

9. A lot could be recalled, but the memory is very painful

Mikhail Burd (b. 1932)

I was born in 1932, in the village of Dzygovka, Yampol district, Vinnitsa oblast. When I was seven months old, I became an orphan. My mum died in 1933; my father remarried and never recognized me as his son, although he lived nearby, in the neighbouring Chernovtsy district. My grandma raised me until I reached fourteen years of age. My grandma was everything to me.

Our village was very big. Jews lived in the centre of it. They were all busy doing their own business. There were also professionals in different trades among us.

The war began, and planes with black crosses on their wings were humming threateningly above our heads. People said that we had to run away, hide, and some people from the village went to Bezvodnoye, a place nearby. They thought they would find shelter there. They stayed overnight with some local Jews (there were five families), and in the morning returned home: it is better to die home than in some strange place.

A couple of days later we learned that local Ukrainians assisted and took part in the execution of those five families. After the war, we buried them at the Jewish cemetery of the village of Dzygovka. It is very painful to recall all this. I shall remember it all until my dying day.

In July 1941, we were all put into one place, and the ghetto was established. Jewish refugees from Bessarabia and Romania were also put into this ghetto. After our place was liberated they left for their homeland immediately. I am not going to describe how we lived there. Jewish people everywhere in the world know this well, since many of them went through the inferno of Fascist imprisonment.

Together with my uncle, we worked in the *kolkhoz* as woodcutters and tried to at least bring some splints home to burn them in the stove and cook something. I remember the following episode. An old threshing machine was in the *kolkhoz*, and I started to take laths

off it. I had made a first bundle and put it on my shoulders when, at that moment, a German saw me, and motioned with his finger for me to approach. My blood chilled in my veins. I thought this was the end. I acted very fast; I threw the bundle of wood to the ground immediately, jumped up on to the machine, and from there I jumped over the tall fence. At that moment I heard shots, but it was too late. I was already down, all in the thistles, and running home across the gardens. They were pulling the thistles out of me for two days.

Once the Ukrainian police broke into the ghetto and captured one man, named Donik Bondar (we called him this because he was a cooper), some fifty years old. Vovk, a drunken policeman, ordered him to make twelve barrels by the morning. Donik said, 'I will make one barrel only.'

Then Vovk put his rifle into Donik's mouth and fired. The bullet blew his head away. He was a very respected man in the Dzygovka community. All the community wept for him.

I recall the Giter family, our neighbours. Avrum Giter was a photographer; he had a wife, Gitl, and two boys, Yasha and Itzik. Avrum went into the army in the early days of the war, and soon afterwards he was killed. And his family suffered in the ghetto. My grandma and I went around the neighbours, collecting bits and pieces to support them. Thank God, they survived, and after our district had been liberated, they left for Almaty immediately, to go to their family. Soon afterwards Gitl died. The boys grew up, had their own families, and left for Israel.

In 1949, I graduated from the Borislav technical school and became an oil industry worker. I served in the army in 1951-54. And I have worked in the Drogobych Oil Refinery for forty-one years. I retired at fifty-five, and had a son and a daughter who have their own families now. My wife, Busya Shoilovna Trunyanskaya, and I are listed as former young ghetto and concentration camp prisoners. A lot could be recalled but the memory is very painful. The heart still bleeds.