them to leave my wife alone, by attesting her identity by means of testimonies.

While the real Tat'iana Pavlovna Glagoleva was subject to such dangers in Kyiv, the new-fledged Tat'iana Pavlovna was living a relatively peaceful life some 50 kilometers from Kyiv, in the village of Zlodiivka on the right bank of the Dnieper.

But unfortunately, one and a half months after her arrival, the village authorities started regarding her with some suspicion and making inquiries about her among the nearby farmers. This was not at all surprising, as a city woman who suddenly, out of nowhere and without any purpose, settles down in a peasant cottage, and not even in the summer, when large numbers of vacationers appear in Zlodiivka, but in deep autumn, when everyone leaves the village, is sure to make a strange impression. Finally, Izabella Naumovna was summoned before the village council to determine her identity.

After somehow dodging these troubles, Izabella Naumovna hastily made her way back to Kyiv and, late at night on November 29, suddenly turned up at our door out of the blue. From that moment on, she, and later also her ten-year-old daughter Irochka, started living with us under the guise of relatives, and stayed with us for two years. We went everywhere together.

We had to hide both in our own apartment and in the church's bell tower. It was a difficult task, since we had to hide Izabella Naumovna not just as a Jew but also as a woman that, on account of her age, was subject to deportation to Germany or mobilization for the construction of bridges and roads, which would mean certain death for her, because, firstly, her impaired health would not endure such hard work, and secondly, an old acquaintance might cross her path and betray her, even against their own will, by cause of one incautious exclamation.

Apart from Izabella Naumovna Mirkina and her daughter Irochka, we were able to save some other Jews, too. Among these were Polina Davydovna Sheveleva and her mother Evgeniia Akimovna Sheveleva. Polina Davydovna, a young, 28-year-old woman, was married to a Ukrainian, Dmitrii Lukich Pasichnyi; they lived in a large house at 63 Saksahanskyi Street. It was there that the fateful order of September 28 reached them. Immediately sensing something was wrong, Dmitrii Lukich Pasichnyi decided his wife and mother-in-law need not hurry to the Jewish cemetery and set off to gather information, while leaving them behind in the locked apartment.

He arrived at the designated time in the Lukianivka district and went so far in his investigation that he was apprehended and almost got himself killed together with the Jews. He barely managed to get out of that place.

It became clear to him that sending his wife and mother-in-law to the Jewish cemetery would mean sending them to their execution, and he decided to hide them from the Germans at all costs. This was extremely difficult, because their neighbors knew they were Jewish.

The Germans could storm their apartment at any time and take the poor women away to be shot. Such a horrible end was the fate of many people who, in mortal fear, sought shelter in basements, they were exposed and ruthlessly driven to their death in Babyn Yar. Poor Pasichnyi was racking his brains, trying to find a way out of their hopeless situation. It was necessary to get these tormented women out of their burdensome confinement, where they lived under the constant threat of death, as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, Pasichnyi met my brother's wife, the singer Maria Ivanovna Egoricheva, who used to work with his wife. She advised him to turn to me for help, explaining that I was the son of the late professor of Hebraistics, father Aleksandr Glagolev, who had always stood up for oppressed and unjustly convicted people during his thirty-five-year service as a priest and professor, no matter their nationality [ethnicity] or religious denomination. She told him how, during a Jewish pogrom in 1905, my father, in spite of his soft and seemingly even timid character, had the courage to lead a sacred procession towards the enraged crowd, to convince them to cease their evil, unchristian pursuits; how, in 1913, when he was appointed as an expert in the Beilis case, he stood up for the Jews against the slander they faced – the accusation of ritual murders.

Maria Ivanovna expressed the hope that I would be true to the principles by which my father had raised us, and would do everything possible to save the doomed women. I rummaged through all the fragments of church records that had been retained in my father's archive and, thankfully, found a blank of a civil document that had long ago been abolished and lost its validity – a certificate of baptism. The blank contained a metric statement about the baptism of Pelageia Danilovna Sheveleva, born in 1913 to Orthodox parents. The official seal for this certificate was provided by Pasichnyi himself, who peeled it off of an old document, which had once been issued to some dentist and had allowed him to open a dental practice.

Unfortunately, the year of issue of this seal did not correspond at all to the year indicated by the certificate of baptism I had given to Polina Davydovna. With this highly suspicious document Polina Davydovna and her mother were brought over to the church premises and accommodated in a small house at 6 Pokrovska Street, belonging to our church community. This secluded little house, situated in the back of the garden, had been built in 1909 for my father, the prior of the Church of the Good Nicholas [Mykola Prytysk Church]. I lived there from eight to twenty-nine: growing up, studying, getting married. My eldest children were born here. And when (after thirteen years of absence) I crossed the doorstep of that house again, I hoped it would serve a good purpose, in memory of my late father. It was there that we were able to hide Polina Davydovna and her mother from the murderers' hands.

In all efforts directed at the rescue of Izabella Naumovna and her daughter and Polina Davydovna and her mother, I got help from my friend Aleksandr Grigor'evich

Gorbovskii. Unwilling to work for the Germans, he had left his former job at the Academy of Sciences and enrolled in my service as manager of the church buildings, which provided him with an official position during the German occupation. This man, putting his own head at risk, did a lot of good for people outlawed by the Germans. He knew I was hiding Jews in the church buildings and did not only not oppose this, but offered assistance in many ways. He did not pass on information about people who were subject to deportation to Germany or local labor beyond their strength. And apart from Izabella Naumovna and Polina Davydovna, there were about ten more of those people on our estate. True, they were not, like the Jews, facing death in Babyn Yar, but they could be deported to Germany.

Many times extremely critical situations occurred, when it seemed our custodian [Gorbovskii] was marked for death, but he stayed true to his principles: to protect his ward from the Germans, whatever it took.

It was particularly hard to shelter children and adolescents, who constantly forgot to be cautious and in their giddiness, it seemed, tried their best to die.

- Rita! Weren't you caught at work and sent to Germany! Why won't you understand you are in Germany right now, in Stuttgart, or at least in Königsberg. That's what everyone believes, and no one must know you jumped of the train in Boiarka and are hiding here with us in the bell tower. And how about you, Ira? If we may believe official information, you are virtually on your deathbed! And what were you thinking, Iura? Remember, you aren't even in Kyiv!

That is what our custodian would exclaim in alarm, while Rita, Iura and Ira, breaking out of their forced isolation and idleness, were simply being kids who, having gathered a horde of peers, would ride each other in a clattering wheelbarrow over the old cast-iron plates of the Church courtyard, or play volleyball, all the while producing a terrible roaring and screaming. And all this in the Church courtyard, while in the school across the road a German military hospital was located, which had a guard in front of it day and night.

- Children! Have you ever read "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Beecher Stowe?

- No! – thin voices would answer him carelessly.

- That's a shame! Then you would understand you are in the position of Eliza and the other runaway negroes, who are being chased by the savage slave traders.

Now, when all that is in the past, you can imagine the magnitude of the danger and what an act of bravery Aleksandr Grigor'evich Gorbovskii committed by becoming the custodian of the Pokrov Church.

Meanwhile, my task as the prior of the church was to save... the custodian himself, who, because of his sex and age, was under constant threat, and at times even lived without registration. True, because of his health condition the military commission had always considered Aleksandr Grigor'evich unfit for military service and he possessed a card that exempted him from conscription, but the Germans paid little attention to this; that is why I tried to keep him close and give him the additional title of acolyte. "Ich bin ein Priester, und das ist mein Psalmenmensinger"¹⁰, - this statement saved us more than once during roundups and document checks.

There were many others who sought protection from me as a priest. One way or another I tried to save them. As the prior of the small, wintery Intercession of the Holy

¹⁰ "I am a priest, and this is my acolyte (Ger.)"

Mother [Pokrov] Church in Podil, I wanted as many deprived people as possible to find shelter under the cover of this church, and considered helping them my Christian duty. That is why such a huge number of singers, acolytes, guards, cleaners, prosphora bakers and janitors appeared in our small and poor church, enough for five cathedrals. Fortunately, the Germans had little understanding of these matters, otherwise things would have looked a lot grimmer for me and my “staff” – because the documents stating these people were employed exempted them from various kinds of forced labor.

But it would be too much to tell about all our successful or unsuccessful attempts to save this or that person from the Germans.

I will only mention one other family, that of Nikolai Georgievich Germaize.

This was a family of Jewish descent, but already under tsarist rule Nikolai Georgievich' parents and all of their children had converted to Orthodox Christianity and from then on stopped considering themselves Jews. Germaize's wife had also been baptized before their marriage. Their son Iura, an incredibly talented and lively seventeen-year-old boy who studied at a medical institute, didn't even suspect he was of Jewish descent, it seems. According to their passports, they were all Ukrainians, but if Iura could pass for one, his parents had such an outspoken Semitic appearance that my heart sank of fear for them – for it was clear the first German to cross their path would suspect them of being Jewish, and they would die. And that is indeed what happened. Some days after the mass murder of Jews in Babyn Yar, a befriended medical student came to us in a hurry and informed us that a comrade from the institute, Iura Germaize, had been arrested together with his father at the point where all men in Kyiv were required to pass registration. The poor people were accused of being Jews and beaten up mercilessly.

It was necessary to inform Iura's mother about what had happened as quickly as possible and to deliver the metric certificate of Iura's baptism and the church marriage certificate of his parents to the registration point, and to bring some more people who could testify that Nikolai Georgievich and Iura were not Jews. My daughter ran up to the Nestorovskyi alley, where the Germaizes lived, while me and my wife went to the school where Nikolai Georgievich had been a math teacher for many years, to call his colleagues to help as witnesses.

We ran fast, but the events were developing even faster. When the Germaizes' neighbors arrived at the scene with all necessary documents, they only saw the father and son get escorted out of the building, pushed into an automobile and driven off towards Babyn Yar, Iura being horribly pale and barely standing on his legs, and Nikolai Georgievich so disfigured by the beatings that his eyes were filled with blood and bulging out of their sockets. He walked as a blindman, stumbling and without recognizing either people or the route. By the time Germaize's colleagues and I got to the point, the captives had already been carried off, and our endeavors to have them returned and set free were only met with curses and threats.

It was clear they had perished, but we had to think about Germaize's wife, Liudmila Borisovna. The poor woman, who was oscillating between utter despair and a faint hope that her husband and son, whom she loved selflessly, were alive, was expecting someone to come for her any moment. We tried to calm the grieving woman down, fostering in her the faith that her husband and son would return. But it was too late to undo what had happened; however, we needed to prevent another misfortune, which could happen to poor

Liudmila Borisovna any minute. It is hard to describe what she went through in her empty apartment on those terrible, endlessly long October evenings and nights, while mourning the death of her son and husband, and in her mortal anguish expecting the same ending for herself at any time. We tried to visit Liudmila Borisovna as often as possible, to at least somewhat keep her spirits up, to distract her from depressing thoughts and help her sort out her family documents. Unfortunately, her passport and church marriage certificate had disappeared together with her son. All we found was a student card, which stated she had accepted the sacrament of baptism before marriage, whereby she had received her new name – Liudmila, as well as some trivial documents.

Thus passed Liudmila Borisovna's days and nights full of suffering. Until suddenly, her neighbors came to us with the horrible news that she had been arrested as a Jew and taken to the Gestapo.

I immediately wrote a statement in which I attested the Germaizes were not Jewish, and begged not to murder an innocent woman. My wife hurried to the Gestapo with this letter, but there she was received so harshly that she promptly lost all hope of success. Our further endeavors to get Liudmila Borisovna released were also fruitless.

We later found out they starved her for five days, and on the sixth day brought her and other Jews, who had been arrested throughout the city after trying to save themselves, to the courtyard to transport them to Babyn Yar. There were also children among the doomed, who had been vainly hidden by their Russian relatives or neighbors. When they started loading the Jews into cars to drive them to their execution, Liudmila Borisovna suddenly noticed the investigator who had interrogated her and treated her better than the others. At that moment, her vital instinct stirred and brought her out of the state of stupor and total apathy, even about her imminent violent death, in which she had fallen. She rushed towards the investigator and begged him to have mercy on her, because she was not Jewish at all, but Ukrainian, and she said the wife of priest Glagolev, who had known her for a long time, could confirm this. The investigator wrote down our address and sent the poor woman back to her cell. And thus we got a visit from a Gestapo officer, who introduced himself and began interrogating my wife. He was outrageously impolite, terrorizing my wife and trying to confound her. Finally, he stated that if she would vouch for L. B. Germaize's non-Jewishness, she would be set free, but if further proceeding would prove her testimony to be false, not only Germaize would pay with her head, but my wife, too. We faced an awful situation. Liudmila Borisovna might have been baptized, but she was Jewish, and it was hard to find someone with a more outspoken Semitic appearance. In addition, she spoke with a strong Jewish accent. An incautious testimony could lead to the death of two people. The easiest thing would be to say: "I don't know". But that would be the equivalent of signing Germaize's death sentence. Affirming she was not Jewish meant signing her own death sentence. It was an unbearable torment, but the sense of duty and pity prevailed, and my wife firmly stated she had no doubt whatsoever that Germaize was Russian, since she and her husband had spent all their time in the church where my father used to serve and requested memorial services and prayers, and that in the Soviet period, when no one could force them to do so. After having warned my wife against a false guarantee once more, the Gestapo officer left, and Liudmila Borisovna was set free the very same day, what is more, she received a reference stating she was not Jewish but Ukrainian.

We all rejoiced. Liudmila Borisovna returned to her apartment, which had been looted by the Germans. She was in such an exhausted and dire condition that she looked more like a ghost than a living person. At home, another blow awaited her: the news that her mother, an old lady of about seventy years, who also had not shown up at the cemetery on September 29, and had stayed in her former apartment in the Kyianivskiyi Alley, had been exposed there and sent by the Germans to Babyn Yar, where she had been shot.

There was one good thing – the reference Liudmila Borisovna had received at the Gestapo made it possible for her to appear in public and even feel safer at home. I gave her a church reference saying she was of orthodox confession and Ukrainian nationality.

It is hard to convey all the words of gratitude with which Liudmila Borisovna greeted my wife when they first met. All we wished for was for the poor woman to live free of suffering and persecution, but unfortunately, our wishes were hardly reckoned with, and some three months later Liudmila Borisovna was again taken to the Gestapo, where she died. This time I myself was summoned to the Gestapo and threatened with retaliation because I, as a Russian person and Orthodox priest, had tarnished myself by interceding for a kike.¹¹

All this was unbearably hard and wretched, and involuntarily I came upon the paradoxical thought that those Jews that had followed the order without questions and were shot by the Germans on the first day, had been lucky, as they had died immediately and walked towards their execution without knowing what awaited them. Far worse was the suffering of those who, after having gone through the loss of their close ones and the dread of uninterrupted anticipation of death, were, in the end, caught and shot dead. And there were many such cases. On the street one could often, even long after September 29, see a wagon or even a simple gig being used to transport, like useless accursed junk, like offal for the crags, some weakened elderly Jews, or women and children, half-dead from disease and dread. These still not killed Jews were transported to Babyn Yar.

I have heard that children's homes were visited by special commissions to pick out Jewish children, even the tiniest ones, for execution. Circumcised boys were condemned to die, because, regardless all intentions, no paperwork could hide their nationality [ethnicity].

Such were the horrors the Germans inflicted upon Ukraine's Jews, but it was only a prelude, after which the Russian and Ukrainian population of the occupied cities and villages suffered on an even wider scale. In every single house people mourned their Gritsko or Omelko, their Paraska or Oksana, who were deported for hard labor in Germany. I even met families with three children in total, all of whom were taken away from their mother to Germany.

In the city, people could somehow stand up for themselves and their children, and get exempted on ground of illness or work. Here it was easier, in the end, to hide oneself or one's relatives. The village proved utterly void of protection in this respect. Thus girls and boys, sometimes just children, not just sixteen but even fifteen or fourteen years old, having seen nothing in their lives except for their village, were wrested from their families and deported to alien, faraway, hostile Germany, where they were tormented, exhausted with hunger, excessive labor and cold. They were treated like the enslaved negroes at slave holders' plantations.

¹¹ The Russian original term *zhidovka* is derogatory – translator's note.

How many of them were there in the villages, and in the remote hamlets, and in the city! Father and husband at the front, the eldest children in Germany, mother with the little children left at home. Such was the usual picture of Ukrainian village life during the years of the German occupation. And that was during the period when the Germans were still calmly and “orderly” in charge of the country. As soon as things worsened for them at the front, and the partisans began annoying them in the rear, the Germans went completely insane, and their excesses and cruelty reached their apogee.

The autumn of 1942 and the following winter our family spent in villages on the other side of the Dnieper. First in Tarasovichi, then in Nyzhnia Dubechnia. We were forced to do so because our eldest girl became seriously ill and the doctors prescribed to take her away from the city, to breath fresh air, and give her an enhanced diet. In Kyiv, I couldn’t do any of the things necessary to save my sick daughter’s life. Our conditions were extremely hard and we lived literally from hand to mouth. That is why I requested a temporary assignment to a parish in Tarasovichi and moved there with my entire family, bringing along Izabella Naumovna and Irochka as relatives. I also took Aleksandr Grigor’evich Gorbovskii with me, granting him the title of acolyte. This was better for their safety.

Around that time, i.e. in the autumn of 1942, the areas across the Dnieper, especially the forest districts, saw increased partisan activity. Rumors started reaching us from all over that partisans were appearing now in this, now in that village, at night and sometimes in the middle of the day, that they were killing the Germans there, retaliating against policemen, and driving into the woods cattle that had been prepared for transport to Germany. Unable to fight the well-armed partisans directly, since they did not have sufficient force for this in the periphery, the Germans chose a different method. They sent their punitive detachments into the “culpable” villages, to burn the village down and exterminate as many “suspects” as possible, either by shooting or hanging them, or by burning people alive in a sealed-off building. Gradually, the latter, most savage method of destroying people became the most prevalent. Most of the large flourishing villages were turned into sheer fires. In the environs of Kyiv the following villages were burned down in this way: Pisky, Nova Basan’, Novoselytsia, and later Oshytky, Dniprovs’ki Novosilky, Zhukyn, Chornyn and others. We sensed this wave would eventually reach Nyzhnia Dubechnia, where we had moved after Tarasovichi. What could we do? The Germans could easily qualify us as suspicious elements and crack down on us.

Suddenly, we were summoned to the village administration and told to present our passports and identity cards, after which they announced in a very rude manner that I, my wife, our children and the clerk were allowed to live in the village, but as for “that so-called relative and her girl, well, they have no business hanging around here and must go to Kyiv and work.”¹²

It took a lot of effort to obtain a wagon and send poor Izabella Naumovna and Irochka back to Kyiv, back under the auspices of the Pokrov Church, and some days later, in the morning, before sunrise, I secretly sent my wife, who was about to give birth, to Kyiv with a trustworthy person. Under the hay at the bottom of the sleigh we crammed 4 bags of potatoes from our stock, the only guarantee against a hungry death in the city, at least for some time. It was an anxious and sad departure. I was terrified to let my wife go; she also

¹² Quotation in Ukrainian – translator’s note.

was worried about leaving me and the children behind in the village, which was under threat of reprisal by a punitive detachment. But there was nothing else to do, since the local authorities, who did not want me to leave them, would not let all of us go together. My wife and I agreed the children and I would leave Dubechnia a few days later, not later than February 16.

My wife departed. The road was hard, and the horse was so feeble that the 25 kilometers to Kyiv took over ten hours of toiling. The poor traveler started thinking her journey would never end and she would have to give birth on the ice. It was late at night when they finally made their way to Kyiv. And some days after their departure, on January 31, a German punitive detachment appeared in Nyzhniaa Dubechnia. The pretext to crack down on the residents was the fact that a partisan unit had driven through the village the day before, although there had been no clashes with the Germans.

The executioners arrived in the evening, got settled in the school building, spent the entire night drinking with the policemen and bawling drunken songs, and at dawn, the horror happened: they locked up three men, a young woman and a five-year-old boy in one of the cottages and, having poured kerosene over them, set them on fire. When the poor people, suffocating from the fire and smoke, broke the glass and tried to push the petrified boy out through a window, the Germans used their bayonets to poke him back inside the blazing cottage.

All around the fathers, mothers and wives of the burning people ran about, crying, breaking their own hands in despair, and begging for mercy. They were chased away and beaten with rifle butts.

When I was informed about what had happened, I hurried to the place of execution. It is hard to imagine a more gruesome spectacle than the one that unfolded before my eyes there. The butchers had already left, and in the ashes of the fire the relatives and neighbors of the victims were digging through the smoldering coals, shifting the burnt beams and removing the charred corpses from underneath them. An incessant groaning hang over the village.

The next morning, I announced to the church that I would hold a memorial service for the innocent martyrs, and offered everyone to participate. Those present in the church remained to pay their final respects to their fellow villagers. And two days later we buried all charred remains of human bodies we were able to find at the cemetery.

Now, two years later, it still makes my hair stand on end in terror when I remember the German atrocities I had to witness. In the neighboring villages, the same happened, only on a more colossal scale. There, those burnt alive amounted not to single cases, but to dozens or even hundreds...

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