

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

USHMM, RG-22.002, reel 4, copy from GARF, f. 7021, op. 54, d. 1341, ll.163-165

The Holocaust in Ukraine – Transnistria

Translation: E09 Testimony by Survivors Liusia Sukharevich and Mania Ribalova, 9 May 1944

To the Extraordinary State Commission,
from Liusia Solomonovna Sukharevich¹ and Mania Moiseevna Ribalova, natives of the town
of Shpykiv²

July 22, 1941. Exactly one month after the start of the war, the Germans entered the town of Shpykiv. One month later the Banderites (independists) came to power and organized an administration headed by Sokor, Tsigol'nik and Kolesnik. And one month after the arrival of the banderites, the Romanians assumed power. Immediately, the Jews were gathered from all streets and resettled into one street (the ghetto). All Jews from all the villages of the Shpykiv rayon were gathered and resettled in the ghetto as well. A committee of Jews was formed, the elder was Kartsovnik [first name illegible] (he was taken to the Germans and did not return), the elder's deputy was Zarotskii David L'vovich (who currently works for the Raion Trade Union). The Romanians and all newly-organized institutions started demanding from the Jewish elder Jews for different kinds of work (harvesting beetroot or potatoes at a kolkhoz, washing floors at institutions, at the factory, etc.). We were escorted to and from the work by Romanians. On December 5, 1941, Romanian patrols surrounded the ghetto and told all Jews to bring all their jewelry to the primăria³. The valuables were collected by the military commander Bulygin and the praetor and chair of the administration Sokor.

On December 8, 1941, we got thirty minutes to pack our stuff, and all 980 of us were sent to a concentration camp in Rohozna, 12 km from Shpykiv. All items and possessions in the apartments fell into the hands of the local authorities. We were convoyed by the Romanians Tompa and other policemen from Shpykiv, Vasil Palamarchuk, Zhenia Ganzhuk, Ostapov, as well as policemen from Rohozna. Even before we had walked 1 km, the policemen had seized from many people those things they had managed to grab with them: from S. Bromberg (whose entire family starved to death), from M. Milshtein, and the first to fall victim on the way was the 60-year-old lady F. Fortel, who Ostapov and Ganzhuk caught with Soviet money. Halfway through, the commander arrived, and the praetor and policemen stopped harassing people.

In the camp, we were housed in a club building, a clinic and a kolkhoz stables. At first, we were still allowed to visit the village, but after a month they locked us up, proclaimed a quarantine and installed a guard formed by the policemen: V. Maikos, V. Garnega, Khariton Ruzhila, and the elder Nikitich. These policemen would beat up the captives for no reason at all. Villagers were only allowed to approach the gates to trade something if part of the

¹ Names of persons are given according to the Russian spelling and transliteration as in the original. The text has been placed in paragraphs to increase readability – translator's note. A German translation of the document is in *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933-1945*, Band 7 (Munich: Oldenburg Verlag, 2011), pp. 834-837 (document 332).

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

³ Romanian for city hall – translator's note.

traded products were handed over to them. There was no labor whatsoever at the camp, it was a death camp. The Jew M. Shkol'nik was selected to be elder of the camp, he ended up on German territory and didn't return either. Moreover, there were Jews who maintained good relations with the policemen and helped keep order inside the camp, for instance, by standing guard near the door of a building at night, so that there was no possibility to escape from the camp, to enter the building in the summer at 6pm. These were Khamm Shor (hanged himself), Abram Kandyba and Iasha Snitkovskii.

On average about 8-10 people would die from starvation in the camp every day. Most of the people in the camp lived of potato peels, beet leaves and green squashes. Whoever had some potatoes in their soup would be happy and count themselves rich. We and our families were among those people. Father L. Sukharevich died from starvation in July 1942. There was one case at the camp when the policeman V. Garnega killed David Bronshtein and his wife at night, when they tried to escape from the camp. He [Garnega] himself had lured them to his sister, then he seized all their belongings, brought them to the camp gate and murdered them. The death rate in the camp was very high. In 9 months' time, over 400 people died, and on September 6, 1942, we were joined with a larger camp in Pechora, on the premises of a former K.O.V.O.⁴ sanitorium.

Before we were sent to the second camp, the policeman V. Maikos hit my mother on the head with a ramrod and she bled to death. In the second camp there were Jews from all over the Tul'chyn rayon, the Bratslav rayon, from Mohyliv[-Podil's'kyi] and Bukovina. The policemen there were M. Smetanskii, Iasha Simirenko, and others. The policemen were not allowed to enter the camp premises, local villagers came to the [barbed] wire to trade and sell products. The commander of the camp was the Romanian master sergeant Stratulat. Two days before our arrival at the camp, the Germans had taken away 1500 people for labor in the German territories, from there, no one returned. On the third day after our arrival at the camp, SS men arrived once again with vehicles to take away people, this time not for work but to kill them (the pits had already been prepared). The commander of the camp refused to hand over people, he called up the prefecture in Tul'chyn, from there a call was made to the governor in Tiraspol, and an order came not to kill people. After the commander had closed the gate and the SS men had left, those people who were unable to leave the building were killed by the Germans. And on December 11, 1942, I [Sukharevich] decided to flee from the camp to the town of Murafa in the Sharhorod rayon, from where Jews were not deported. There was a Jewish labor colony there, where I lived as a free woman and could go to work for the farmers in the village. Jews were not allowed to do any other work. Thus I lived in Murafa until the day of liberation from the Romanian occupiers (March 20, 1944).

After my departure from the camp, Mania Ribalova and her entire family remained in the camp, until the day they were liberated, because her mother and younger sister suffered from swollenness and could not walk anywhere. The situation in the camp got worse every day. The policemen entered the camp premises and the building and beat up people, the farmers were not admitted near the camp. To visit the village and beg for potatoes, people had to sneak through and climb over the barbed-wire fencing, but even then they did not always succeed. M. Ribalova's mother died from starvation in February, 1943, her younger

⁴ Kievskii Osobyi voennyi okrug – translator's note.

sister in March, 1943. All she had left were her older sister, whose legs were paralyzed from a fever, and her 10-year-old boy.

Control over the camp was in the hands of the Jewish elder M. Tsimerman (from Bukovina), and Vishnevskii (a doctor who currently works in Tul'chyn). They would beat up people even worse than the policemen, all the while living a materially comfortable life. Only they could go wherever they pleased, because they were in contact with the policemen and the commander. The clothes that were delivered for the Jews from Bucharest they confiscated for themselves. In June, 1943, a relief sergeant arrived and took 80 people from the camp with him to cut peat in Tul'chyn. There, they were awaited by German vehicles, and they were transported to German territory.⁵ In August, 1943, a commission arrived from Switzerland to investigate the material situation of the captives. The Jewish community showed the commission healthy people, and not the ill and swollen ones who were lying inside the building. On March 12, 1944, passing German troops surrounded the camp and wanted to massacre the captives, but before the arrival of the Gestapo, the camp was liberated by the Red Army on March 17.

Now we are living in Shpykiv. L. Sukharevich' house was not destroyed, because it was inhabited by a Ukrainian. Ribalova's house has been destroyed. L. Sukharevich has finished middle education, she has been a Komsomol member since 1937. We are both working as accountants in the Shpykiv office of the State Bank. Not once during the entire occupation did we lose hope that our valiant Red Army would liberate us from the Romano-German monsters and take revenge for our parents, brothers and sisters, who fell victim in prisons and concentration camps.

L. Sukharevich
M.M. Rybalova⁶

May 9, 1944
Shpykiv

Translated by Tobias Wals

⁵ The Reichskommissariat Ukraine – translator's note.

⁶ Elsewhere spelled as Ribalova – translator's note.