



Holocaust Testimony of  
Yevdokiya Savelievna Lipovich

*Two letters written December 2, 1994 and December 23, 1994*

#### A. Personal data related to the survivor

1. Yevdokiya Savelievna Lipovich (according to the documents)  
Shifra Barash (according to the origin)
2. The 21st of May 1933, Marianovka village, Starobeshevskiy district, Donetsk region (according to the documents)  
The town of Leova, Moldova, born in May or April 1933 (according to evidence from relatives).
3. Currently living at Stefan cel Mare street, 34, 29, Cahul, Moldova. (Previously named Tankistov street.) Phone number: 2-03-01.
4. Teacher of history.
5. Before WWII started she lived in Leova. After that she, along with her relatives and hundreds of other Jews, travelled hundreds of 'versts' (the Russian measure of length, equal to 0,65 mile) under the fascists' barrels,. The last point of their deportation was Berezovka village, Odessa region (1941 - 1945).
6. Married. Her husband's name is Roman Leybovich Lipovich. They have two sons named Vyacheslav and Anatoliy who live in St.Petersburg (Russia).

#### B. The circumstances of the survival

1. Local women of Berezovka (Odessa region) Vera Fedorovna Visokos, and her sister Lidiya Fedorovna Babienko, as well as other kind-hearted women entered the concentration camp in order to feed the poor prisoners.
2. The exact date of the event is unknown. It probably happened at the end of 1941 or at the beginning of 1942. It was winter, snow was on the ground, the weather was figid.

3. My sister Nina and I were led away by Vera Fedorovna Visokos and Lidiya Fedorovna Babienko and became members of their family.
4. Here are some 'financial factors' of the survival. In order not to be eliminated together with other Jewish girls, because of their denunciation by neighbours, the saviors gave a substantial bribe to Romanian occupational authorities of Berezovka, as well as to a priest, who provided a Baptismal Certificate, dated with some before-the-war date, as I suppose.
5. In my personal mind, our saviors' only motive was mercy.
6. No doubt, they took risks, as I mentioned above. I will write more about it in a free form.
7. We didn't become very close in our relationships. The fact of adoption wasn't formalized, but my sister and I have an unpayable debt to these people because we survived thanks to them.
8. That same day another girl survived thanks to the other circumstances. She was from Odessa.

So, I will try to answer your questions systemically, and I know you would like me to write more details about the other circumstances of our survival, as well as to discuss some issues that concern me.

I don't know how you got to know about our existence and the fact that my sister and I were rescued by Vera and Lidiya Fedorovna, but I swear to God it is true.

So, starting from the beginning, our family was big. Before WWII We were 5 children, my father, and my mother. We lived in Leova (now in Moldova). It was a rather populous Jewish town. My father, Srul Barash, was working, but was disabled from childhood (he had damaged his right foot, if I'm not wrong). My mother, Sheindl, didn't work.

Our family was hardly making ends meet, we often went hungry. Our father had many siblings; I remember all of them by name. We had many cousins as well as our grandparents.

When the war started and the fascists captured the town, my relatives with some other families tried to evacuate, however, they could not go far on foot with small children. Our family and the families of my father's brother, Uncle Etsyk, as well as some other families, were soon captured by the fascists. The men and the adult sons were separated from the family from the very beginning. They were, probably, eliminated. We never saw them again. Women and children were sent to Leova where they joined other refugees. I remember that we were led to the square of some big horse yard. It was crowded with the people in the same situation as we were. All of these people with children and some of their goods were led to gradual elimination. I would like to tell more about the painful journey from Leova to the Berezovka in another letter because this story could take a great deal of time.

On the way some other Jewish refugees were joining our column until we arrived in Odessa, but among the Leova refugees that we started with, only about 20 dystrophic people arrived in Berezovka; most of them couldn't even stand on their feet. I can't imagine the way I, an 8-years old girl, was able to move, that I survived and hadn't died as the majority had. In the winter frost and only half-dressed I could still crawl out of the camp.

I don't remember well, but maybe I was given some pieces of bread by someone.

By the time we were taken away from the concentration camp by our saviors, few of us were still alive. Our elder brother Lyova was one of them. He was only 10 years old. Our mother and the rest of her children were no longer alive. The rooms where the prisoners were kept had no windows or doors. The temperature inside was the same as outside in the winter. At that time nobody was left guarding us. Where could we, the dystrophic run?

I remember that on one day at the end of 1941 or at the beginning of 1942 (I think Christmas was being celebrated in my savior's home), These local women came to the camp. They brought some food. Our brother spoke Russian. My sister and I spoke Yiddish and Romanian only so we didn't understand what he was talking to those women about. It soon became clear that he had asked them to save my sister and me. I am still surprised how such a young boy could think of his sisters' survival, but not of his own.

Vera Fedorovna Visokos and Lidiya Fedorovna Babienko led away my sister Nina first. She almost wasn't able to move her feet anymore. Two hours later they came back for me. I remember they gave me a big plate full of mashed potatoes. I started eating. I haven't eaten more delicious potatoes since then!

My sister and I were washed of the dirt and the numerous lice. My sister (named Mina) was renamed to Nina from the very beginning. I had been called Chika in my family, though I was named Shifra according to the documents. Vera Fedorovna started calling me Dusya, in honor of her beloved elder sister Yevdokiya Fedorovna.

My sister and I were separated - Nina was taken by Lidiya Fedorovna, and I was taken by Vera Fedorovna. Both of them had their own children. Vera Fevodorvna had two sons, who were younger than me - Volodya and Victor. My brother Lyova was left in the camp. According to our saviors' words, they were bringing food to him and to some other prisoners, but in several days all of them were gone. There were rumors that everyone who was still alive were later killed, so only my sister Nina and I survived out of all of those people. She was ill for a long time and our saviors thought she might soon die. Fortunately, she got much better in 2-3 months.

It was said that one other girl was saved by some neighbor, but she was from another group of refugees. I got acquainted with her in Berezovka, several years ago. Her name was Galya, When I met her five years ago she was working as a kindergarten teacher. She told me the way she had survived. A new group of jews was brought from Odessa. When the column was moving along the road her mother pushed the girl away into a crowd of locals standing on the roadside. She shouted: "Please, save my daughter!" She was killed with the automatic fire at that moment. The guards weren't able to find the girl among the local females, standing in a row. That's the story Galya told me about her survival.

In some time somebody among the neighbors denounced the information about the sisters who were hiding the Jewish girls. I remember that gendarme came to us; one of them spoke Romanian. He started threatening my savior, saying that she needed to be shot. He asked: "Why did you lead the Jewish girls away?".

Vera Fedorovna, her sister Lida, and the woman who had saved Galya were led away. I hardly understood what was going on. It's likely, that the occupational authorities wanted to receive a bribe. In such a way, our saviors managed to avoid punishment. We were led to the priest's house in the night. He poured water into a bowl, splashed it onto our heads and gave our 'mothers' the Baptismal certificates. He did this all for a big reward of course.

Later, when I visited her as an adult, Vera Fedorovna told me that Romanian authorities and this priest repeatedly demanded new bribes for my survival.

According to the Baptismal certificate given by the priest I became Yevdokiya Savelievna Visokos (Saveliy is a Vera Fedorovna's husband, who has died in the war). Mina became Nina Porfirievna Babenko. That is the way Mina and I became no longer sisters.

We were ordered not to speak Yiddish or Romanian amongst ourselves, as well as not to tell anybody who we really were. Later we forgot both Yiddish and Romanian. The baptismal certificates given by the priest were the only identifications we had. Four years later we were taken to an orphanage.

How was the living with our saviors? We weren't hungry and we had where to sleep. We were protected as well. Other things didn't matter much. It was very difficult. We never became very close, but they were risking their lives to saved us from physical elimination. That's, obviously the most important thing. We have an unpayable debt to the Nepomnyashikh family (which our saviors belonged to).

In 1945 Vera Fedorovna with her family moved to Donetsk.

Soon she sent me to Marianovskiy orphanage where I was taken care of until 1950. When it was time for me to leave the orphanage it became clear that I had no documentation except the baptismal certificate. I don't know what the motive of the orphanage administration was when they took my personal data (the place of my birth, the date, and the data from my parents). Nobody spoke to me personally. They didn't put the information about Vera Fedorovna on my birth certificate. In the 'Mother' row the name Nadezhda, not Vera, was recorded. The rest of the data did not prove our relations either. It meant that I wasn't adopted by her. My sister Nina had the same case.

How were the relationships with our saviors after the war? I've always related to Vera Fedorovna with the sense of gratitude. I went thousands of kilometers to visit her. I also brought gifts when I had the money, but her financial situation was much better than mine.

I didn't visit Donetsk very often after her death. My contact with her relatives is almost absent (except for Liza Ovcharik from Berezovka - the former wife of one of the nephews of Vera Fedorovna).

However, I often suffer from remorse. About 5 years ago, when I was in Donetsk, where I went to try to recovering my identity, I met a Vera Fedorovna's son, Victor. He was in a bad condition - an insane man in need of care. I did nothing for him. I couldn't do anything for him that year because of my husband, Roman Leybovich Lipovich, was at the Republican hospital in serious condition.



I spent whole days near his bed for 5 months taking care of him. That is why I wasn't able to provide help to the son of my savior. Her relatives stopped communicating with me in spite of their inability to help him either. Also, the financial situation of my family became extremely bad because of 'Perestroika' in the Soviet Union. Our savings, kept in the bank, were gone due to the political situation. After that, I tried to figure out what happened to Victor but they didn't tell me. That's why I still don't know if he is alive or not.

Talking about my sister Nina, she had not been keeping relations with Lidiya Fedorovna. First, Lidiya Fedorovna wasn't interested in Nina's life in the orphanage; Also, Nina couldn't visit her like I was visiting Vera Fedorovna. They lived far from each other, separated by thousands of kilometers. Second, Nina, being married for her whole life is afraid of being revealed. Her husband is an active anti-Semit. They have a bad relationship which is why she doesn't want him to know who she really is. Her situation is not so easy. She is also second-group disabled. When I told her about my trying to recover my identity she asked me not talk to her about this issue. That is why the only thing I can tell you is that she lives in Mariupol, Donetsk region. I still can't give you her home address without asking her permission. I know that Lidiya Fedorovna is angry with my sister. Everything is complicated.

When I left the orphanage, remembering my motherland, I was full of hope that some of my relatives were alive. Maybe even my father was alive because I hadn't seen him dead. I wrote a letter to the local council of Leova. In some time I've received a letter from Aunt Basiya, my father's sister. She called me to come back home, which is why I left my job and moved to Leova.

Among the large family of my father, Srula Barash, only Aunt Basia and Uncle Yankel were still living. Aunt Basia with her husband and a small daughter were living in Leova. Uncle Yankel was living in Iargara (Leova district). He had two adult daughters who were married - Fira and Raya, as well as a son Lyonya. All of them moved to Israel the long time ago.

I did not have a close relationship with my relatives. I was even going to move back to Donetsk when I met my future husband and moved to his home in Cahul [near Leova]. I have been living here for almost 40 years.

I left the orphanage with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade education and later completed the pedagogical college. After I was already married I attended and graduated from the Chisinau National University. I studied to be a history teacher. Now I'm retired so I don't work anymore.

Now I'd like to share the following story with you. I've written above about the documents that I left an orphanage with. In the 'Nationality' row of my passport, it is written 'Russian'. According to my husband's advice I didn't recover my nationality [Jewish]. The country was full of anti-Semitic views.

Then in the 1990s, with changes in the political system and a new wave of anti-Semitic threats, the emigration of Jews became extremely popular. My husband and I started thinking of possibly moving to Israel. That is why I decided to start trying to recover my real identity. That's why I went to Berezovka, and then to Donetsk. There I managed to get certification of my being taken care of in the Marianovskiy orphanage. Talking about Berezovka, my efforts aimed at documenting the fact that I was a prisoner of the fascist concentration camp, didn't bring any results. I wasn't able to prove it. I applied to different institutions: to the court, legal advice service, prosecutor's office, local authorities' office and so on. I faced a wall of indifference and bureaucracy.

In the prosecutor's office, I was told that if I was adopted, I can't be considered as a prisoner (however, as you already know, the my adoption was never finalized). Also, according to the legal provision defining prisoners of the fascist camps, Jews in Ghettos were not deemed prisoners. Does it mean, that Jews, being convoyed, under the barrels of guns, were not led to be murdered? This question wasn't answered clearly by the prosecutor's assistant. The prosecutor gave me the advice to apply to the Odessa archive. That's what I did. Of course the Odessa archive did not have any information about me personally.

I brought 15 people to the office of the local executive committee, who could confirm the facts of my imprisonment in a concentration camp and my survival, thanks to Vera Fedorovna.

The head of the executive committee didn't want to see me so I had to talk to his assistant. He refused to give a certificate establishing my survival, explaining that in fact, that there was no Jewish concentration camp in Berezovka and that Jews were not murdered there.

Then I visited the notary's office. I brought the witnesses to him as well. However, he also refused to give me the certificate, telling me: "I can't give you such kind of a certificate because you will demand some privileges for yourself and I'll be responsible for this". I only managed to have the witness testimonies certified by the secretary of executive committee. I was told, however, that this paper was not an official documentation of the facts. They demanded that I provide witnesses among the people who were also in the concentration camp in Berezovka, but as I've said before, this was impossible because only my sister and I survived. The house and the yard which were the last shelter for the prisoners was still standing, but the people, who were imprisoned there did not survive. The house was restored. Moreover, some people started living there. These people know nothing of that tragedy. The walls are silent. The people don't believe those who witnessed the tragedy of Jews, murdered there.

So, 5 years ago I didn't manage to prove who I really was. In spite of this I wanted to spread the story of murdered Jews from Leova. In Chisinau the Jewish newspaper "Nash Golos" ("Our voice") is published. We subscribed to it. The Jewish newspaper often publishes some terrible stories about the Jewish tragedy. I wanted to share the story from my childhood memory.

I wanted to tell about the deaths of my relatives and family. I came to the editorial office of “Nash golos” in order to talk to the editor, Balzan. I think it was in the summer of 1990. The respected editor and one of his employees, however, told me that they were not responsible for the publishing of such materials. They advised me to visit the Jewish museum in order to talk to Pilate (it is almost a historic name, that’s why I remember it well). However, the doors of the museum were locked with a huge lock and my efforts to find Pilate did not bring much success. Some time later I was told that Pilate had already moved to Israel. I was very disappointed with this news. I was offended by the “Nash golos” editorial office. It seemed to me that the articles related to the Jewish tragedy published by the members of this office, didn’t concern them much. I’m not talking about the current members. Maybe they are much more kind-hearted people. However, since that first time I don’t want to go there again, though the voices of the dead call not to forget their suffering and death in the fascist camp. And I thank you, Katya Gusareva, and the whole Yad Vashem organization, that you don’t allow forgetting about this tragedy.

As I finish writing this letter, I hope for your response. I hope that you will ask me to send you the terrible stories about the journey of the Jews from Leova to the town of Berezovka, located in Odessa region.

And one more thing, the third girl who survived, Galya, who I mentioned earlier, was living in Berezovka 5 years ago. Liza Ovcharik introduced me to her.

She was my guide in those hapless days when I was doing my best in order to recover my identity. I asked Galya to visit the local executive committee office with me, however, she refused this proposal. She explained that she became formally a Ukrainian so she doesn't want to spoil her and her children's lives by telling the truth. I was surprised with this fact because her husband is also Jewish. Besides, many people in Berezovka know her real nationality. But I can do nothing about this. It's better to be a devil, than a Jew in this society. All my whole life I too had to keep silent about my real nationality. However, in order to prove that I tried to recover my Jewish identity, I am sending you copies of some of my documents.

1. The original evidence of survival.
2. The certificate from the Marianovskiy executive committee.
3. The certificate from the Odessa National archive.

Best wishes, E.S. Lipovich.  
2/XII- 1994

Secretary of the regional executive committee Shandrovskaya

Dear Katya Gusareva!

You have probably received my letter where I answered all of your questions related to my survival in details. Now, thanks to my friends' relative, an Israeli citizen, who is staying in our town who has offered bring my memoirs about imprisonment by the fascists to Yad Vashem, I'm glad to present you my story.

Everything, that I'm writing about was seen with my own eyes. I'm writing about the facts stored in my good, though childish memory. Of course, I didn't understand everything as a child, however, you should have no doubt in the true nature of my words.

I think you won't be surprised if I start my story from the more early years, before WWII started. This is necessary to better understand the events which occurred at the beginning of the war, and of all of the fears about the fascist camp.

I started to understand all of the connected life facts since our family has moved back to Leova, where my father was from. We were leaving the Romanian town of Husi, which was where my mother, Sheindl (Zhenya) was from. It seems to me, this happened in 1938 or 1939 when I was 5 or 6 years old. Numerous relatives of my father, Srula Barash, were living in the Bessarabian town Leova. There were no less than 7 siblings of his. I remember everyone of them by name: Etsyk, Yankel, Eezya, Motes, Reeve and Basya.

All of them were married and had kids. The biggest family was Uncle Etsyk's. I think it consisted of nine members. The second biggest family was ours (7 members). I remember our grandfather, my father's father, Shaiya, and his brother, who were the same age. They were twins. My grandma died before I was born. My grandfather married another woman.

It is a pity, that when I came back to Leova in 1952 I didn't ask more about my lineage. Now I have nobody to ask, and I have forgotten the names of many of my numerous cousins. I now know only the names of family members of my Uncle Yankel, who survived and just recently passed away. All of them had the same surname that I had - Barash. The war sifted our family through the sieve of death, having left just a couple of Barashes and some other relatives. The adult children of Uncle Yankel - Fira Yalkonovich, Raya Goldenstein and Lyonya Barash moved to Israel in the very first wave of emigration. I have no relations to them.

Before the war started Leova was absolutely Jewish. It was populated with some thousands of people. I think, every second person was Jewish. Some rich families - the owners of shops, ships, whole blocks of houses, and merchants were among them. But the majority of them were poor people. It was hard to find a good job.

The lineage of my mother is unknown to me. As I remember, the only relative she had was her sister who was living with her husband and a son in the Romanian town of Husi. Not so long before the war started my mother received notification about her sister's death. We could not go to the funeral because the red army had arrived and Bessarabia was joined to the USSR. The borders were closed.



When my mother married my father she brought him a dowry equal to 60 thousands Leu (Romanian currency), but my father didn't manage to invest this money in some business and that is why my family entered the ranks of poor Jews. Our father was working as a laborer from early morning until late at night. However, the money he earned was not enough even for feeding his children once a day. He hoped that our family would start living better after Bessarabia joined the USSR, but his hopes didn't come true. The new authorities provided us with free housing in an old lodge near a lumber yard. Now father could save some money for living, though we continued to be extremely poor.

The family was growing. When we moved to Leova, our parents had three children. The eldest one was Lyova, me - Chyka (Shyfra) was the second; and the youngest was my sister Mina. Before the war started, a 4<sup>th</sup> child, Motya, was born, and then one more child, Khona-Rivka, was born.

My father was disabled since childhood - his right foot was damaged. He was getting very tired at his work where he was standing still for the whole day.

When the war began, our family, just like many other Jewish families, moved to Borogani village. The town of Leova stands on the Prut River [the border between Bessarabia and Romania]. The enemy threatened the town each hour. Everyone hoped that the Soviet troops would hold the border at the Prut so that the enemy would fold. Everyone hoped that we would be able to return to our homes soon, but the news came that the enemy entered Leova and started its attack rapidly. The Jewish families started evacuating from Borogani into the deep regions of the USSR together with the retreating Red Army forces. I remember my parents lamented the fact that they had small children and no transport. The efforts to find any vehicle were futile.

When night came they decided to go on foot. Some other families with small children united into one group, including ours. The family of my father's brother, Uncle Etsyk, was also there. I remember this terrible night because it was very tragic. It was the last night we were all still together - the adults and the children. Father was carrying 3-year old Motya on his shoulders, as well a big pack. Mother was carrying baby Khana and leading 5-year old Mina. My brother Lyova and I were carrying some basket, which was extremely heavy for me. I was whining the whole way because I wanted very much to sleep. I didn't have that uneasy feeling that was felt by the adults. They knew very well what fascism was and why it was so dangerous for the Jewish people. We stopped to rest a couple of times. As soon as we stopped, we would fall asleep so that the adults could hardly wake us up to continue further.

In the early morning we entered some village. It was complete darkness everywhere. It seemed to be empty, uninhabited. Even the dogs weren't barking. We only met one Moldavian on our way. Our parents started asking him where we should go. We followed the way he pointed and came to the enemy's camp. I don't know if he wanted us to be captured or not, but we were captured immediately and closed in some house. When they started talking to the adults we children immediately fell asleep. When we woke up the first thing we heard was our mother mourning. The fathers and adult men were already gone (17 men in all).

My father, Uncle Etsyk, and his 17-year old son were among them. We never saw them alive again. I think that they were quickly eliminated.

All of the women and children were convoyed to Leova. We were allowed to settle in our houses. Our house, however, was already plundered so my mother and one other woman decided to inhabit our relatives' more spacious house. We hoped that something was left inside, but this house was empty as well. There were no clothes, bedding or food there. We were hungry. Our mothers were looking for some food everywhere. They found some handfuls of corn flour and cooked some porridge. It was very untasty, but we were very hungry. Our mothers decided to ask some Moldovans, whom they were in good relations with, for the help, but they were afraid to communicate with us. They locked their doors when we visited them. For the whole time spent in Leova I didn't see anybody who lived there before the war. It looked like the town became totally empty. We were hungry, but we had nothing to eat.

In a few days, we were woken up in the middle of the night with loud shouts and knocking on the doors. The gendarmes came. We were told to gather and to follow them. We were not allowed to take anything, not even those items that we brought with us to this house. They said we would be given everything later.

We were brought to some big yard. It was full of people. We saw many familiar Jews there that also didn't manage get away, who were captured and returned to Leova.

There were also those who were captured with us that night. Also, there were some unfamiliar people who I had never seen before in Leova. I think they were Jews from Romania.

Our tragic trip started when the sun rose. Romanian fascist authorities gave a speech in front of the Jews. They told us that we had no reasons to worry, that we would be sent to Russia where we would have enough food. They promised to settle us there because they claimed Romania did not have enough food for its population. We were warned that we should not try to escape. They told us that those who tried to escape would be found and shot.

Now, in order to make things clear, I would like to underline some facts from our 'trip'. As it's known, in Moldova and other countries of the USSR, special Jewish concentration camps, Ghettos, were created. In our case there was no single ghetto at all. It seemed like the fascist authorities had the goal of killing as many Jews as possible through forced marches, hunger, and shootings. This opinion can be confirmed by the fact that my sister, my brother and I were found several hundreds kilometers from Leova in Berezovka, Odessa region.

Sometimes we were brought with the carts of local people, but the majority of the way we went on foot. If we were brought to some town we could be kept there for a long time, for two weeks or even more.

As a rule, the guards tried to bring us into village before night. Then we were brought into the homes of locals who were given the order to watch us and not to let us run away. I think there were some brave people who managed to run away from the guards. It would be so nice if such people really existed. They would confirm my words.

The belief that we were being led to Russia, to places with much food, was so strong that I even heard such kind of opinions from locals who hosted us. Sometimes, when we were hungry and we were crying a lot some local would tell us: "Don't cry. Soon you will be in Russia and have as much food, as you like". And we believed in these words.

I don't remember the way we were sent out of Leova, whether it was on foot or on some vehicle, but it seems to me that we were going on foot. It seemed that we were going endlessly.

It was hot, we were thirsty and hungry. Mother was carrying baby Khona. She had no milk in her breasts in order to feed the child. The baby suffered from heat, dirt, and insects; her face covered with a dark crust. It was cracking and rotting. The babygirl's face had a bad smell.

It's a pity that I was too small to remember the towns and villages that we passed through. I can't recall the way we went, but I definitely remember that we visited Tiraspol and Odessa. By the way, when we stopped in Tiraspol this was our longest rest time. We were brought into some big yard (I think it was a cowshed or a stable).

There was a lot of old straw on the ground in the long buildings for the animals. We slept on it. We stayed there for a pretty long time. The prisoners were very often found dead. Once I woke up because of my mother wailing over Khona's cold body. In the morning the body of the child was brought to a heap of corpses. In some time the vehicle entered the yard and took the corpses away. The dead were driven away almost every day. They were especially numerous when the fascists brought a barrel of salted sprats into the camp. The crowd emptied the barrels of sprats in a moment. Then the most terrible things happened. There was no water in the camp, and nobody was allowed to leave so everyone started to die. Soon our grandpa Shaiya died. I remember he came close to us and started complaining that he was losing his life power. My grandfather was a strong man, though he looked weak and skinny. I never saw him nor his wife or his brother anymore after that visit to Tiraspol. The number of people started decreasing rapidly, however, soon some new prisoners joined us. We were going in numerous vehicles in an unknown direction when we left Tiraspol.

It looked like the autumn was coming. It was becoming colder with each day. The thin dress couldn't warm my naked body. We had neither stockings nor any shoes.

I tried to spend as much time on the sun as I could in order to warm, but it was warming less and less each day. We had another death on one of those very cold days. We were brought to some big room once again, it was probably some gym. Here our brother Motya died. He was a funny and cheerful boy. Before his death he became capricious and talked to nobody except mother. I was especially shocked with this death because I loved him very much and I nursed him.

We started getting used to the other deaths. It was a usual activity. We saw people dying each day. It was hard to get used to the shots at the end of the column. When we were going on feet, we heard adults hurrying the children all the time, whispering that those who were too slow were shot.

The same things happened when there was not enough place for all the prisoners in the vehicles. Those who didn't manage to get a place were shot as well. The familiar faces that started with us in Leova were met more seldom. Two of the Barash brothers' families were still with us, however, the family of Uncle Etsyk became not so numerous. I remember how sad it was when my cousin Roza died. She was the same age, as me, and I remember her name only.

When we were placed in some big building one more time, a familiar girl from Leova appeared from nowhere and joined us. She started telling my mother and Aunt Sima about the Romanian soldiers raping and killing Jewish girls in the neighboring village. Though the adults tried to talk in such a way that I couldn't understand, I did. It was clear to me. It was like I saw it with my own eyes. It left a big impression, so I was very scared.

Then one day my mother had an attack. She told me that she didn't want to live anymore and that she would die soon. We children starting crying around her. Then Uncle Etsyk's wife, Aunt Sima, started shaming our mother. How dares she think in such a way? Who will take care of her children? Mother calmed down a bit, but she was becoming weaker all the time. In autumn, in some big semidark hangar, our mother was dying. We, her three surviving children, were sitting around her and crying. Her eyes were closed, her mouth was opening and closing like she wanted to say something but she couldn't. Then her body became cold and we continued wailing. Some men dressed in civilian clothes entered the hangar. They learned more about the reason of our wailing and gave us pieces of bread. They promised to bury our mother. Her body was put on a cart and taken away, however I don't know the place where it happened nor how our mother was buried. We can just make a guess at it.



We didn't know where Aunt Sima and her family had gone. There was nobody to comfort us. We were left alone - orphans among hundreds of people suffering the same fate. The family of Uncle Etsyk has disappeared, we never saw them again. I still can't imagine a strong active Aunt Sima being dead. As well as I can't imagine the moment when the whole family has gone.

After mother's death our trip included much more suffering. We had to fight for our survival by ourselves. Once, on a gloomy day when we were given a lift, the cart stopped - the charioteer had to give a drink to the horses. Another cart stopped near ours and I could see Aunt Reeva, my father's sister. I saw her among the prisoners in our group for the first and the last time. She probably couldn't evacuate and was captured by fascists just like thousands of other Jews. She was alone, without her kids. It was like she was looking at us but she didn't see us. She was thinking about her own grief. Without ever exchanging a word we were separate, and I never heard anything about her anymore.

Having let the charioteers go home, the guards once again brought us to a school yard. A big building with huge windows was standing on a high foundation.

But we weren't allowed go inside the building - we were left in the yard, under the sky. The weather was pretty warm.

Soon some people dressed in civilian clothes people appeared inside the camp. They declared in Romanian that everyone who had any gold or any other valuable goods must give them over to the Great Romania. If any such goods were hidden by anyone, they would be shot. They gave some time for everyone to complete this order. After that they started the search the camp.

The camp was filled with some unfamiliar people. It seemed that they arrived here before us. Maybe they came from the Northern regions of Moldova. It seemed that those people were not preparing for death, but for some kind of journey or relocation. They looked rich in comparison to us. They had great goods, even some warm blankets and pillows. They had jam, butter and bread. I think, they had some jewelry as well. I think, they were deceived in the same way that we were, that they were promised that they were going to Russia where there was a lot of food. It seemed that the fascist authorities had allowed those people to take everything they had. The only limit was the space on the carts, which they were given.

So, as soon as the time for giving up all of the jewelry ended, the search began.

I was a nimble girl so I was running around the camp territory and watching the gendarmes searching through the goods and products; ripping pillows. The fuzz was everywhere. The jam and butter glasses were being broken. Even the bread was being broken, in order to see the jewelry, hidden inside. In many cases, of course, the jewelry was found indeed. The people who were hiding it were taken away immediately. In several minutes some shots could be heard not far from that place. The people dressed in civilian clothes were saying: "Listen to this! They were hiding the gold from the Great Romania, that is why they are shot". It made a strong impression on me. I still see visions of the searches and hear the words of the searchers. I remember those moments very well.

The fascist executioners were turning humans into the animals. Hunger and cold, rudeness were turning both children and adults into a 'faceless mass'. Many of us were losing compassion for each other, were not caring about dying people. We ignored the corpses lying under our legs. There were also exceptions. I remember one such case. There was a family that consisted of a father and his several children. He managed to exchange some of his goods for a boiled chicken. Such cases were rare. The locals were visiting the camp in order to exchange some foods for the goods. That is how it was.

The father of those children, who had this chicken in his hands started eating it with greed. The children were standing by him, waiting for him to share some pieces. He, however, pushed them away, growling like a beast. He continued until nothing was left of the chicken.

Another time I saw a different kind of situation. One the mother who had 6 children was given a half bowl of soup from a guard. The children surrounded her and she gave a spoonful of soup to each one. She didn't even have a spoon for herself! It meant, that we were still remaining as humans.

I remember that in this camp a husband and his wife came to me and my brother and started asking us about adopting Mina. They said, she was similar to their daughter who had died. They promised they would dress her in the best clothes of their dead daughter. We were glad to give away the responsibility for our whining young sister. She was asking for food all the time, but we were hungry also. Those people brought Mina with them to another area of the huge camp.

Some time later, in another place, someone brought our sister back. He said, that her adopters were already dead.

Mina was dressed in beautiful and warm clothes so that I even envied her. I was dressed in some old clothes, which hardly covered my body.

The weather was becoming colder. It was raining more often, but my old clothes and shoes with no socks didn't keep me warm. Sometimes after a long day of traveling, we were brought to some small apartments. The tired people couldn't stand on their feet anymore - they were falling asleep on the ground. Sometimes the bodies were put so close to each other that it was impossible to pass through them. Some of the people had no free space for laying down and they had to spend the whole night standing without a sleep. I had to endure this often myself as well. I remember that once I had no space for laying down between the people who were already sleeping. My legs were aching, my eyes were shutting, but I had nothing to lean on. I went outdoors and noticed a long bench there. Some guards, who did not have enough space to staying inside the house, were sitting on it. I sat down on the edge of the bench and was trying to fall asleep, but the weather was too cold and wet, so I couldn't sleep at all. I spent that night running inside in order to warm, then going outdoors to sit on the bench (my legs were aching terribly). I don't even remember how difficult it was to go the whole next day having had no sleep.

Once my sister and I had fallen behind our brother. He sat on another cart and was taken away. We weren't been able to see him for a long time. Such situations happened frequently when we used carts. One part of the prisoners were taken away before us, and spent the night in one town or village; while another part stayed in a different place.

When we arrived in Odessa Lyova wasn't among the prisoners either. We spent several days there in some huge building similar to a repair shop.

It was very cold for me there. Some very old woman died near me. One of the adults took off her coat and threw it to me. This coat was the only thing that covered my half-dressed body. It was long and wide so that I could wrap it around myself.

I'm forgetting to tell about one important fact: we were bitten by lice. There were so many that we could fill our hands with them. Frankly speaking, they were biting us and we were eating them because we were so hungry. I feel sick each time I remember the way these insects burst in my mouth.

Time was passing. New prisoners were joining our group less often. Our whole group was becoming less numerous with each stop. When we were woken up to travel further, many corpses were left behind on the ground. Some of the people were still alive, but they were not able to stand anymore. It was clear what the fascists have been doing with them. A huge number of people were facing death. As it was getting colder, this number increased. When we got to the last point - Berezovka, our group was very small.

I wrote about this in my previous letter. We met up with our brother, Lyova, in Berezovka. He was laying on a heap of old clothes and couldn't rise to his feet. He told us that he had been lying in such a way for several days and that he couldn't move anymore. My sister and I took care of him. If we got a piece of bread we shared it with him.

We were placed in a house with broken windows and without any doors. Another house for the guards was situated in the yard. I think it was warm there. The guards were not watching us very well. We couldn't run away because we had dystrophic bodies. The locals visited the camp in order to exchange food for goods, however we had no goods. 15-20 dystrophic people were living the last days of their lives. Once our camp was visited by women who brought my sister and me to their homes. They gave us some food, and were staring at us, talking about something with each other. The hostess took Mina's hat and saw the numerous lice. After this they took away her good clothes and put some old clothes on her instead. Then they brought us back to the camp again. Some time later, after we were rescued by Vera Fedorovna Visokos and Lidiya Fedorovna Babienko, I found out that those women were German prostitutes. One of them, named Mariyka, committed suicide before the Red Army arrived. We saw Mina's clothes on a neighbour boy. Mariyka had sold them.

The number of people able to walk, as I was, was rapidly decreasing with each day. Before we were led away by our saviors no more than 5 people could stand on their feet. I still ask myself the question, how did I manage to survive? How didn't I fall down and die just like the hundreds of others? We walked hundreds of miles from Leova to our destination, Berezovka. Only a few people managed to survive the trip from Leova to Berezovka.

My sister and I were among the few who were still able to stand on our feet. Who is that guardian angel who supported us? Or maybe the fact that even before the war we often went hungry made us stronger, and our bodies were used to being hungry. Who knows. It was cold when I went outdoors to ask the locals for some bread. In the camp yard a soldiers' canteen was located for the guards. We, the prisoners, were coming here hoping to get something to eat. Sometimes a Romanian soldier would give us some food. Some of the soldiers were throwing the bones to us like we were dogs. Others would splash boiling water on us and laugh loudly. They had fun, we had tears.

I can't say for how long we were stayed in Berezovka camp before we were saved, but it was the real winter. I've already written about the events of this period (in the previous letter) so I won't repeat it one more time. Now I'd like to write about one more fact. I had started understanding Russian before the war started. A Soviet military unit was located near where we were living, so that we, the children, were learning to speak Russian with the Soviet soldiers. Lyova started speaking Russian quickly. I learned it fast after my rescue. This is why I am mentioning this fact. In the winter of 1942, the local men of Berezovka started being sent on some public works. The relatives of our saviors were mobilized by the Romanian authorities as well. These men were coming back home in the late evening. They were morally depressed. I heard, them telling their relatives about the reason for their depression.



They said that at the Berezovka station or the railway crossing, the trains were coming regularly. They were full of Jews. These people were given orders to stand in lines, and then they were shot with automatic guns. The Romanians order the local men to dig holes and to throw the corpses in them. It was very difficult to dig because of the cold weather. It made the ground very hard. The snowdrifts were higher than the buildings. The fascists were also killing babies manually, throwing them against the metal walls of the wagon. After their heads were smashed, they threw the babies in the ground. The bodies of people, covered with snow took a long time to move. How was it different from Babiy Yar?

The last time I visited Berezovka several years ago, I learned that the majority of Jews were murdered in Viktorovka, a village located near Berezovka. It is possible, that these events I just described may have taken place in this village.

Dear Katya Gusareva!

I have already spent much time documenting the facts about our survival, however I still haven't managed to prove it.

Maybe the members of Yad Vashem, the Righteous Among the Nations will also have some doubts about whether my story is true. In this case I can offer two different pieces of evidence. The first one is the witnesses - the people, who know who, how and when my life was saved. The second is also witnesses - Jews who knew my parents and me very well before the war and after I returned to Leova in 1952.

I was living in my aunt's house at that time and married later. Some of my relatives who emigrated to Israel a long time ago may also know me. They have surnames: Barash, Yalkonovich, Goldenstein, Levinzon. The neighbors of our parents (they have surnames Benderskyie, Tsatskin, Boyanzhu) have been living in Israel for several years. I can also provide you with the addresses of these witnesses if it's needed. They know who I am and where I am from for sure.

Sincerely, Yevdokiya Savelievna Lipovich

23/XII 1994

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Yevdokiya in 1954