



Socrates
Comenius

2003 -2006



Stories of War

People who haven't memory of their past can't be owners of their future.

**Common people's war experiences
to understand wars senseless.**

the whole interviews collection, translated in each participants Countries language, is available on the internet site:

<http://www.itismt.it/diario/diario.htm>

**An European Comenius School Project among:
Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain**



Name:	Linda	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Plakso	Rank:	none
Born:	16th July 1938	Assignments:	none
Age:	66	Location:	Rõuge, Lukka village
City:	Rõuge, Lukka village	When:	July 1944

It was 1944 when my sister was born. Mother gave birth in a cowshed because German soldiers were stationed in our house. We were too afraid to stay at home so the woman from next door came and took my mother and her five children to her place. We stayed in her cellar. There were shelves in the cellar and we were up on the shelves.

There was water up to our knees on the floor of the cellar. Mother still used to go home to feed the animals. One time the pigs got out and the Germans chased them back into the pigsty. The Germans didn't touch mother. They allowed mother to feed the animals and then she came back to us. My sister got ill because the cellar was cold and moist. She was born on July 31st. I don't remember for how long we stayed in the cellar. My sister got bone tuberculosis. A bump grew on her back and is there till this day.

Father didn't go to war, he escaped to the woods with the man from next door. They had a cave there. Since mother was in the condition she was in (had small children), father came home to see her all the time. I guess someone was jealous and told on him. And so it happened that one morning, before he came to the neighbour's house, father was captured. He stepped into the cowshed, was taken prisoner and then lead past the house to the other side of the hill. He was shot near the place where three rocks stood in a pile and his head lay on the rocks.

Of course mother didn't know anything about it at first, father just didn't come to see us. One morning mother and the woman who let us stay in her house saw something shining in the sun. Father had been wearing wellingtons and those were shining in the sun. They went to have a look and found father shot. Then he was buried in our garden. When the war was over his body was dug up and taken to cemetery.

I don't even want to talk about how terribly the dead were treated during the war. They did dig graves during winter but usually only a small hole was made. A couple of shovelfuls of earth were thrown on the body with hands and feet left sticking out of the grave. It was terrible, especially for those who were deported. My father's sister was deported. My aunt had two small children. One of them died in the train carriage. The child's body was thrown out the door right away. Whoever died, went out the door...

1. ESTONIANS

Valter Pajumets



Name:	Valter	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Pajumets	Rank:	
Born:	04 August 1930	Assignments:	Student
Age:	75	Location:	Rõuge
City:	Nogo village	When:	1941-1949

Why did Estonians join the German army?

An Estonian did not go to fight for Germans but to revenge for taking Estonia's liberty. For the mothers, fathers and brothers who were deported to Russia. In order to revenge, he had to put on the German SS uniform and take their weapons which were more up-to-date. Later Estonian soldiers have been accused for joining the German army. But they had no other way to fight against communism. They had to choose the best from among two bad possibilities. Many Estonians died, the fight was severe. Estonian soldiers stood out against the enemy in the battles of Narva and kept our country free so that several people could escape. Approximately 60,000 to 70,000 Estonians escaped to Sweden over the sea as well as to Germany. They could enter the free world thanks to the soldiers in German uniforms who withheld the front.

In terms of history, Germans were even greater enemies to Estonians than Russians because German occupation lasted since 11th or 12th centuries. They sometimes repressed out ancestors who had to toil in manors in order to subsist. However, in 1941 Russians deported and killed so many innocent Estonians – 11,000 people, including women and children, were deported to Siberia. Thousands more were arrested. Estonian officers were taken to Väraska camp and sent to Siberia where they mainly passed away in inhuman conditions.

A couple of words about my life. I studied at Võru Secondary School at the beginning of the Soviet occupation. Many of these military persons fled to forests and went on fighting there. This fighting was certainly condemned to death. Estonia was full of Russian soldiers with up-to-date equipment. The American radio that we listened to told us to organise schoolchildren and we did so. The Americans' promise to come and liberate us from Russians was spread everywhere. Yet it turned out to be an empty propaganda. But our men went to the forest, were caught there and killed. We – students – got organised. There was a liberation hero called Kuperyanov whose name we gave to our organisation and fought together with the "forest brothers". Some minor examples to illustrate it: on February 24, 1949 the town of Võru was decorated with blue-black-white flags. We made small flags and also hoisted a big flag in the middle of the town. There was a big tree near Vabaduse Square. We had put the flag on the tree at night, in the morning people were in high spirits. Small flags were torn off, but Stories of war _____ 3

nobody dared to take the big flag down because we had put a box near it with ropes all around. It was a disguise as if the flag was mined. Military miners were brought and they made sure that there was nothing. But the people were rejoicing. This was the last time when the tricolour waved in Võru, and then the long 50-year occupation started.



Name:	Viia	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Luik	Rank:	None
Born:	01 February 1929	Assignments:	Worker
Age:	76	Location:	Rõuge and Siberia
City:	Rõuge	When:	1941-1949

Our home did not suffer from war destruction, but a bomb fell on the neighbouring house, breaking the roof. There were no battles. Bombs fell from planes and dropped close by. The feeling was rather anxious. A plane crashed into the lake as a result of an air battle. It was a horrible sight when the plane caught fire, but the pilot got away with the parachute. Falling took a long time. We were watching it outdoors. Then it dropped into Lake Valgjärv . A pond of oil stayed long on the lake.

In 1941 our cellar burnt in fire and we went to our neighbour's cellar. We could see Russian and German soldiers in turns. We were always scared of what all could happen. We used to bake bread at home and once the loaves were in the oven when bombs started coming. I remember how we ran to bring the breads during a break in the battle. All telephone wires were on the ground and they were being unravelled.

Planes constantly flew and it was terrifying at night. We were afraid of a new bombing. Shops burned in Rõuge, but there was not much destruction in our village.

However, on the other side of the school house many houses burnt down. This did not happen in our village. Nobody died, but wounded people were brought. They died and were buried by the road...

In May 1945, when the war was reaching its end, my father and brother were arrested. We were also turned out of our home and left with no dwelling whatsoever. We were supposed to find a new shelter on our own, in a relatives' place, for instance. As I was in the black list, I was not allowed to work either. My father had been a member of Defence Union and later participated in Self-Defence. Therefore, I was not eligible to be a Soviet worker.

March 25, 1949 – I remember this day as if it was only yesterday. In the morning, on my way to work I met people with wept faces. They said that deportation had begun. My office was silent, telephones were switched off. We saw how people were put on trucks in the street. They had already started at night. We walked around and discussed. I would have liked to phone my acquaintances in Rõuge and inform them of the situation, but we could not phone anywhere.

I had once been an accountant in an industrial plant. The director of the plant had invited me to his place two weeks before deportation. This was like an interrogation. He asked everything about my father and me. Later, discussing it with my colleagues, the latter suggested I should not go back to my flat – they might come for me.

The work day ended. We went to the bank and learned that a person we knew had already been taken away. Anxiety was everywhere. We walked along the street and saw how people were put on trucks. We started walking home. I had just stepped out of the door when our personnel inspector shouted: Kroon, come here! He made me sit in his room and prohibited to leave. I only wanted to pay a good-bye visit to my own room. When I was leaving the room, two men came and said that I was sentenced to life-long deportation. A truck took me to my flat and I was given half an hour to pack my belongings. Then I was taken to a place next to the railway station. There was a long train with a number of wagons. Loading had already started at night. People from Rõuge were already in my wagon. It was a bit relieving to see familiar faces among them.

When I was packing in my flat, I was told what to take along. I thought there was no use to take anything – they would shoot me anyway. My colleagues had wrapped a package and wanted to hand it to me but they were not allowed to approach. It was Friday. On Saturday night the train pulled out of the station and we had the hopeless feeling of never seeing Estonia again. On the way, we were fed once a day. We were not allowed to go out of the wagons, except for once – somewhere in Russia – surrounded by soldiers who carried guns. This was humiliating. After passing the Urals, we were allowed to walk outside. We were in the destination on April 14. All that time we lived without washing...

Boris Bezanitski



Name:	Boris	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Bezanitski	Rank:	Soldier
Born:	13/09/1923	Assignments:	
Age:	81	Location:	Estonia, Russia, Latvia
City:	Uduvere	When:	II Word War

Then I reached Lääne County in my journey of life. My brother, who was also a clergyman, lived there. For the time being, I decided to stay there. I remember entering Pärnu on June 14 (1941). Already before reaching Pärnu, the trucks passed me. I could not understand what was happening. There were a few people in it and the gunmen were on the other side. It did not seem right to me. When I got to the place of Pärnu priest he said we were having a dark day. People were being deported. I left my luggage in their place and went to Papiniidu stop. I couldn't see how it all happened as there were so many people. It was the morning of June 21 when the message was brought that the war had begun with the attack of Germany .

I was also mobilised. On September 19, 1944 next to Klooga military camp, where I was, there was the Jews' camp. There were one thousand and five hundred of them. They were all shot and burnt on the pyre.

Then we went to see those places where Jews were shot and burnt. And there we had such a picture in the 20th century! There were piles, under which there were 6 metre long logs and so there was a pile of logs, a pile of corpses, a pile of logs, a pile of... These were spread over with inflammable liquid which was kind of explosive. We were in the neighbourhood and heard a loud crash and saw a column of fire coming up. We were wondering whether a ship hit the mine as the sea was quite close. It appeared the corpses were burnt. We had never heard of such camps like Auschwitz etc.

Every day we left our camp to see whether the Russians had arrived already. Once it was my turn to go. I was cycling and I saw the people dressed in black in the distance. Those were a few Jews who had survived and were able to escape. Our boys who had been in the neighbourhood told they had also seen the Jews who had survived. The boys were wearing German uniforms. The Jews had begged them not to shoot them! The boys said they were the wrong men and were not going to kill them.

I saw it was peaceful everywhere and went back to the camp. I just arrived at the gate of the camp when I saw the Russian truck driving in. I tried not to rush in order to be unnoticed. But there was a board fence and as soon as I got behind it I started running. I shouted to boys that Russians were in the camp! We packed our clothes quickly and hid them in the potato furrow. We had already coloured the clothes of the German army. There was a big kettle on the fire and we were colouring. I don't remember how many of us there were but some women were also there. They sewed us trousers from blankets.

I was also caught and sent to Siberia (for serving in the German army). On an early morning I was taken to Ülemiste station. I saw a long troop train of small goods wagons. I don't remember how many people were put in one wagon but there were definitely over twenty of them. There were two-storeyed bunk beds. But it was a very cold winter and those sleeping against the wall had frozen and stuck to the wall by morning. But everybody survived in our wagon. The ride took a couple of weeks. We had lost our sense of time and couldn't think that well. One night we arrived somewhere and they told us to come off the train. The wagon was high and we jumped in the deep snow. We were told „ sadiz!“ (“sit down“!). We sat in the snow and saw a big fence of long laths. It was a small camp, we were taken there and shown our bunk beds. I took my coat off and used it as a blanket. The thieves came to rob me. They took one coat and wanted another but I managed to grab it. There were 22 men and they said that also 31 women. A small brigade was formed of men, we were plaiting hotbed mats which were meant for some kind of vegetable. And then one day at the lunch time when women had just finished eating and men came in, our chief told the women to wait for us singing for farewell. It was a man from Tallinn , I guess Jõerüüt was his name, don't remember his first name. They had somehow heard that women were going to be sent away. And what do you think we were singing? We were singing the hymn....

And now about this mat. I had also another mat, which was more simple and had been made of the pieces of American infantry and air fleet uniforms. How these got in the camp I don't know. This one is Japanese.

This has been made in the camp. At first I made this for myself in front of the bunk bed. Beds were for four people. First I made this small bedside rug. My mother made these when I was a small boy, so I thought I would also try. I could use materials and scissors available in the camp. Here all are not greatcoats, some are cloths for overcoat. This is the cloth for overcoat. It took time for me to collect the material. Whenever I recovered I started making these mats sitting there in the evenings having sick men on my both sides, some of them had even open tuberculosis. And so I spent my time. First I made these rosettes. The colours were alike in the beginning but later different colours appeared and I had to start matching them. I had designed them and the pieces just had to be sewn together. It took me three years to complete this mat. And what materials do we have here? I managed to find out that this greatcoat had been on the front and men were caught for praising life in Europe . When this greatcoat had been worn out already I got this piece of seamy side. This cloth reminds me the front, the camp... I have already forgotten some things. These black ones are also from greatcoats. These green ones are from the greatcoat of the German army. These light ones are from the German police. This is from the Russian air fleet uniform. But these are most interesting. How did I match them? Tailors made caps for prison guards and officers. And I got these pieces there. This belonged to a Lithuanian fellow. He began to like this idea and as he could get the materials he started collecting the better ones. This red one was probably a shoulder strap but I don't remember that well. Luckily, no searching took place when leaving the camp. But this one is from Japan . I did not make any notes and don't remember exactly. This looks like the Russian air fleet. This must be German. Near my

prison camp there was a German camp and I probably got these pieces there. Things were abandoned and material was available.

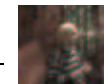
Did any problems occur with blue, black and white combination?

They didn't know! But maybe nobody noticed it there. But this one is blue, black and white and only my friends and fellows could see that. I didn't present it often there. It has been at exhibitions at Võru. There was an agricultural exhibition at Võru in 50's and these mats were there. Once I promised to give it to the museum but later I decided to keep it.

But what are these black ones?

These here? In women camp the clothes for tankmen and railroad workers and these long strips were brought to the camp for upholstering the doors. These were put under the cover from outside. They knew I was dealing with handicraft and offered me bigger pieces. And this is a totally new material and has been touched by women prisoners. But other pieces would have a lot to speak about.

Karin Laine



Name:	Karin	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Laine	Rank:	None
Born:	17/03/1930	Assignments:	Student
Age:	75	Location:	Deported to Siberia
City:	Rõuge	When:	1944 - 1945

There were quite serious battles in Rõuge. Our family escaped but animals were left home. On August 13, Rõuge was in fire. The Germans came and bombed and they had no idea where the Russians would be. I remember the morning of August 12, 1944 when a big herd of cows of the Germans went up this church hill. As Russians approached from the other side, the villages of Sandisuu and Taudsa got all these animals. I don't know how many soldiers were killed there. Many people have been buried here in Rõuge graveyard. The battle was quite intense. The Germans were bombing from this side and the Russians from the side of church. And the locals escaped.

Did your house suffer any loss during this battle?

Yes, the Germans bombed it. But the locals carried all our stuff that they could away. Later we could see our stuff in many houses. For example, embroidered towels. But we were given back nothing as at the moment of bombing everything was taken that could be taken.

Were any locals killed during the battles?

Yes, one daughter from Margi family was killed through the bomb or the bullet. She was five then. It was the same bombing. The surroundings of our other house were full of bomb craters but it is interesting that this house was not hit. The place was full of the craters. Probably they didn't want to destroy everything, they threw their bombs somewhere else.

People say that a plane fell into a lake somewhere here in Rõuge?

Yes, the plane was hit and fell into the Valgjärve. We were watching how the plane was taken out of the lake. It was a small fighter.

Were all the pieces found? Was the whole plane taken out?

It was brought out in pieces. It was a small fighter plane. There was only one person, the pilot, who had jumped out himself. The pilot survived. But here we had so many dead persons. Right here under our house. Over there where this road takes us out, many people were buried. After war people were forced to dig out the dead bodies. First they were given alcohol. The corpses had to be put somewhere and so they were wrapped in a greatcoat. Oh, how they looked like!!! You know I probably had no piece of meat for a whole year. When I went to the university and there were practical trainings with corpses, I also couldn't eat meat

for six months. There we had corpses in solution that we had to cut but here we had rotten corpses. They were all buried up here in the graveyard. At that time there were so many dead bodies. They were dug out, people showed the places where somebody had been buried.

My father was imprisoned in May 1945. He had 2000 roubles with him. I went to Valga NKVD and I told that I could not continue my studies as I didn't have any money. And they gave me back 800 roubles of my father's money. Even in my father's file it was said that 800 from 2000 roubles had been returned to his daughter. They could not judge my father's case for a long time. I told you that he saved the lives of 10 people here. Father was transferred from Valga to Võru as we were from Rõuge. We sent him stuff in a cloth bag. We wrote him letters on the cigarette paper and hid them in the seam of the bag. Once we received a letter from father: „Can't hold up anymore, I'll sign". By then, he had stayed in prison for 10 years. In Vasalemma prison he was surrounded by intelligence. It was good he was not sent to Russia . He was already 55 years old and he wouldn't have made it in Russia .

On March 25, deportation took place. 157 people were supposed to be deported but actually 78 were taken away and 79 people got away with it (some of them weren't home and others escaped). The total of 990 people were planned to be deported from Võru County but finally 483 were deported.

When we were deported to Siberia we were told it would be till the end of our lives. We signed to confirm that me and my children would be life convicts. I was not married, had no children, it means my still unborn children would have been lifelong convicts. Viia Luik was deported from work. She had nothing with her as she basically came right from work. But we came from home. Our uncle had brought us 20 litres of fat and we could take it in our carriage. We had food and bread. My old boyfriend Kalju brought 2 kilos of butter. The only strong man in our carriage was Valter Toode. All the others were women and children. Using a bucket for the toilet was really awful. There were two-storeyed bunk beds and the doors were not opened. Valter was very courageous and threw all faeces out of window. Then they started opening doors more and more. The first morning we were allowed to go out having crossed the border, everybody ran out in the marsh behind the small trees. That was most humiliating. Soldiers were everywhere and shouted Põstro! Põstro! ('hurry up' in Russian).

And you were put on the train in Võru?

Yes, in Võru.

How long did the ride take?

20 days.

My goddaughter was two months old then. She was born on January 15. She was not in our carriage. And she survived! Now she is 51 years old. How at all could such a baby survive?! She told they had found a way for heating water. It was cold then.

You had bunk beds in your carriage, could you sleep well?

Yes, there were bunk beds and wooden boards. There were no mattresses, only pallets.

We were like animals being sorted. Some stops were made during the ride. They came to check the people in the carriage. It was hard for those who were sent to kolkhoz. But we were sent to the collective farm where money was paid for reward. We were taken to the prison camp which was most horrible as we were put together with the prisoners. The bunk bed for four was shared by over ten of us! Everything placed against window was stolen by the prisoners from outside. They somehow removed the windows. Luckily, we were in the corner without the windows.



Name:	Aksel	Nationality:	Estonian
Last name:	Tiivoja	Rank:	Soldier
Born:	13/09/1923	Assignments:	Infantryman
Age:	18	Location:	Ukraine
City:	Rõuge, Ruuksu village	When:	1943

I was in the Ukraine with the army. There were big straw stacks there. Russians were inside the stacks. Our boss was such an ambitious man who wanted to do everything very quickly. We started walking towards the straw stacks. The Russians' nerves were set to an end. As soon as we started walking, they fired. If they had let us come closer, all of us would have died. We moved back, a tank came to help us. It set the straw stacks on fire. Russians escaped. The tank was supplied with a heavy machine gun. A command for a shot was given. Lots of people were killed, including a couple of Hungarians. A plump Hungarian was also hit. Another Hungarian, a slender one, tried to take the former on his back but he soon died. They tried to lay him on the tank but they just couldn't do it. We pushed our guns under him and with the help of these we heaved him on the tank.

Later, we went out to the field where a battle had taken place. There were lots of gas masks and other trash there. In those days there were no phones like we have today. Then wires were taken everywhere. The field was so full of wires that we got stuck in them. I saw from the shore that there were men sitting on a trench. Actually, they had been shot and had stiffened. When watched from far away they looked as if in their positions.

I think it was in 1948. I was already at home then. I went out with my friend in the evening and saw two Russian soldiers smoking in our way. We were not smokers. They started approaching us, pulled out their guns and as soon as I could jump across a ditch, one of them fired a bullet in from my back and out from my front side. I could flee into a household. The man of the house went to the road and found a Russian soldier who took me to the hospital on his motorcycle that had a sidecar. Another man crawled out from the same site and was later also taken to the hospital.

2. HUNGARIANS

László Ettig



Name:	László	Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:	Ettig	Rank:	Soldier
Born:	1923	Assignments:	Artillery
Age:	21	Location:	Dráva river
City:	Nagymányok	When:	1944

Well, it was 1944. On 16 May the artillery regiment Nr. 12 got new uniforms and we took an oath at the Hero statue never to leave our weapons.

We set off down to the second line next to the river Dráva.

One evening I got orders to go to the frontier with Jóska Varga, a quite small lad from Paks.

As we arrived at the Dráva, we came under fire. American 10mm automatic weapons. They were like "dumdum" bullets and they were whistling near my ear.

I hit the ground and pulled Jóska behind me. There was a corn field behind the ditch (since then I've known how tall the corn is in July) and we crawled into it.

I had 2 magazines of bullets in my pocket. Jóska had 2 magazines, too. He had already fired 1 magazine and kept on telling me "shoot, shoot!"

Suddenly I heard him wail and saw him fall. He was hit in the crotch. I could see him bleeding in the moonlight. I pushed my hand on his wound to stop the bleeding and went on firing with my left hand.

I was a sharpshooter. I won nice prizes at shooting competitions.

The boy next to me was bleeding and I was very terrified. I had already fired the last, 10th bullet but I heard the bullets whistling by my ears.

It was obvious that these men weren't trained. They were irregular forces. They just got these weapons without instructions how to use them. Maybe that's why they didn't hit me.

My uniform was deep green. The boy with me had a faded white uniform so he was easier to be seen. Well, I fired my last bullet, though we were always told to leave the last one for ourselves.

My hands and everything were covered in blood. I stopped pushing the side of the boy, because he stopped bleeding. He was just moaning and his voice started to fade.

Even today I can't tell how many people I killed. There might have been about 15-20 people around me. I hit many of them.

One of them was thrown to the ground. It was terrible. I couldn't forget him. I could see him in front of me. He was a tall, black, leggy guy and in the moonlit night he seemed to have a very big nose.

Later I met some Serbians very similar to him. I always thought he was one of them.

The gunfire was getting less and less loud and finally stopped. I fired my last bullet. Then I remembered our oath so I took the safety plug out and threw it away.

I stood up. I thought they would shoot. But they didn't. I set off in the direction of Hemusevec on foot.

As soon as I started, there was firing from everywhere. Our patrol was opening fire at me. I shouted: "Password!" They gave the password and I answered so they stopped shooting. Only then did I dare to stand up as I was lying on the road.

We took the wounded to the doctor in Hemusevec. The doctor said that if the boy had been operated on right away, he might have stood a chance of making it, but he bled to death.

Well, that was my trial by fire in the war. I got a medal.

The funeral of Jóska Varga was held by his brother who was a priest. He was 16 years older than Jóska and he was the head of a Premonstrant monastery.

I led the guards of honour. One of the lieutenants said: "You were as white as a ghost." Then I told him that I was there when the boy died and I could have been next.

Ede Ambach



Name:	Ede	Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:	Ambach	Rank:	none
Born:	1939	Assignments:	none
Age:	5	Location:	Németkér Hungary
City:	Németkér	When:	1944

My name is Ede Ambach. I was born in August 1939 in Németkér. I am 65 years old. I was born when the war started. I lost my father in the war. Then the family moved to Csámpa and had a farm. Later the nuclear power station was built up here.

We made bunkers, this way we were preparing for the war in 1944.

One day we woke to that fact that the governor soldiers went away. They were German but mainly Hungarian soldiers. After the withdrawal our family collected the dead Hungarian soldiers. More than 10 Hungarian soldiers were killed there.

Early in the morning we heard the military subject-headings 'huri, huri', there was a big din when the Russian soldiers were coming from the Danube in long battle lines. When they arrived at our farm we did not hide. It was impossible and it would have been senseless.

They shot all the animals in the yard, the poultries, too. They let the pigs out, they shot them that way. They went away on 2 horses. The meat of the animals and every movable things (for example blankets) were taken away by them.

The officers behaved themselves as officers just until the evening but then they became mischievous people. My mother was 43, the neighbouring woman was 47. The officers molested them but I do not want to tell the details about it.

We escaped from Csámpa to Paks. By the time the Russian soldiers came, the Hungarians and Germans mostly had gone. Those who stayed there were all shot by the Russians.

Paks-Németkér-Cece villages belonged to the war zone so the soldiers were passing along this direction and we had to take part in it even twice.

The houses were occupied as accomodation for the soldiers. The people were frightened, so they spent the nights in the stables.

War is terrible in any case, to survive it as a child and to experience its aftermaths. It is depriving of everything.

I wish nobody was involved in war. Everybody should act individually not to have a war. People should understand that the individual must not start war and

then there is nobody to be followed by people. People should study and improve their mind.

Márton Bátor



Name:		Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:		Rank:	Commander
Born:	1926	Assignments:	Com. of knight platoon
Age:	18	Location:	Bölcske
City:	Bölcske	When:	1944

I went to the teacher's training college to Pécs on the fourth year, I was 18 years old.

The students in Pécs, and all the young people over 18 were taken to become soldiers in Hungary. The war was the most intense in Russia. Then we heard about that the Germans were to win. Well, later the situation changed.

I did not want to stay in Pécs so I decided to go home to Bölcske village. I escaped. Going out to the streets was forbidden then but I walked down to the railway station without any fear. There I sat into a breaking waggon and fell asleep.

Later I realized that I am in Pusztaszabolcs railway station. There I met a friend from Bölcske, he went home, too. We walked home to Bölcske across the fields. In the evening we arrived at Bölcske. Both side of the road, the ditches, and in front of the houses was full of German soldiers. The whole village was full of Germans.

The following day a gendarme, a friend of us, warned me that I could be counted as a deserter. He lived next door he asked his friend, who was a warrant officer, what to do with me. This officer did me a favour. He ordered me to be a knight. I had to wear a uniform and he made me the commander of the oldest knight platoon.

We drilled every day, followed out rifle practice.

We did shooting exercises on the bank of the Danube, at a side of a hill. We learned soldier parade steps, marching, so we learned soldier things like recruits. It was going on until 2nd December 1944, when the Russian came.

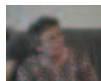
My parents hid in a cellar like other people in the whole village the Russians shot a round from the tower of the catholic church into a wooden fence however it happened quite close to us. We went home, though we were frightened . this willage we survived the Russian invasion. We heard that the Russian soldiers took away food from here and there. We also heard about a teacher, who was on the front, that his wife was raped by two Russian officers.

I had a job in a kitchen, it was a big Russian kitchen and it supplied a lot of Russian soldiers with food. I had a friend, we cut the wood for the kitchen day by day. This way we didn't have to go to Madocsa airport to do forced labour.

Nothing matter happened to me, I only heard about victims in the village who died because they were hit by mines from the other side of the Danube. For example there was a family; a mother, her daughter-in-law and her twelve-year old daughter who died when a mine hit a mulberry tree. The mother was washing clothes. All of them died. The funeral ceremony was in their house, in the kitchen. There were 3 coffins next to each other. The priest did the service there. It was the most shocking event in the village.

There were other local victims, too. Their names can be read on the heros square in Bölcske.

Mrs Orbán



Name:		Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:	Mrs Orbán	Rank:	None
Born:	1937	Assignments:	None
Age:	8	Location:	Keszthely
City:	Tapolca	When:	1945

As I am quite old, I was about 8 years old during the 2nd world war. We lived in Tapolca and we were escaping.

There was an airport next to Tapolca, an airforce base. It was always bombed at that time.

My father was a railwayman, they ordered more railway carriages so on those ones the railwaymen and their families could escape.

As there was bombing all the time, one afternoon in March in 1945 my mother was raving that we shouldn't be there during the bombing. So we, children and women were made to go away along the railway. And then some enemy war planes (known as Russian planes) noticed that some people were going along next to the rail roads and we were being bombed.

I was frightened then. These experiences still come back in my mind. The railroad was completely bombed down, there were a lot of dead people.

My mother went nearly mad because of bombing. She lifted up the dead people's caps to see their faces if they were familiar. It is so deep experience in my mind. Perhaps I could never forget it.

Then the special railroad carriages followed us, we got on them at around Keszthely and travelled long-long kms. We often stopped on open fields and if there was an air attack, everybody jumped down from the train and escaped into the nearby forest, because, these long carriages were always shot if they were noticed.

Csáktornya belonged to Croatia and there were also burnt parts of the town. We walked into the town with our packs. We thought that the Russians had already gone and we could find some kind of shelter. And then the Bulgarian partisans caught us up and right then they collected the men. They were taken to do forced labour.

Women and children stayed only there. We had to go into a stable. We stayed there for weeks, we got food from a farm. Soldiers watched over us.

My mother put our family's documents into a railway bag because she was afraid. Everybody was afraid that the Russians and the partisans would take away anything from us. So my mother covered the bag when she was going across the yard that is why she was made to stand to the wall to be shot down as the

Russians supposed that there was a secret transmitting set in the bag. And because we couldn't speak Serbian or Russian language, a woman came to help to interpret for that Russian or Bulgarian soldier that she had not been a spy and there was no secret transmitting set in her bag. She showed our documents so my mother escaped.

In a word we were terrified all the time. We hadn't heard anything about the men, about my father either. We could hardly get food, and our home was in ruins, when we got back to our house. Well, these are really bad experiences, indeed.

Sándorné Kovács



Name:	Sándorné	Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:	Kovács	Rank:	None
Born:	1923	Assignments:	None
Age:	22	Location:	Bölcske
City:	Bölcske	When:	1945

We were being chased by the Russians. We ran away to the neighbourhood. Our cattles were taken away. We were standing in the kitchen in the dark when they came into the other room, we ran out of the house backwards to the neighbour's damaged fence. We went up the attic, pulled up the ladder so they couldn't follow us. We stayed there until the daybreak. When it was getting light the owner of the house came out to feed the animals. We told him silently and carefully that we were on his attic.

When we noticed that the Russians went away around our house we returned home.

Then the Russians came again at night and whom they found they captured them, took them away to barracks.

They were given a very little food and mean bed and by day the Russians forced them to work.

Hungarian soldiers were taken away to Russia. They were forced to work. They had to dig trenches and they were made to take apart the weed there. Their soup was cooked from that weed for them. If they found somewhere some potatoes they dug them out and they could cook some better food from that.

After work they were taken back to the lagers where they slept at night. Some of them hid somewhere. They changed their clothes to civilian clothes then they hid themselves again. They were let go into a private house where they were hidden. They could escape this way so they weren't taken back to the front line again.

Well, what can I say?

The war was the biggest pain, the biggest cruelty. We weren't respected at all, neither our cattles. Nobody could tell it differently who lived that time through.

We couldn't eat, we had to hide ourselves. We were starving, we had nothing to eat. People suffered a lot. Too much.

Once we were working on the field, we were ploughing with oxen when we were shot from Solt. The houses were shot, too. People escaped to the cellars.

There was a woman with a three-year old child in her arm. Both of them died. A mine hit them, both of them died right there. A similar case happened in Bölcske street. A handsome young woman was running from one of the neighbourhood to the other to escape, meanwhile she was shot down. She died there at once.

It's not good to think of these things, because one relives it again what happened then and just becomes indignant.

Mrs Horváth



Name:		Nationality:	Hungarian
Last name:	Mrs Horváth	Rank:	None
Born:	1916	Assignments:	None
Age:	28	Location:	Veszprém-Bezenye
City:	Várpalota	When:	1944

I had two little boys then (4 and 1,5 years old) and we had to escape, because the war really started. Pécfürdő was right next to Várpalota, where my husband worked, so we lived there.

We had to go down to the mine. Petrol was stored there and he worked there with soldiers, but he wore civilian clothes. When the petrol was brought he had to receipt it.

We hid ourselves in an empty mine when we heard the siren, when we were being bombed. The surface of the earth was 16 m above us. But as we got home after the bombing the siren sounded again and it was very difficult for me, because I had to pick up my two children hastily and run up the mountain meanwhile English war planes (first English planes, they were called big „gigants”)

Well these were terrible experiences. That time everybody could escape, but we were frightened.

We had to escape from Várpalota. Nobody wanted to lodge us, because we were strangers with 2 kids, so nobody would have had us with pleasure. Then we set off on foot towards Beszprém to leave the country. Well we didn't know where to go, because we couldn't go towards Paks, there was already war. The weather was horrible, it was very foggy on 8th December. My younger sister, who was seven-month pregnant, was coming with us, too. It was terrible. In Bezenye (near Mosonmagyaróvár, near the Austrian border) people lodged us kindly. There was bombing all the time by the Germans in Bezenye, too. German soldiers were cheeky with women. Then we were young, I was 28, my younger sister was 21. We hid the baby into a trough in the cellar when one of the German soldier was drunken. That was the most horrible experience. Our husbands were not with us. We didn't know where they were. Only we were there women and two little kids. We lived in Bezenye for 4 months on the main street. When the end of the war was so close the Germans were marching there with tanks, they were going home. The Hungarians told us not to go to the main street, because the Germans push everybody down from there, because they hurried away so the Russians couldn't catch up with them, as they had already come into our country.

Two more railroaders lived with us in the same house. They were refugee soldiers, too. They built a very good air raid shelter for us in the yard. We survived the last 4 days of the war in there. Then the Russians came on Easter-eve, on Holy Saturday. Afterwards there was no more war, nobody hurt us. We could go

up into our house. 8 days later we were said that Hungary got free. We could come home to Paks. Then we asked a certification that we were allowed to come home, to show it if we would be stopped on our way from Bezenye to our parents, to Paks. Our parents still lived in Paks. We set off and we got home in 4 days. We stayed at different houses every night where we were let in. Sometimes we slept on straw, sometimes in bed. Meanwhile we got a carriage with two nice horses.

We packed up our stuff to go on. On the road we met a Russian woman. Russian women were very wicked, they wanted to take everything away from us, mainly our kids belongings. Then one of the railroadman knelt down to beg not to take away the kids' things at least. Only this way he was able to influence her.

Meanwhile we were going home our horses were changed 4 times. We got a worse horse every time. Last time we got a horse that wasn't taken away from us because the back of the horse was shot a lot of times.

We got home, my sister had a baby boy meanwhile. On our way there was a village, Szomor, which was completely empty, nobody lived there at all. I never forgot it. We came home on foot, because some cars were going in front of us and they were hit, by mines we saw the people died in them.

We never went through the towns, but on the country roads. Near Dunaföldvár our horse fell down, it was so weak. When we got to Paks the wheel of the carriage, dropped. Well, hardly, but we got home to Paks finally.

Our parents were still alive, we were very very happy. Our house was fit up for post office, One of the room had no furniture at all. They heated the house with cupboards, beds, with everything. That was a horrible experience, too.

My husband was captured by the Russians and he was, taken away to Székesfehérvár, to a prisoner's camp.

I went there 5 times on foot from Paks to visit my husband, but there were a lot of Russian Soldier and they always pointed their gun at me, to shoot me dead, but 4-5-6 women together we were brave, we weren't hurt only we were made to be frightened to send us home. So we went to our parents' house.

We did it well to escape from our house in Várpalota, because the kitchen wall was damaged by a bomb. If we had been at home then we must have died.

It was terrible to survive these things. I hope I will not have any more experiences like this. My children grew up, all the four of them live in Paks. I have 7 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren, too. So finally everything is right, I am fine now.



Name:	Stefano	Nationality:	Italian
Last name:	Lorusso	Rank:	Soldier
Born:	10 April 1912	Assignments:	None
Age:	92	Location:	Russia; Italy
City:	Altamura	When:	1942; 1943

After two days, in this Russian village where we had arrived, the Russian troops decided to attack us. A soldier, a "bersagliere" from "Abruzzo", I don't remember his name, was stricken by 6 bullets, 4 from the shoulder reached the chest, the others 2 bullets broke an arm in three pieces. He shouted "help me", "help me", "help me" but nobody wanted to take up him, I brought him for two hours because I want to save him. We were quite a lot but nobody wanted to take up him. A his fellow townsperson didn't want to take up him, he thought it was needless because he would be died however. That soldier asked me for help catcheing my leg with the hand. I carried an heavy machine gun, I threw it to ground because I wanted to take up him, in this way I saved his life. After six months he sent me a letter calling me "brother". At the middle night, in front of us, 100 meters ahead, there was 2 soldiers, 2 "bersaglieri". It was too dark and the Russians launched rockets to locate us it was an instant and the two "bersaglieri" that preceded us disapear. We also had scythed. I was wounded at the right arm by a mortar's splinter. My friend Domenico Cicirelli that was far from me less then half of a meter was killed, since stricken by mortar's bomb. He didn't have neither the time to say "A".

After the 8th September armistice we was in a barracks in Verona . The next morning a colonel appeared at a window and said: "At cost of life Germans troops doesn't enter in the barracks". The same morning a German tank came, fell down the front door, and two Germans soldiers entered. The two Germans asked to speak with commander. They were at least one hour and half speaking with our commander and the end order was "surrendering". Once left weapons the Germans took possession of the barracks and took all prisoners. I thought to escape otherwise I would been deported in Germany together to the other prisoners. After I have eaten the meal I decided to escape.

On the surrounding wall there were 4 or 5 barbed wire and on each angle of the barracks there was a sentinel, another sentinel was at the front door. I didn't think two times, I undressed my shirt and I threw it beyond the wall, did a footstep back, put a foot against the wall, grabs myself with the hand to the wall and I was on the wall. I hurted myself with the barbed wire but I didn't left the hold. On the other side of the wall there was a trench and due to the fear they shoot me I jumped down. I not realized that my trousers had gotten entangled in the barbed wire, I lost the equilibrium felling with my face to ground and disfiguring myself but, anyway, I was able to run away. Beyond the wall there was a girl about 20 years

3. ITALIANS

old in a first moment she howled, I told her "don't worry because I am a friend" and I told her my history. She bring me at her home where she medicated me and I lost cognizance. In order to recover my consciousness she slaps me afther I drink something. Her familiar arrived and she tells them all. One of the familiar asked me as the door behind the barracks was done. I answered that I didn't know it because I had come in barracks only the preceding night. One of these familiar, as the door was done by wood, saw the door in a way to allow to the Italians to run away. A lot of Italians, in this way, were able to run away. As we thought that the war was ended we throw uniforms I threw all except shoes because I didn't know what it could happen in the future.

Anna Viri



Name:	Anna	Nationality:	Italian
Last name:	Viri	Rank:	
Born:	82	Assignments:	Student - Worker
Age:		Location:	Rome; Italy
City:	Roma	When:	1942; 1943

We heard some strokes but they were not so strong. A group of airplanes approaches the place where we were so we understood that they dropped bombs, I cannot explain you the terror. Frightened we went down but they didn't allow us to go out. Frightened. At the end we went out and the scene we found out, that I found out, was really upsetting. Truck, wheelbarrows, cars raced all around, dripped blood everywhere because they brought wounded peoples loaded on the roads, anywhere.

Each of us was terrorized by the idea of return at home and don't know what to find. You can imagine our fear. In this way we understood, we young people, what the war was. One thing is to think, another, instead it is to live so terrible moments, It is difficult to explain. Go home, end find own house collapsed with people looked for other people among the rubbles, you don't understand anything more, you become a thing, everything seems to be strange, everything seems to be useless. My little brothers and I went to a city, to a town in Lazio Region in a country house and we were lucky because there the danger was worse.

Groups of Germans passed and when they saw a girl or children, according to their tendencies and preferences, strange things happened. Naturally these things could not be reported to the authorities. And now, I tell you the last episode, I have told you the first one that has impressed me now the last episode: the arrival of the allies in Rome . We felt noises, we leaned out to the window and we saw the Americans they stopped, looked toward the windows, greeted. It seemed us that really the war was ended, that the liberators had arrived, perhaps, they certainly has improved our conditions so that little by little, but little by little the war ended. It didn't end that day when it seemed us to have resolved the problem. But we were certainly encouraged. I remember that moments of true war we have felt when the Germans were in Rome , when our parents we re picked up and brought in concentration camps.

This experience has been so shocking. When I speak of war and I see you that don't have idea of what the war is I say: "blessed you", I hope that you continue haven't id ea of the war is. Now there is the television, one time it wasn't, now you can be afraid through the television however, you know, to live war is different it is very very heavier.

Angelo Tarasco



Name: Angelo
Last name: Tarasco
Born: 1923
Age: 19
City: Matera
Nationality: Italian
Rank: Soldier
Assignments: Infantryman
Location: Yugoslavia
When: 1943 - 1944

On 10th on June 10th 1944, .43 no 40 .the war began. I was still child as you, .therefore in 43 I was, .was I?, .in 40 I was 17 years old. Then when I was 19 and half years old I have lived as soldier. In the island of Rhodes we were 45.000 Italians and 7000 Germans.

They have done us prisoners because the general, the commanders, have sold us. From Rhodes they have brought me in Yugoslavia , by airplane. In Rhodes , February 1th, we were without jacke t, it was warm there, there it is warm. Only some mornings I put the jack et on the shoulders, it was warm, the morning.

Then in two hours, with the airplane, to Greece there were 900 Kms. from Rhodes to Athens in Greece there were 900 Kms. In the concentration camp we were in the tall snow, in two hours, and we have suffered for the snow. We have been two days in Athens and then they have brought us in Yugoslavia . We have been for a some time imprisoned and then we have escaped away. From the concentration camp we have gone to the partisan.

The partisan were armed and we have undertaken the partisan war. We have connected with the Red army and we have fought together with them. Before we were only partisan and the Russian were distant, but after, together, we have freed Belgrade the capital of Yugoslavia . We have employed 8 days to conquered Belgrade from October 14th 1944 to October 22 and then we have always advanced and we have always gone forth.

Giuseppe Fiore



Name: Giuseppe
Last name: Fiore
Born: 21 January 1924
Age: 19
City: Altamura
Nationality: Italian
Rank: Soldier
Assignments: radio transmissions
Location: Altamura
When: 1943

My father said don't go out because there are Canadian soldiers, there was one patrol, they were 5 armed people. I went with another to "Porta Bari". We Arrived to "Porta Bari", and we were coming back and we were this way... they said: "Money, wallets... " Hei, I said, we fight together with the Americans! "No, you have to show the documents otherwise we bring you in the prison or give us money" we withstood and they aimed the weapons and they hurt us. At the end we gave them our wallets and the money of another our friend from Terlizzi that someone given me to bring to Terlizzi. We gave them all the money, the license that I had, but this was a fortune because I didn't come back to the front anymore.

Didn't you go to war anymore?

My father said you don't have to go there.

I went to a doctor in Bari , he gave me a injection, I had the fever to 40° and the day when my licence expired I was in the hospital and it ended in this way. However if we insisted they brought us in the prison because they had "white paper".

Because after a certain time you couldn't go out?

There was the curfew .

I tell you this for your own safety.



Name:
Last name: D'Ercole
Born:
Age:
City:

Nationality: Italia
Rank: Soldier
Assignments: Subsistence
Location:
When:

What did you see in the roads?

I saw that in the evening, at the sunset, so.... we were in first line, and they came to bomb. A person was in safe, if he was sheltered, if he had time to shelter, he saved himself, the other ones died.

In the '40 departed to Naples ?

to Naples , on January 12th 1940 to Mergellina, 40° infantry.... More exactly I was destined to the fortress of Tobruk to the 31° frontier gard. We were brought to Glasgow .

And what did you do there?

Nothing, I was in a concentration camp, with barbed wire all around.

What did you see?

What did I see? They gave us tents and we slept under those, they brought us lunch, in the morning the coffee, coffee and milk.

Have you been in concentrations camp until Italy passed with the allies?

With the allies.

Where have you been after Italy passed with the allies? Have you been working with that family?

Yes.

In a family to work fields?

The fields they had were all breedings, cows production, milch cows.

How long have you been in that family?

I was there until I was repatriated, four or five years. I went in the morning by bicycle and after I reentered in the concentration camp.

So in the evening you reentered to the concentration camp.

I reentered in the concentration camp.

So you worked with this family and then in the evening you reentered and did they pay you?

They didn't pay me but there were those that get money, they didn't pay me, the master gave me a pound per week because he was satisfied of what I did, on Saturday and Sunday I went to the cinema so I spent my money this way.

How did people live when you returned here?

How did I lived when I returned? It was the month of June we picked up ears, we crushed them to make wheat, then we brought it to a mill to make flour, we kneaded flour to make bread, this was everything.

So you lived this way? And what have you done when you returned?

When I returned I found job and I went to work.

Which job?

Labourer, worker because when I returned here there was nothing to eat, there was nothing to do, there was smuggling, they came from Altamura and from Bari, they came and what they could grasp they brought away what could we do. The wars don't have to be again, we have to reason, if people reason we can reach an agreement. If someone loose temper he can set on fire everything.

So is war ignorance?

The war is ignorance, where ignorance is war is. I have always told this.

Eustachio Cifarelli



Name:	Eustachio	Nationality:	Italian
Last name:	Cifarelli	Rank:	Saylorman
Born:	1925	Assignments:	Radiogoniometrist
Age:	18	Location:	North to South Italy
City:	Matera	When:	sept. 1943

I would like to begin from this point: "Who want war": politicians want war. Politicians are who, as Gianfranco says, give our life for the country, not theirs, our lives so we have been us, we weren't voluntaries, we have lived as recruits.

I had the training course in Varignano and it ended exactly on the armistice day, the September 8th.

The day after the Germans came and we escaped away. From Varignano to La Spezia normally we used buses but we went afoot. We have employed one day to arrive afoot, with the backpacks on shoulder. Arrived to La Spezia there was a train, we caught it. Once, in a station, some girls said: "Sailors you have to go down because Germans are in Parma ". Nobody went down. In Parma there wasn't anybody, after we went from there to Castelfranco Emilia where they stopped the train and they brought us to Modena , afoot, as prisoners. I have been eight days imprisoned.

The Germans let some girls to come in the concentration camp, the girls came in the concentration camp they brought... they brought something to eat. A group of these girls brought the map of the sewers... and they explained to us that behind the barracks there was a gutter through that it was possible to slip myself and to walk. At 15 meters from there a sentinel was going up and down. When I escaped there was another sailor sat there that saw me looking around and he said: "do you want to escape?" I answered to him: "When the sentinel turns himself open the gutter". So he did it, he opened the gutter and I launched myself in the sewers following the instructions: the first one to the left, the second to the right.

Just entered in the sewer I was afraid because there was a step of about 30 cms. But water, made a noise like a tall fall. I walked standing in the sewer, a hand on wall and the other on the other side. I arrived where this step was, I saw that he was about only 30 cms. "I can do it". Others four or five meters and I found "the first one to the left". The boys that were out, the sewer was straight now, had put a light as those that were used under the wagons, when I saw it I thought "it is sure now, this is the right way". When I was out, I undressed my uniform and I wore civil dresses, I washed myself in the house and then an elderly women came, I was twenty years old, she could be fifty, she brought me to her house, fed me and brought me until we had crossed the river, in Modena there is the Panaro river, after having crossed she told me to follow the power line, to follow it

because it arrives in Bologna. I walked three days along the power line and I arrived in Bologna . In the cities there was nothing to eat. With the farmers we could eat but in the cities... in the evening a man told me: " I haven't nothing to eat, if you want some money I can give you" I said: "thanks the same" I had money and I didn't accept more.

The day after I continued the march and I arrived in Mirandola a railway station after Bologna . Arrived in Mirandola I was not alone more, there was people coming from other cities, there was infantrymen, sailors, we were about twenty young men, we decided that only one of us would have gone to see what the stationmaster said and when the train arrived, one of us went. The stationmaster said: "At four o'clock this morning a goods train will come, until that time be away, don't come here, when the train will come if you see nobody, come here, if you see Germans be away".

At four o'clock there was nobody and we jumped on the goods train. It brought us up to Montesilvano, in Pescara the railway had been bombed and the train didn't arrive there. In Montesilvano was night and I went to sleep in the baggage warehouse. In the morning at the first daylights, two Germans came. When they entered they didn't see me, they went in the back of the warehouse after they went out each with a box on the shoulders, perhaps it was beer, then they saw me, gesticulating I told them I had slept there, with gestures, they told me to go away, I went out and I washed my face at a fountain.

Along the road I saw people coming from Pescara , somebody with mattress on the back , who... I said: "What it's happen " They said: "Yesterday the Americans have come and have launched leaflets saying that today at two o'clock they would have returned to bombing and to be three kilometres away from the railroad and from the road" so it happened. From Montesilvano, we came afoot up to Cerignola where we found English troops. In Barletta we caught a train and before reaching Bari the inspector said: "If you go in Bari you will find the patrols and they don't let you to go home. You have to go down in Santo Spirito". We have gone down there and we have met a smuggler it was dark and we didn't know the place. The smuggler brought a sack full of shoes, he said: "If you help me to bring the sack I will help you". When I arrived at home, I passed near a fountain where some women took water, they saw me. A policeman asked to the women: "I am looking for a sailor".

Women that never think to their own business told him: "Not the first neighbourhoods, the second is where he lives". I was washing my face on the stair, you know how in the houses of the "Sassi" district is, when I saw the policeman: "Are You the sailor? ", "Yes", and in dialect: " Were you waiting for me? I am just arrived and I am washing myself". He answered: "go on doing", he write down my name and last name and said: "However, tomorrow morning you have to come in our barracks". I stay thirteen days at home, on October 13 I was already in Taranto to leave again.



Name:	Zelma	Nationality:	Latvian
Last name:	Laukšteine	Rank:	
Born:	16 November 1927	Assignments:	
Age:	13/14	Location:	Rudbāži
City:	Aizpute	When:	June 1941

Then just we two – my father and I – harvested potatoes. We saw that the war is coming closer and all the inhabitants were going away. They went to Liepaja or abroad. But my father said that if Germans are retreating so fast – for days, for weeks they are coming and already they are in Riga. But we couldn't imagine that Kurzeme's pot would stay right here. The Germans remained here. No one would have thought that. So we stayed and lived in our house. We lived by the on railway. And then the air – raids started. Russians shot up the railway with mine – throwers. Then later in the nights Russians drove very silent and put out candle lanterns, but in the day they struck. Air – raids were without breaks. And then the Germans shot at these planes and they fell down. But those in the planes didn't want to die. They wanted to survive, that's why they jumped out with parachutes. Down stood the German snipers stood on the ground and pif paf... They fell down. They didn't shoot at the people. They shot at the parachutes. When they shot those balloons, people fell down in the boughs of trees and died. Many of them were injured and their viscera were hanging down to the ground. I didn't go to see that. They were horrible looks! Terrible looks!

Now we understood that the war had started.

Then they shot and shot at the railway. How we got bombarded! When my brother ran, one bomb blew and he burnt his arm with the bomb splinters. The holes were so big and huge. People disappeared where they could. No one stayed in his house. But my father said that we can't walk around for ever, our grandmother is very old, where can we go, we also haven't got anything to take with us. We will live in Rudbāži. Germans came to us. They dug a bunker near our house. We had a big kitchen. Then grandmother and we three children slept on the half of our kitchen and Germans slept on the other half till threshold, till the last one, so we hadn't a free place left. In the end we had such a times when sometimes in our house were Germans, sometimes Russians. Then the Russians took us and then again Germans.

On the 17th of December Germans told us, that we can't live in this house any more, there are no private persons. But we had no horses, we had nothing and now we needed to go away from our house with empty hands. Germans had a big hooded cart and horses; they told us that they would bring us out. And then we loaded the carts, put in our grandmother. But I had the idea to take my mums bike, Ilmar needed to lead our cow. We didn't have anything to put on our feet.

4. LATVIANS

There was terrible mud. The roads weren't like roads, and then they were paved with trees, so everyone could drive. The trees were laid next to each other, and it was possible. The arnes hand driven so hard that the road almost wasn't there. They told us where they were taking us, but we didn't know where it was. Where would we stay? And then we arrived at a house in Laidi. It was an extremely cold winter, a very hard frost about – 20 oC. We weren't wearing warm clothes; actually we didn't know what we should wear. We cut bushes in the cemetery. We cut lilac bushes in Laidi cemetery. What could such children do? Then the son of this houses mistress was brought out and shot. I don't know what happened, but the housekeeper didn't want that everyone to live there. Then we went to another house, which was called "Bangotnes", where we spent the rest of the time till the war's end.

Rota Lilija Saveljeva



Name:	Rota Lilija	Nationality:	Latvian
Last name:	Saveljeva	Rank:	
Born:	10 June 1922	Assignments:	
Age:	19	Location:	Aizpute
City:	Aizpute	When:	June 1941

Then suddenly the basement's door was opened and the Red army appeared and said: "Why are you hiding Germans?" we said that we aren't hiding Germans, we are hiding from the war, because here is a bombardment and we aren't safe. They said: "Come out with raised arms on the street. Stride, march!" We got frightened! We said that we haven't done anything. "Please don't speak! Do what is commanded!" We all raised our arms up and went out. We were twelve persons. There were four men – two old and two about 30 years old – for young women and four young girls, including me. We had terrible fears when Russians ordered to go with raised hands like this; we all went in one line. That Mrs. Egle went in the front. She wore a black, long dress, but like an old lady she raised her arms like this – in the form of "o" – and went. My mother had a tidy on her arm. At the beginning my sister thought that the end of our lives would come. And then we went till Laža's law – court. And then we all were set in a row. And in the front was a soldier with a rifle. It was possible to shoot. My sister was very worried, she cried, but I thought – could it be so awful. Then we stood for a while, we didn't understand what would happen. And then one officer ran up and said: " Don't do it! These people are innocent." We understood that if the Germans soldiers had been hiding in those woods – sheds, which were opposite the house we were taken out of, that we would have been shot.

After we recovered from the walking with the raised arms, we thought that we couldn't stay in Aizpute. We must go away from Aizpute. Then we packed our personal property, we took food with us, we took also blankets and sheets and then we went there, there to the East. We went along the coast of river Laža to one house – "Zītiši". There was a very kind person, who gave us refuge in the top of his cattle – shed. And there we stayed few days; we thought that we're not safe in the town.

And then, when the time went we heard that here the wave of the war is over and that now here is German army. Then the housekeeper gave us his horse and we drove with that horse to Aizpute. And we arrived back home, I also took my parents with me, but all the young ones stayed there. I with my parents and possibly with our neighbours – both Enģeļi – were driving. And we arrived and saw that Germans' army has occupied our house. We returned and said that it is our house. They had packed trunks full with our personal property, which seemed valuable to them. There were clocks; there were also new blankets and pieces of fabric. And so, they took with them everything that was valuable. We begged them

to give us back our property. And so in the end they gave us back one part, but they appropriated the other part.

Jānis Sjomkāns



Name:	Jānis	Nationality:	Latvian
Last name:	Sjomkāns	Rank:	Soldier
Born:	25 August 1925	Assignments:	
Age:	17	Location:	Asīte
City:	Aizpute	When:	Sept., October 1944

Well, what can we remember? The German “tigers” arrived – long – range artillery – and then they bombarded Vaiņode. We were all sleeping. In the morning, when we woke up, everywhere were German soldiers, we couldn’t even put our noses out. When they began using long – range artillery, then the windows of all the houses were shattered. Four men carried one shell, and then you can imagine, what the projectiles were like! Then they drove us out of our house and we drove to something like a ravine. All people from Asites estate were there. We dug bunkers and rounded up all animals. All time two people were on duty. We lived there about two weeks. At one moment a “Hitler” ran up to me from backside and said to me that we must go to the rear of the front. We drove to the lake Sepene , where we lived. I was at call – up age, but I went together with refugees and we arrived in Vanga. There we stayed there, but then there was a big control. We had to dig bunkers for the army and then they caught me like a lamb. Than they put me in a car, took me to Aizpute and held me in prison there. There were different kinds of people – soldiers, officers and messengers. I was in the death cell a few months. Then we were sorted – Russians separately and Latvians separately. We were taken to a doctor’s commission and in the port was already a ship to take us to Germany . We were like soldiers. We were taken to the coast for drills. The captain climbed a mountain and watched the sea with binoculars. He said: “ The sea is full of planes. We can’t get anywhere. There are air battles going on.” I was put in the death camera again. The water was dropping on my head. In my camera weren’t any dry places. I endured all, experienced. I was not taken to Germany and when the war was over, we went working to woods.

Feliks Vindavs

Name: Feliks
Last name: Vindavs
Born: 2 September 1937
Age: 16
City: Aizpute

Nationality: Latvia
Rank:
Assignments:
Location: Rostova – Aizpute
When: 1943 - 1945

I remember that when the Germans came, everyone was going from Rostov to the North of Caucasus. We also went. The fighting sides were Germans and Russians. On the Germans' side were Caucasians and Armenians. And we saw all that. We saw how the Armenians lived. It was like in a war – martial laws. Everyone came in this village. They took everything – calf or chicken or cock.

They took everything for themselves, because they were so many. How many the regiments there were, I don't know, but in our house were two German officers. We had to communicate with both fighting sides. We had German officers who killed people. Germans organized special punitive expeditions. They caught partisans. The partisans communicated with the village's inhabitants, who gave them some food. And then, like in a war, there was a time when Russians attacked the village. There was a battle.

When we heard shots, I run out in the yard to see what was happening. I saw everything in a space of about one kilometre. When the Russians attacked the Germans run away, but they shot and I saw how people died. This was the single battle, which I saw. And now ... the worst thing in my life... we were three brothers. My middle brother and I were in evacuation. But my oldest brother was called in the Russian army and it was so... I was a boy and I was running around. One moment my mother called me. I ran home and I saw terrible crying and grief. It seemed like my family had got an announcement that my brother had died. It turned out that he fell in Dobele...

Emīlija Alecka

Name: Emīlija
Last name: Alecka
Born: 14 January 1924
Age: 16
City: Aizpute

Nationality: Latvian
Rank:
Assignments:
Location: Kuldīga, Pāvilosta
When: 1940

I remember... When the war started and the Germans came in Latvia, we had terrible time in Pāvilosta. It was St. John's day 22nd of June, in the morning I went out and we didn't know that the war has started. Maybe we knew, but we couldn't suspect that they were expeditionary force. I looked around and saw one ship at the horizon. There were more ships like a lot of matches behind it. I thought what is it? Who could it be? All horizon was full with them. I went back in the house and told it to my father and mother.

It was two or three o'clock in the afternoon and then the air – raid started. And then everything started... oh, my God! We couldn't talk to each other for 20 or 30 minutes. They bombarded Pāvilosta because there was spread a wrong message that expeditionary force is in Pāvilosta, but actually it was in Užava. And then it started to bombard everyone. There were horses killed and people were killed. When they threw these bombs in the sea then it seemed that the water is going up till the sun. My neighbour's was bombed down, but our house was still standing. But what did it use that it was standing? We could hang out our hands between walls and ceiling, but the roof didn't lift down. What could we do? All windows were broken. We ran to the wood and sit there. Like a rabbit I went through the dune. Dum, dum, dum... while I was running, I saw how bullets were falling down in the sands. What luck! No one of them hurt me. I didn't even lie on the ground; I didn't know how I must react. Any way bullets didn't hit me.

It was also terrible how Germans maltreated Hebrews. They didn't permit Hebrews to walk on the sidewalk. They needed to walk on the streets' part... They were so humiliated. They needed to sew a big yellow star on the back of their clothes and also in the front of them. In this way everyone could see who is Hebrew. They could go to the work, but it was only for a short time. And then it kept going till they were chased together in ghetto. Sometimes they could go to the work, but people were frightened and they new that something terrible will happen. So everything started. When it got dark, then I felt how the cried and screamed, how bet them. In such a way they started to annihilate Hebrews. It was going very long... it was very painful for me to walk past the ghetto... When I was passing it, it hurt terribly. I knew many of them from my school. Eight years I had lived there. I knew pretty a lot of them. I couldn't help them. My heart was hurting in the same way as for any person, is he small or big. The little one didn't understand why is he held there. I couldn't watch it. My conscience didn't allow it. I went through another street, so I couldn't see that horror, so long till they were all

dead. And then it started... We could hear how they were screaming and crying. They were chased in cars and people in terrible despair screamed.

Did they know where they were being taken?

They didn't know that, because they couldn't do anything, they couldn't read any newspaper; listen to the radio, they had nothing. We all knew that in Padure near Kuldigas' turning they were shot. That was horrible... Somebody said that children were taken by one leg and held like this and then they were shot.

Arturs Vīdners



Name:	Arturs	Nationality:	Latvian
Last name:	Vīdners	Rank:	Officer
Born:	14 August 1925	Assignments:	Bat. Ernests Blaumanis
Age:	18	Location:	Kurzeme's port
City:	Aizpute	When:	1943

And then the worst battle, which we had, was the Christmas battle. It started on 21st of December and finished on 30th of December. In the Christmas battle we lost a minimum of 3500 men in our sector. That didn't include the Germans, who fought together with us. There were a lot of wounded people. In that time I was assigned to the battalion of Ernest Laumanis. It was an assault battalion. Our assignment was to close braches in the battle lines, and we were located in the rear. In the night or day we were put in cars and we closed braches in an assault.

There were few people alive after the Christmas battle. Officers were fallen, and the whole leadership was fallen. We needed to manage some how, that's why those places were divided between non-commissioned officers. The Russians wanted to take advantage of it, because they had information that we were going to celebrate Christmas. And then they would take Kurzeme very easily. Our reconnoiterers had found out everything, that's why we knew what would happen. Because Russians gathered all forces – artillery and troops. Everything turned out otherwise. They were drunk in the holiday, but we weren't though we had a small Christmas tree in each bunker and in the day each man got 100 g , we were ready for hard battles. And that's how it happened. We had an officers' bunker with six rows of logs.

The lookout stayed outside and the rest of us hide, where we could. The fire was terrible. There was as much snow as now. In the morning the ground was plowed up all around, there was no snow anymore. And everyone walked around like abscessed from all these gases which came from artillery and the air. And then at two or three o'clock in the day the hard battles started. Later it turned out that in Christmas battle there were 22 Russians to one Latvian, not including Germans. They also fought against the Russians.

For what I got the first category metal cross... It was near Lestene's church. We had trenches there. It was in February. We knew that they wanted to get us out so they could get to the Liepaja's highway. They had a lot of tanks. But we had many "tank - fists". We shot with them at the infantry when we had no other choice. When "tank – fists" hit a tree or frozen ground, they exploded, but there was no effect. It was useless, it only went thru metal. We knew that a battle would start, because additional ammunition was given out. Germans stayed on the left flank and we – on the right flank. In Lestene's church we had a lookout, which

watched the enemy's artillery movement and adjusted the fire. We prepared for the battle. They started with artillery. We were cold and we went into the church. The lookouts, who had been in the tower all day, had gone down to smoke. I had a friend with whom I was together from the first day. He went into that church, but I stayed outside. Two grenades came in thru the roof and those boys who came down to warm themselves, died. My friend's uniform coat was totally destroyed, but none of the splinters hit him. In the fringe of the forest we heard a roar, we knew that the infantry would come. The fight started on the left flank. A belt stuck in our "bone saw". Ilmar and I went in the bunker. On the left sidemen were yelling that the Germans were retreating.

The Germans retreated and the Russians surrounded us from the left side. We wanted to get the belt out, because they were fastened together, so we could shoot more. That "bone - saw" had an additional barrel. When the tube got hot, then we put on the additional barrel. When we went out we saw that there weren't any soldiers in the ditch. The Russians came like eaves. We saw that the Russians were already 300 m from our ditches. Germans and all the others were running away. What to do? If we went out, then we would have inevitable death.

We made a decision - the men left the "tank - fists" there and there. Men were gathered differently. Seeing that the Germans ran away, they also retreated to the highway ditch. There we had big trenches. Ilmars and I made a decision – he went to the one flank, but I to the other. He shot 30 m on one side; I shot 30 m to the other side. Then we came back and shot some "tank - fists". So we held out four and a half hours. Even tanks didn't come out from the woods, because we shot with "tank - fists". In the evening the reinforcements came. So held 350 to 400 men.

5. SLOVAKIANS

Anna Doležalová

Name: Anna
Last name: Doležalová
Born: April 1st 1926
Age: 84
City: Tisovec
Nationality: Slovakia
Rank: None
Assignments: None
Location: Slovak Republic
When: 1944

I was so young...the Slovak national uprising started. In Tisovec there was established the mobile army surgical hospital, which was brought forward from Ružomberok. We had accepted the injured at the railway station, where they were transferred by trains. From this place we transferred soldiers to the townschool – the hospital building. They were dressed by 103 volunteer nurses. The main part of theirs had special nursery education. My mother was the oldest and one of the most experienced. She belonged to the tenders of the WW1, where she worked like nurse. This time I was only 18, but helped for all I was worth. As I can remember, the difficult cases were transmitted to Hnúšťa-part Likier.

Others were located to the building of Secondary school (the main site of hospital), to Sokolovňa, buildings of companies in Hámor, and also in the flats (called baraky) over cemetery. The young ladies without nursery education helped in hygiene, food cartion and at least with the sweet words, help to allay the pain of injured. It was horrible. We saw so much painless, misery but we were needed so we have to keep it up.

The departure of guerrillas and the repression of Slovak national uprising (cross Dielik) caused the advance of German army. The mobile army surgical hospital had to be evacuated. We picked up the injured to the trains. The hardly injured were transferred to the airport Tri duby(Slíáč), and than transmitted to ZSSR or by train to Staré Hory. Nobody could imagine that this will be so dangerous. We were in the middle of shooting by German soldiers. The people started to run but chance to rescue ourselves was very small. I was the member of group, which came out to run away. We sheltered in the mountains and there cure our heroes. We were keen on to come to our houses back. After the examination in the borough Richtárová, we were able to return. Without one tale it wouldn't be possible. We said them that we are normal people running away from the line. By foot we went to Banská Bystrica and than finally to Tisovec.

My mother (Anna Knapčoková) was the first women in Czechoslovakia appreciated by the medal of Florance Nightingale (May 1965, Prague). She died after bestowal this price one month later. She didn't fight, but take care of injured and moderated soldier's affliction. She was supposed to be also the mother of injured people.

Pavel Antal

Name: Pavel
Last name: Antal
Born:
Age:
City:
Nationality:
Rank:
Assignments:
Location:
When:

Pavel Antal, he was born on 17th June 1922 in Klenovec, here he lived his childhood in countryside , where his parents had farmhouse.

In the morning on 1th January 1945 Germans attacked their farmhouse. They took some farm animals and food. Then they went to a village where they were a few weeks. They left on 28th January 1945 and they went to Čierny Balog. On Tlstý Potok partisans waited for them and partisans defeated Germans. After defeat partisans buried Germans.

Then in 1945 Pavel Antal received a command to report in Tisovec and took food for one week. In Tisovec everybody had medical examination. Those who complied went to Poprad.

All the way to Poprad they walked. They slept in Hranomnica. Then in Poprad men assigned to The second paradesant brigade and men went to Kežmarok for a fast operational drill. After drill they gave military oath to Eduard Beneš. After oath they went to Valašské Mezirící in Czech republic and they were divided into three groups – each 120 men. Their commander was Pavel Láska. In Valašské Mezirící they fought on the front against Germans until the end of war – on 9th May 1945. After war men went to Slovakia. The journey was difficult because healthy men had to help injured men.

His family heard that he was dead and they went to Zvolen. They met him and gave him food.

After war Pavel Antal did the demining in Kremnica and surroundings, Banská Štiavnica and surroundings, Pohranská Polhora, Tisovec, Bezno, Sitno and surroundings and Zvolen.

Samuel Klenovský



Name:	Samuel	Nationality:	Slovakia
Last name:	Klenovský	Rank:	None
Born:	1917	Assignments:	None
Age:	88	Location:	Slovak Republic
City:	Klenovec	When:	1944

Samuel Klenovský (born April 27, 1917 in Klenovec) served his military service in the years 1942-1944 in the Artillery regiment 11 as a member of the quick division. He remembers that on August 27, 1944 all the important people, the notaries and illegal participants met in Z. Repášová's flat and prepared the declaration of the Slovak National Uprising. On August 28, 1944 at seven a.m. the Slovak National Uprising was declared in the yard of above mentioned Z. Repášová. On the same day Mr. Samuel Klenovský entered the Slovak National Uprising and his first duty was to go to Tepličné, announce the beginning of the Slovak National Uprising and inform about arm distribution in the Klenovec square. The interest was enormous and they were out of arms and equipment at ten a.m. Mr. Klenovský was named the chief of the rebellion storehouse of arms and equipment. The storehouse at that time was today's Town Office and it provided arms for the whole valley. There were garrisons sent out to the surrounding area from Klenovec. At the end of October 1944, due to changes in political conditions in Hungary, German forces came thereof and they fought the Slovak National Uprising. Mr. Klenovský and his garrison stood up to a German troop in Rimavská Baňa and delayed them for 2-3 days. Meanwhile, another German troop broke through at Dielik and reached Tisovec. Šuška, the chief of the Rimavská Baňa garrison, ordered his men to retreat. This was a wise decision, as it not only saved them, but also caused them not to suffer any loss. Another fight took place at Chorepa, where there were already casualties. From there they retreated to Kokava, and then further to Utekáč. German troops broke through in Rimavská Baňa and got to Kokava, and thus Mr. Klenovský's garrison retreated to a school on a hill in Skorušina. Here they picked up a report that Banská Bystrica had been captured and the central military headquarters declared a transition to partisan (guerilla) war. Chief Šuška and several of his soldiers went to fight to Nízke Tatry. On January 23, 1945, Hnúšťa and Klenovec were disengaged and the fighting front formed at the Klenovec dam. There was a German troop at Skorušina, but they couldn't escape, since Mr. Klenovský and his garrison were below them on the same hill. On January 23, 1945, the German chief sent a group of soldiers to find an escape route. These Germans met a partisan troop and there was a fight. Almost all of the Germans died in the battle. The German commanders sent no more soldiers that way. One of the partisans was killed in the fight as well. His name was J. Láska. There is a memorial dedicated to him where the battle took place.

Russian troops broke the German defence at Dielik and got to Tisovec. Soon the fights in the valley ended, because the Germans retreated very fast. Their retreat happened in the night, when they quietly passed the partisan troop, and thus no fight broke out.

Mr. Klenovský also remembers the famous Antek case, in which he was involved. There was a troop of Russian partisans in Klenovec at Tepličné, which was commanded by chief Sadilenko. One of the soldiers belonging to this troop was Antek (his real name was Antonín Vazač). He was a German spy, who intentionally let himself be captured at the eastern front and passed himself off as a Czech. Then he was sent to Slovakia as a partisan. On December 31, 1944 he did a raid in Klenovec with the help of German garrisons from Hnúšťa and Klenovec. He announced that anyone caught without a stamp in their identity card would be shot. This caused many people from the hills to come down to the village to get their IDs stamped. One of them was Mr. Klenovský. He was saved by a borrowed German textbook, which he used to prove that he's not a "German enemy". Antek sorted the people into three groups. Women and children were locked in the church, men were in the Community centre and chosen "German enemies" were in the grocery store. Samuel Klenovský and some other men spent three days in the Community centre. Others were not so lucky. Knapp from Brezovo and Ondrej Reptiš from Hnúšťa were taken to Banská Bystrica and then shot. Štefánik and Kašáni were shot in Trenčín. When the Russians broke through in Čerenčany, the Germans were retreating and taking prisoners, who were supposed to gather in the Klenovec square. Anyone who wouldn't report would be shot. Mr. Klenovský and other former partisans didn't show up, but escaped over the hills to their former troop commanded by chief Hrivnák. After the war, in Prague, Antek passed himself off as a great partisan, but he met some people from Klenovec, who remembered him very well. He was taken to Rimavská Sobota, convicted and shot.

This is the story of a direct participant in the Slovak National Uprising, Mr. Samuel Klenovský.

František Hradovský

Name: František
Last name: Hradovský
Born: 18.1.1933
Age: 71
City: Hačava - Hnúšťa

Nationality: Slovakia
Rank: None
Assignments: None
Location: Slovak Republic
When: 1944 - 1945

It was in 1944, I was early twelve, and war was raging on the whole world. I and my friends were liking play at soldiers. As we don't know how bad is war, we were very happy. In the evenings our parents and neighbours were talking, what will happen to they and primarily their children.

Around whole Tisovec it was resounding: "Front is on the move from Ukraine towards the west!" Roller skates and cannons what were pulled two or three horses were removing in the streets, what was very interesting for us, little boys.

We children were peddling "Zvesti tisovskej posádky" ("Tidings of garrison of Tisovec"), what was one-letter newspaper. It were returning news from front. There were messages ,for example, how many rebels increased, whether took some German or partisan prisoner in newspaper. I remember it costed one cone. It were pressing at about eight am a they were giving us from a hundred to a hundred and fifty pieces of newspaper and we were selling its to surroundings. We were travelling by train and when we showed him a card what we gave, we did not need pay for ticket as far up as Rimavské Brezovo. In the train and in villages we were selling Zvesti tisovskej posádky.

In our midst was "kitchen" again. It happened a cook switch on little lamp and started cooking. Grandma once saw him. He took out a little meat, dusted of straw and threw dirty meat into pan with a water. When grandma saw it take him to task and together with my mammy well cleansed meat, grind it and made hamburgers (fašírky). Since this day soldiers have gone to grandma and wanted hamburgers (fašírky).

In the square located wood house, where we used to play after exit of Russians. It was a winter and it was cold. We wanted to start fire in the fire-place in the middle of room. In the top was opening so we had to look inside. We found German magazines and at bottom whole strip of munition to submachine-gun. If we had started fire, I would not have tell these stories.

Michal Bagačka

Name: Michal
Last name: Bagačka
Born: 18.6.1921
Age: 84
City: Rimavská Baňa

Nationality: Slovakia
Rank: None
Assignments: None
Location: Brezno
When: 1942

Mr. Michal Bagačka was a soldier and he was captured by Germans. They went from Tisovec to Polhora... A cort and everything stopped. My friend Koncoš and I devided that we run away. We enterd the some yeard and then we run to the barn. It was far, but fortunately nobody saw us. We took a haystack we hid. One old woman came and said: 'I know, that you are here, so I bring you clothes and food, because men are wearing dresses of women there. Germans don't meet you.' We put on the clothes and went to opposite side. This woman weited us there. We entered the house, where was warm. It was at 12 o'clock. We stayed here all time and evening a small boy came and said: 'Mrs., Germans are looking for men!' Fortunately I observed a cellar on the floor in the kitchen, where they stored potatoes in past. I opend a cover and both jumped there. They closed the cover and sprinkled the floor. It was like washing. We were very quite in the cellar. There were a lot of mud, because they didn't use it. We heard that Germans entered: 'Nicht partizan?' and when he saw it is poor house he left. So we went out...

Michal Bačačka



Name:	Pavel	Nationality:	Slovakian
Last name:	Lehotský	Rank:	
Born:	1915	Assignments:	
Age:	25	Location:	Slovak Republic
City:	Dekýš	When:	1944

I was born on the 5. September 1915 in a small village Dekýš. In 1937 I joined the army to basic military duty to Ipeľské Šahy as a border guide. Later I was regraded at to artillery. During the II. world war I stayed there. When Slovak national uprising was coming, two divisions were earmarked to Karpaty. I was incorporated to second division with a command in Vyšná Radvaň. After the commander left I was appointed to be a commander of artillery battery. As the commander I worked near Medzilaborce and I had an observation post in Radošica near Polish border. Battery was in Palota, the last village on the area border between Slovakia and Poland. Slovak soldiers started coming to partisan resistance. At the end of August in 1944, immediately after the break out of Sloval national uprising I and my battery got to German captivity. We were kept near the village Zbucké Dlhé for a few hours. A command lieutenant of SS was Austrian. He helped us to escape. 200 soldiers escaped. 104 men of us applied to pierce on the insurgent territory. The others left fore home. Germans shot to us. I transported 104 men to Horehronie. When we were marching, we got to Vyšná Sitnica to partisan colonel Šukajev. From there I left with artillerymen to Ružomberok, but before our arrival the town was destroyed and we were diverted to Brezno. I stayed in Brezno, where I drilled new artillerymen. I drilled 4 groups and with last I left for Červená skala and to Telgárt. On 3rd September Germans came to Červená skala. They caught one sentry duty. Five men were immediately shot and others had to dig their graves, than they jumped into the graves. They gave on their head helmets and they buried them and they beated them with battons. Soldiers started to fight. We pushed out Germans from Telgárt to Besník and there we hid and we didn` t let the Germans to Telgárt and propeled them to Pusté Pole, to Vernár and to Hranovnica and to Kvetnica. In Kvetnica we had a warehouse, but we succeeded to drive only 30 cars and we were deprived of ammunition and fighting material. There were fierce fights to 23rd October. On 23rd October I was injured with shrapnel from unfriendly garnet. I had injury on my head and under the knee. Citizen of troop looked for me. Mist helped them, because it stoped fascist troops. On 25th October Germans were in Brezno and than they went to Banská Bystrica. When I cured I left to Poprad, where reservists concentrated. From there I was delegated to Kežmarok to artillerymen, but to antitank battery. From there to 4th division to Martin and from there to Banská Bystrica, to Selce, where soldiers were meeting . There we got instruction to march to south of Slovakia. At first to Topoľčany, to Nové Zámky and to Levice. In August 1945 we got to Banská Bystrica. On 11th November 1945 as

a commander antitank battery I had exampled shooting. After that I went home, but at home I was only for 3 days, because I got telegram, that I must to go to show exampled shooting. To young generations of our country I wish that they would never experience any war.

6. SPANISH

Bonifacia Isabel Martín



Name: Bonifacia Isabel
Last name: Martín
Born: 5 June 1922
Age: 14
City: Madrid
Nationality: Spaniard
Rank: None
Assignments: None
Location: Madrid
When: 18 July 1936

I am Bonifacia Martín Isabel.

When were you born?

In 1922. At that time I was 14.

So, you were 14 years old.

Just 14. I was 14 on June 5th and the war started on July 18th.

What did you do? You were a child.

A child? I carried water to houses for just several coins, “por dos reales”. With my mother. My mother swept and... worked hard, struggled against difficulties.

Can you remember how our country was before the war started?

Very bad. It was very poor. In my village, at least, the only ones who lived well were the rich families. Workers were workers and if you protested against this situation you were contested.

Were there many conflicts in your region during the war?

Yes, there were. When the war started in my village there were a lot of shootings. I had two cousins who were executed this way: ta, ta, ta... And I lost three cousins. One of them, because he worked as a guard for a wealthy family, like us. The other two, my father’s nephews, because they owned a bar and upstairs they studied and held “Acción Católica” meetings.

My mother sold newspapers, “El Debate” and “ABC”. The day the war started I was there and I went to collect the packet of newspapers, which was taken to the village by coach. My mother told me not to go to fetch them, but I have always been very..., I went there, took the newspapers and began to distribute them. Then I was taken to a blind alley, I was hit, the newspapers were burnt and I went back home. We were pursued because my family worked as guards in a rich house. They said we had priests and nuns hidden in big barrels. We suffered so much.

Churches were burnt, priests were killed, nuns were also killed, a woman was killed just because she helped the poor and she was wearing a big crucifix round her neck.

Listen, when the war started, all the young men in my village were taken to the front. Two months later almost all of them had died. Once, a she-ass gave birth to a little donkey, and all the neighbourhood ate the poor just born animal. The donkey's owner was so upset.

...I have eaten potato peelings, washed and then fried, I have eaten clean and fried banana skins...so, we had to look for anything we could eat. And when there were animal viscera, you hurried to get animal blood to boil it and eat it.

...They came from El Berrueco to my village to sell fire-wood, a woman used to sell wood to my mother. Once that woman gave some food to a cousin of mine, and after the meal, he relaxed and spoke. And he told her that he had killed two of his own cousins. When the war was over, that woman came back to our village and she went to my aunt's shop. My aunt's sons were the ones who had been killed. As they were friends they had lunch together in the backshop. There, she told her about what she had known, though the woman didn't know that my aunt's sons had been murdered. My aunt asked her if she was sure. She was. My cousin was already in prison for another crime.

"Would you mind speaking to him again?" She asked.

"No problem" She answered.

They went to the prison, and the prisoner was confronted with the woman.

Sometime later there was a military judgement and my aunt claimed that he wasn't sentenced to death, because even if he had murdered two of her sons, he was still her nephew and she didn't want him to die, but she didn't want to see him nor his sons in the village again.

What would you say to our students about war? Is it worth?

No!, Another war!, I would tell them to live and enjoy as much as possible, to become good men, and never fight in wars, with guns or rifles. They should enjoy life and work hard, and leave arms in a bag, forgotten in a bag. And rancour? None! The war in Spain was caused by rancour and revenge. You are richer than me? Then I am going to harm you and try to become even richer than you. That was the Spanish Civil War.



Name: Carmen
Last name: Chicharro
Born: 1924
Age: 12
City: Madrid

Nationality: Spaniard
Rank: None
Assignments: None
Location: Madrid
When: July 1936

Her father was a shepherd in a small village. This is the story of her suffering and survival. Today, her daughter is a teacher at Humanejos Secondary School in Parla.

You can remember how the war started. What happened in your village?

We didn't know why that was happening. A day we saw several columns of soldiers getting near along the road... but we didn't know the reason why. In the village nobody knew why, we didn't read newspapers, there wasn't a radio...

How did you live before the war?

Very well, very well. In poverty, as usual at the time, but very well and we were very happy.

And when the columns of soldiers arrived, everything changed...

Of course.

And the troops, which party did they support?

We lived in both zones, national and republican. That's why we had to be evacuated from our village, because the front (and fighting) was exactly there. The national (right party army) arrived from one side and the republicans (left party army) came from the other.

When you were evacuated, where did you go?

We were taken to Sigüenza (a larger village near there).

Then, was all the population taken to Sigüenza, or only several families?

(Each one...) next day we had to get on a lorry and they said: "To Sigüenza!" because the following day the front was going to be there. The

nationals came from Atienza and the others, the red (comunist) troops came from Sigüenza.

Where did you live in Sigüenza?

Men from the committees went there and asked for the keys of empty closed houses. You can imagine the situation, maybe the owners of the house were living on the first floor and refugees on the ground floor, in their house. Owners didn't want us to be there.

And when you went back to your village...how did you live?

Very bad, because my father was captured; a prisoner, the poor man who had never voted anybody and who didn't know anything about right or left parties. He had lived in the mountains with his sheep, so happy, and he was sent to prison for two years. My mother, with six sons and another one she adopted because he had nobody to look after him and we took him to our house... and we didn't have anything to eat. And we were lucky because we kept what we had at home, the hens and a pig.

That was the saddest! We were average children, on Sundays we used to wear our best clothes, but during the war we didn't have anything to eat, we became beggars. They said "My daughters, you have to go and beg". And I was already 12 and I had my friends, and I had to go begging from one house to another. That, that hurt us a lot, it was terrible, terrible. We didn't want to go, all the brothers clutched together and we claimed we didn't want to go out, we didn't want to and my mother didn't want to send us to beg.

We wrote a letter to Soria, where my father was kept, to tell them about our situation, my mother asked them to release my father, she told them that her daughters had to beg... but she got no answer from the nuns.

Of course, my mother had to send some of us to take care of children, others to keep cattle, sheep or goats, just to get some food.

In the village there was another family, the Curras, with a similar situation. They were even more unlucky. They remained in the village, while we left. And they were all sheltered in their house, and when the nationals were arriving, their father, a thin tall and strong man went out and was killed and in front of his daughters,... they told us about it.

Then the Germans came.

There were German soldiers in the area. And Italian?

Italian too. But Germans came always in a hurry, they cooked in the square and fed the troops, then they told us to take a pot if we wanted some food. Our own neighbours told them that they shouldn't give us any food as we were "red" (comunists), but they answered that we were just children, and we weren't guilty even if our parents were. And they gave us food.

Josefa Domínguez García



Name: Pepita
Last name:
Born: November 25th, 1924
Age: 12
City: Madrid
Nationality: Spaniard
Rank:
Assignments:
Location: Madrid
When: July 1936

I was born in Madrid on November 25th, 1924.

How old were you at the time of the war?

I was about to be 12 years old.

What did your family do at the moment?

My father was just a worker.

Do you remember why the war started, its causes?

General Franco incited to rebellion against the republican government, which had been legally constituted.

What happened to you when you were 11 years old?

When the war started, on July 18th, they wanted to keep children and women away from the conflict, because men were mobilized and taken to the front.

You were evacuated, weren't you?

I was evacuated. I was taken to Torrevieja, a town near Alicante . I was 11 or 12.

We were evacuated to a residence which was in fact a psychiatric clinic called Sanatorio Psiquiátrico de Nuestra Señora del Carmen. It was very big. There were about 300 people there.

How was life there? Were you happy?

I remember it as a happy time because we played a lot in the residence. I can remember we went to a large chapel every morning and the teacher taught us there.

I had come back to Madrid because my father fell ill. I didn't return there again, as he died and I became an orphan.

How was life in Madrid ?

At the time, you can imagine, there were a lot of queues to get food. Hunger.

Is there any event you remember in particular?

Once I was very frightened. My step-mother's sister lived in Desengaño Street , near the "Telefónica" building (which was one of the main aims for the national Army artillery), they were doorkeepers there. And a day I went there in the afternoon to get something, then a long unconceivable bombardment started. We took shelter in the cellar of the house. There was an underground passage which even crossed the street.

When the war finished my father's brothers had to go into exile: one of them went to France , the other took the last ship from Alicante and went to the North of Africa and then to Mexico . And he could never come back to Spain . He had the dream of coming back. I still keep his letters and, in them, he said he wanted to come back, under an amnesty, so we could embrace, but he couldn't. He was 86 when he died. He had been an active member of the republican administration.

Do you think the war was useful?

No, it was worthless.

What would you say to our students about the war?

That they should never think of wars. Only about peace and hard work. That they should never think of wars. Only about peace and hard work.

Jesús Higuera



Name: Jesús
Last name: Higuera
Born: 1917
Age: 86
City: Madrid
Nationality: Spaniard
Rank:
Assignments: Priest
Location: Madrid
When: July 1936

Can you tell us where you were born and when? What was your occupation at the time of the Civil War?

I am from Madrid and I was born in 1917, so I am 86 years old now. My occupation at the time? I was a seminarist, I was doing my studies to become a priest. When the war started I was 19 or 20 years old. The reasons why it all started; it was a big problem coming from long ago. First and most important, because of the huge differences among the social classes, then the growing anticlericalism and the lack of freedom even for those who claimed for freedom. No freedom was accepted for the ones who thought differently. That's obvious. There was no tolerance. In Madrid the war started because there was a rebellion at the Cuartel de la Montaña and they were defeated. The conflict had started in North African colonies two or three days before, then it came to Spain. In Madrid everything began with the attack to the Cuartel de la Montaña on July 20th, 1936. I can't forget it. I was at home on holidays and we lived this situation so much. My father was a policeman and he liked order, as it was said at the time, and when he arrived home we were all upset because he came with his gun, a rifle, and he threw it away and said: "we've lost". I had to serve in the Army because of my age. And I was almost all the war in the Teruel campaign.

Why did you fight for and with the republicans?

It wasn't a matter of ideas but of the place you were in. Those who lived in a territory led by the "nacional army" were considered as belonging to it, those who were in an area ruled by the republicans, formed the republican army. It was called "the red army".

How was life in the front?

For me it was always trying to hide my true ideas. If I wanted to survive, nobody should know I was a seminarist.

How was daily life far from the front, in the rear?

Life out of the front was hunger, tremendous hunger. People was very hungry. And those who did not support the republicans were very frightened. I remember that every dawn we heard the shooting of executions in La Casa de Campo. We were afraid of bombs. Once I was at home, my uncle was in the balcony and a

bomb passed over his head, it went through the wall into our flat, and it finished in the ground floor; we were very lucky it didn't explode. We were afraid because we supported the right or "national" party and if they had known it we would have been killed. There was a clandestine, secret church.

Was there any event which impressed you the most?

I was deeply shocked when we were getting near Teruel and we saw lots of families leaving their villages, running away with their donkeys, their household furniture... Then the execution of the ones who had protected the Seminary of Teruel, when they left they were shot. The executions by shooting in the comunist area were terrible. I have also known that something similar happened in the national area.

In your opinion, was there a reason to begin a civil war?

I remember I spoke to the bishop when the war finished: "There is no reason enough to justify war" I said.

Carmen Varela Alarcón



Name: Carmen
Last name: Varela Alarcón
Born: 1926
Age: 10
City: Madrid
Nationality: Spanish
Rank:
Assignments:
Location: Madrid and France
When: 18th July 1936-1939

My name is Carmen Varela Alarcón. I was born here in Madrid , in Tetuán de las Victorias . There were many strikes, long queues for bread, shortage of bread and work. And my father, maybe he belonged to somewhere, I don't know. There was uproar, mainly due to work.

When the first bomb fell, it was 11 P.M., we were already in bed. We went out barefoot and in combination, as we had no nightdresses. We all went out full with fear.

And "where are the two little girls?" And they were in their cradle, wrapped up, but with pieces of glass everywhere, and a lot of noise, we had a real fright.

My father's family and one brother went towards the front. In the end we stayed together my mother, the twins, another sister and me. The rest, 2 brothers, were taken to the nursery to Valencia . My mother, the twins and me left Madrid . When they bombarded, I was just 10 and I took the girls, one in each side. And if my mother went out to buy I was left alone.

When we arrived to the French border we were put into a coach and we crossed together with a school, and for 3 or 4 days we went up and down on a train. People came and gave us cheese, condensed milk through the windows. We had a bad time until we were taken to some big barracks, with the straw the kind given to horses.

After war a lot of the family left, some to Mexico . I was about to leave for Russia , but something happened so I couldn't in the end.

My mother didn't know we were coming, as it was unexpected. A young man accompanied us and we arrived at 7 or 8 PM, on New year's eve.

And so, "have you got two daughters in France ?", he called, moving aside."Yes", "Would you like to see them?". And my mother, "sure I would". "Then here you've got them". The same as in a soap opera. What great joy! And my mother had sardines and garlic soap that night. Out of money, lights off for not paying. And she gave us her dinner that night.

It is horrible, a war. Hunger, fear, poverty, lice, anything, mange, we got it. I remember rubbing myself with a scrubber to make it spring up and I applied some ointment on the wound and ... plenty of misery in a war.

Well, my idea is for youngsters always to converse, first with the family, with the teachers, with everybody. What you cannot do is get angry, turn your back, slap the door and go. Neither with the parents and the teachers, nor with the superiors and even the government. Because, what is the use of insulting each other? None.



Name: Jesús	Nationality: Spanish
Last name: Chaparro Aranda	Rank: Soldier
Born: 1919	Assignments:
Age: 17	Location: Guadalupe - Talavera
City: Turleque, Toledo	When: July 1936- Nov. 1942

My name is Jesús. I was born in Turleque, Toledo . What I did for a living was setting traps for birds, to hunt them and so buy some bread to eat.

Why did war begin?

Well, it was Franco who roused to revolt, not us. We won the elections in 1936, but as we, the poor, were so weak, so Mr. Francisco franco roused to revolt. And I have suffered a lot for that, I have been 40 months in jail and afterwards 29 months in a workers batallion, just for being left-wing.

I had the misfortune of losing my mother at 10, and then at 16 my father was killed by a train. We were 5 siblings when my mother died, me the eldest, aged 10. And my mother’s mother took care of us.

I was in the war for 14 months. I was in Guadalupe front, my 1st battle-front. Later we retired to the province of Toledo , to Talavera de la Reina .

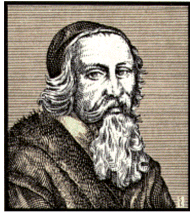
Memories from the battle-front, well, we were having a rest in Caudete de la Jara , the whole brigade, when the 47th company of the “nationals” started to attack. We had to dig a trench of about 10 metres long. We were taken a meal after 24 hours and we joined to eat at the plate, 5 from the squad and the male nurse. They shot a projectile to the plate and another projectile coming and it ended up in the plate. Then the one at my right side had both legs cut off another one was hit in his bottom and the male nurse had his neck cut off.

I was judged the 13th September 1939 and sentenced to 12 years and 1 day. The very same day 3 years later I was informed of the sentence. From that moment on Franco’s warrant was to set free everyone with a 16-month-sentence. I was set free on 24th November 1942.

What I have to add about the judge I have mentioned before. He wanted me to confess to have killed 10 people. That is why I was beaten so badly. This eye got blind for 20 days. And besides a blood gush out of my ear, so the floor got stained with blood as if a pig had been beheaded.

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