



NJHSA Holocaust Survivor Services Professionals

Effective Strategies and Tools for
Working with Holocaust Survivors from the FSU

Cultural Biases, Differences & Service Provision

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Holocaust Community Services, CJE SeniorLife

August 25, 2022

- Founded in 1999 as an inter-agency program of the **Jewish United Fund (JUF) of Metropolitan Chicago**
 - JUF oversees grant administration and fundraising

- Administered by **CJE SeniorLife**

- **HCS** provides holistic services for Holocaust survivors including:
 - Financial Assistance for home care, medication, food, emergencies
 - Case management & counseling
 - Socialization & events
 - Support groups & wellness classes
 - Reparations assistance
 - Education & advocacy

Program Overview

Snapshot: January - July 2022

Total survivors served: 1,948

- **Financial: 1,818**
- **Non-financial: 116**
- **Attrition: 125 (96 died)**
- **New: 78**
- **Wait list: 14**

In 2021...

HCS SERVED

2,100 clients

who received financial aid, reparations assistance, socialization and educational events, support groups, counseling, wellness classes, and resource help

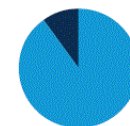
including
1,904

who received financial assistance to pay for food, medicine, personal care, or one-time emergency needs,

75 of whom were new clients



20%
of HCS clients are age **90+**
Clients range in age from
76-105



More than 90%
of survivors served by HCS
with financial and/or psychosocial
support are from Nazi-occupied
territory in the former Soviet Union

***Most Jews Weren't Murdered In Death Camps.
It's Time To Talk About The Other Holocaust.***

by [Izabella Tabarovsky](#) & [Yehuda Blum](#)

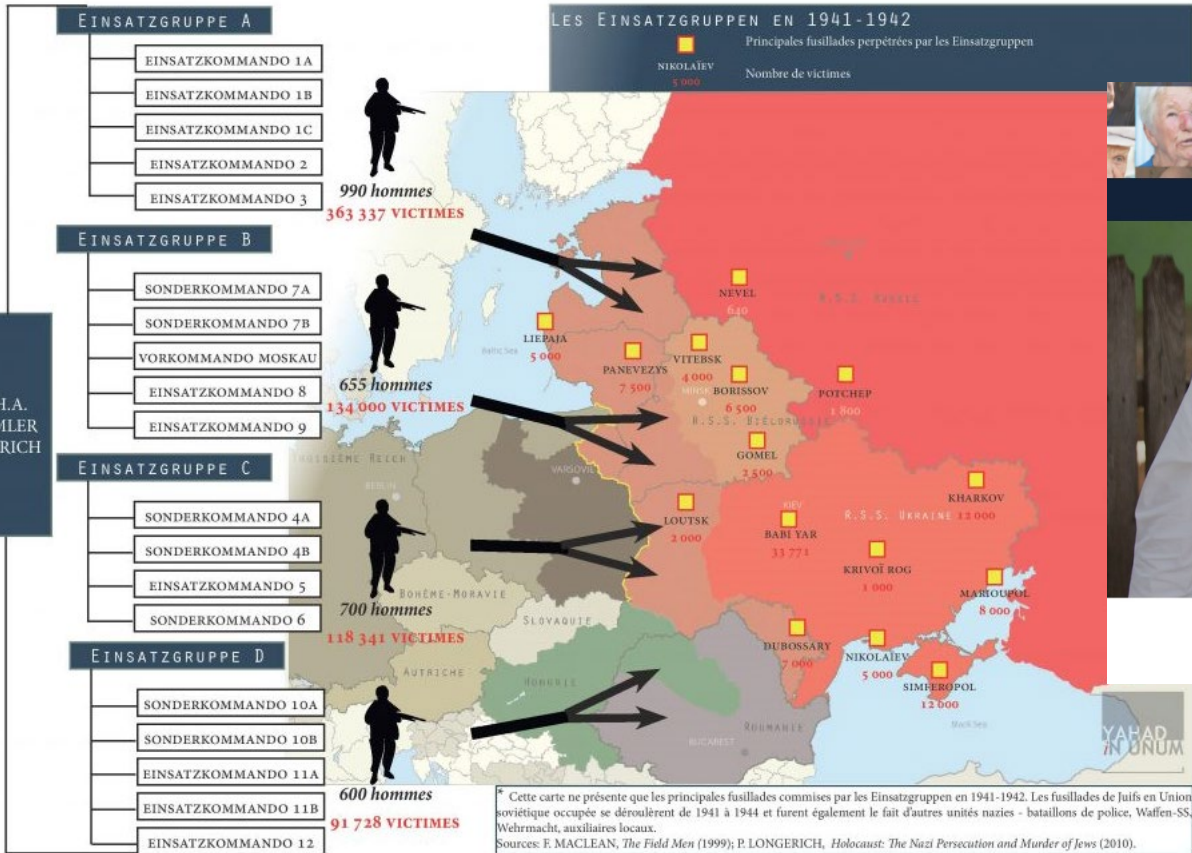
The Forward, June 12, 2019

“Somehow in telling the story of the Holocaust, we have managed to leave out half our dead. We’ve told ourselves half the story. And while the material objects from the Holocaust in the USSR may be gone, the bones of the victims are still there. They lie in unprotected graves, they get in the way of commercial construction projects as they did recently in Belarus, and they get desecrated.

We need to start incorporating these stories into our collective memory.

And we need to start thinking of them as our own.”

Holocaust By Bullets



FATHER PATRICK DESBOIS

<https://yahadmap.org/#map/>

Holocaust Survivors from the FSU in the US

OPERATION EXODUS **'NEVER AGAIN' IS NOW.**

- Following years of “Refuseniks”
- Effort by the American Jewish community
- Raised \$1 billion (1989-97) to rescue Soviet Jews.
- **“Never Again is Now”**

Chicago’s efforts brought over 35,000 refugees from the FSU between 1979 and 1995.

**Many Soviet Jews born before 1944 were persecuted on Nazi-occupied territory.
They are survivors.**

Section I

Cultural Perspectives & Differences

Section II

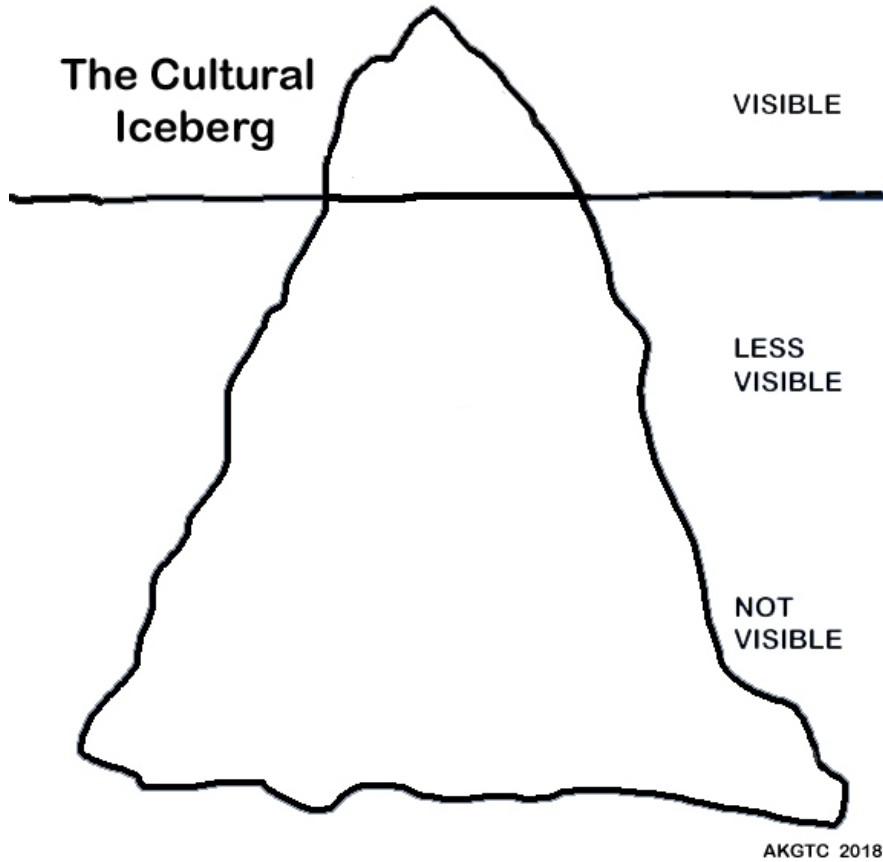
Service Provision through a Cultural Lens & Legacy Building

Cultural Perspectives & Differences

Identifying Russian-Speaking Survivors

- Often difficult to obtain information from Russian-speaking survivors about their pasts
- Many Russian-speaking survivors do not identify as survivors
 - “I am a child of the war.”
 - “I survived the war.”
- Ask simple questions and look for clues
 - Place or date of birth
 - Date of immigration to US
 - Religion
 - Languages spoken and accented/no English
 - Presence or absence of same-age family members

The Cultural Iceberg



FSU Survivors: Cultural Differences

– “Triple Trauma”

- War years
- Life under Soviet regime:
 - Not recognized as survivors of Holocaust/anti-semitism
 - Decades of poor health service, scarcity of resources
- Immigration at later age
 - less acculturation with regard to language
 - unable to work in their professions
 - Stigma associated with immigration

FSU Survivors: Cultural Differences

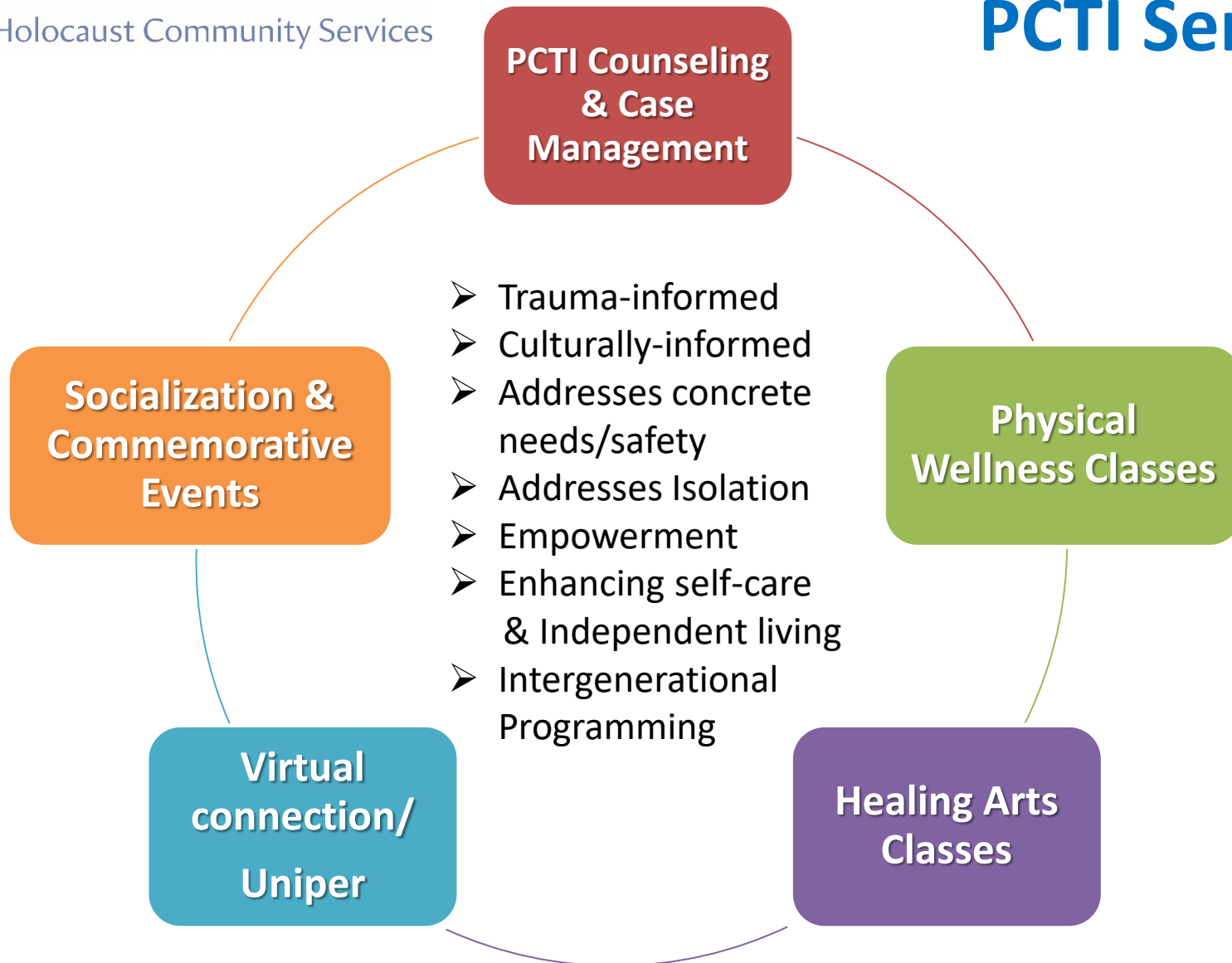
- **Accustomed to Soviet cultural norms, which differ from those in the US**
 - Collectivity vs. Individualism
 - Equality
 - Respect for authority
 - Mistrust of authority
 - Cautious and conservative
 - Proud of their accomplishments

Service Provision through a Cultural Lens & Legacy Building

Information Gathering and Cultural Triggers

- Once an individual is identified as a Holocaust Survivor, it is important that care providers explain how the survivor's personal information will be used
- Be sensitive to the fact that during the Soviet era, many Russian-speaking Jews were mistreated by their government
- Questions about religion/ethnicity may be triggers
- Privacy and perceptions make a difference

HCS Non-Financial PCTI Services



- Communications
 - Bilingual staff
 - Documents (consents, waivers)
 - Marketing (flyers, invitations)
 - Trigger words
- Consideration of cultural/style differences
 - Formal dress & language
 - Power of hierarchy
 - Power of media
 - Volunteerism & philanthropy
 - “Assertive coping”

- Social Services

- Maslow's Hierarchy
- Reframing in consideration of biases (e.g. against counseling)
- Balancing equity and individuality

- Programming

- Events & support groups (e.g. Russian Tea Time)
- Building & strengthening Jewish identity – inclusive of all identities
 - Holidays, Jewish calendar, Israel
 - Lifecycle Education (e.g. end-of-life rituals)

- **Education and awareness**
 - ILHMEC
 - Professionals
 - Synagogues, Jewish Orgs
- **Commemorations**
 - Babi Yar
 - Yom HaShoah
 - Victory Day
- **Legacy & Intergenerational Projects**
 - Museum partnerships
 - 18 Under 18
 - Schools (e.g. BZAEDS partnership)
 - USC Shoah Foundation & Yahad-in-Unum

Legacy Projects & Commemorations



NJHSA Showcase 9/21/22
1:15-2:00 CST



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

cje SeniorLife 
Holocaust Community Services

ONLINE & ON-SITE PROGRAM

Commemoration: 81st Anniversary of Babiy Yar



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 5:30 PM (CDT)

Join CJE SeniorLife Holocaust Community Services and Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center (IHMEC) for an evening with **Dr. Martin Dean**, renowned Holocaust historian, author, former war crimes investigator, and researcher with the Babiy Yar Holocaust Memorial Center. Dr. Dean will examine the complex history of the Babiy Yar ravine, where more than 33,000 Jewish men, women, and children were murdered in just two days. Incorporating new research, witness testimony, and images from a 3-D model curated by the Babiy Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, Dean will reconstruct the landscape as it existed on September 29-30, 1941, and describe the route taken by the Jews into the ravine.



This gathering will include music by internationally renowned cellist, composer and vocalist **Ian Maksin**, remarks by Holocaust Community Services and IHMEC; the launch of **Volume II of Never Heard Never Forget** – a new collection of narratives in memoriam and honor of Chicago Russian-speaking Survivors; and a candle-lighting ceremony with local Survivors. The program will be conducted in English with simultaneous Russian translation. A virtual viewing option will be available.

Complimentary docent-led tours of IHMEC's gallery focused on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union will run from 4:00 – 5:15 pm. The program will start at 5:30 pm. A link will be sent to all registrants for the virtual program 24 hours before the commemoration.

This commemoration is free to the public.

Register: <https://ihm.ec/babiyyar2022> or call HCS Event Line at 773-508-1166 by September 19

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29th
5:30 PM (CST)

ONLINE & ON-SITE

Commemoration: 81st Anniversary of Babiy Yar

Dr. Martin Dean

Holocaust historian, former war crimes investigator, researcher with the Babiy Yar Holocaust Memorial Center

Ian Maksin

internationally renowned cellist

Volume II of Never Heard Never Forget
Book launch

Candle-lighting ceremony
Survivors and descendants

Register: <https://ihm.ec/babiyyar2022>



NEVER HEARD NEVER FORGET

Stories of Victims & Survivors of the Holocaust
in the Former Soviet Union

Volume II

Table of Contents

- Evacuation Journey
- Fragments of Memory
- Ghetto
- Jewish Fighters & Resistance
- Places of Mass Killings
- Saved by the Righteous
- Stories of Death & Survival

[Never Heard Never Forget | CJE.net](http://NeverHeardNeverForget.org)



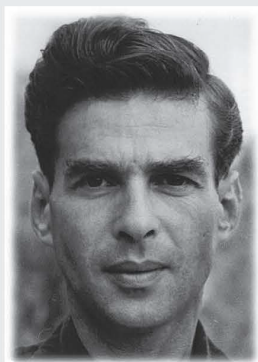
ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

cje SeniorLife 

Holocaust Community Services

Gershon Hoffman

The story of Gershon Hoffman, father of Yonit Hoffman, was told partly in a letter he wrote in October 1945, months after he was liberated on April 23, 1945, on the seventh day of a death march from the concentration camp Flossenburg to Dachau. He had been deported from his birthplace, Hamburg, Germany in November 1941, and he did not arrive in Flossenburg until August 1944. In the three years and eight months in between, he survived a harrowing and brutal existence—first in the Minsk ghetto in Byelorussia and then, after the ghetto was liquidated in 1943, in six labor and concentration camps on the journey from Minsk back to the Bavarian region of Germany. Below are the excerpts of his letter, which describe his experiences in the Minsk ghetto.



Gershon Hoffman (1964) | Гершон Хоффман (1964 г.)

Hamburg, Germany, October 22, 1945

On November 8, 1941 we received a so-called "Evacuation Command" from the Hamburg Criminal Police Dept. Within two days we had to show up at a building of the Gestapo for the purpose of evacuation to the East. All our furnishings, other inventory and other assets including bank accounts, etc. was naturally confiscated, once this order was received. When we left our home, we were to leave our keys at the nearest police station. We were allowed to take with us about 100 pounds of hand luggage per person. That was the beginning. On November 11, 1941 we departed from Hamburg (1500 men, women, and children) strictly guarded by police. The ride itself was still bearable, and we had no idea yet as to what was awaiting us. On November 15th we arrived in Minsk (Byelorussia). To the left and right of the train we saw SS troops standing in a close chain. The train stopped, and we were chased out of it with whips. The first shots were heard—that was our reception. We saw the first corpses. We were loaded on trucks, and they drove us to probably the most primitive and poorest area of Minsk. There we saw our future Ghetto. Typical Russian miserable barracks. We unloaded and were permitted to look over our new living quarters. The huts had been occupied until then by Russian Jews who also were chased from one living quarter to another. But two days before our arrival, they were murdered! We heard this from a few survivors who had been hiding in basements to escape a sure death. They sneaked between houses in fear and tried to save some of their last belongings. Here and there shots were heard everywhere. It was a heart-wrenching sight to be seen. At the moment we were unable to comprehend this all. Soon we could speak to a Russian Jew of the office concerning the elderly (Aeltesturat). He told us that in order to make room for us, two days before our arrival, 28,000 Russian Jews were shot. We were completely shaken by emotion. Among the murdered were men, women, and children.

There was not much time for us to brood about it. Soon the order was for all new residents to appear. We were led to a place where there were rolls of barbed wire and wooden poles stored. Under the supervision of SS guards, we had to surround our living area with barbed wire. Naturally it had to be finished in speed and needless to say, under fear of beatings. Meanwhile, our women had begun to clean the miserable barracks. These houses, if one can even call them houses, had been constantly lived in by various people in recent months. There were constant changes. The result was a continuous chasing around of those tortured people who had to await death on a daily schedule. Rarely in life had we ever seen such filth as we found here. The



Gershon Hoffman with parents (1925)
Гершон Хоффман с родителями (1925 г.)



Identity Card from Bergen-Belsen DP Camp (1945)
Удостоверение личности из Bergen-Belsen DP Camp (1945 г.)



Gershon Hoffman with Yonit Hoffman (1964)
Гершон Хоффман с Энит Хоффман (1964 г.)

Гершон Хоффман

История Гершона Хоффмана, отца Энит Хоффман, была рассказана в письме, написанном им в октябре 1945 года, через несколько месяцев после его освобождения 23 апреля 1945 года. Это произошло на седьмой день марша смерти из концлагеря Фlossenбург в Дахау. Он был депортирован с его родины в Германии, города Гамбурга, в ноябре 1941 года, а прибыл в Фlossenбург только в августе 1944 года. На протяжении этих 3 лет и 8 месяцев он пережил мучительные и жестокие лишения — сначала в Минском гетто в Белоруссии, а затем, после ликвидации гетто в 1943 году, в шести трудовых и концентрационных лагерях на обратном пути из Минска в Баварию, Германия. Ниже приведены выдержки из его письма, которые описывают его страдания в Минском гетто.

Гамбург, Германия, Октябрь 22, 1945г.

В ноябре 1941г. мы получили так называемый «Эвакуационный Приказ» от отдела уголовной полиции Гамбурга. В течение двух дней мы должны были собраться в здании гестапо с целью эвакуации на Восток. Вся наша мебель, все вещи, счет в банке, естественно, были конфискованы, как только этот приказ был издан. Когда мы уходили из нашего дома, мы должны были оставить ключи от дома в ближайшем полицейском участке. Нам разрешалось взять с собой 100 фунтов ручного багажа на человека. Это было начало. 11 ноября 1941 года мы ушли из Гамбурга (1500 мужчин, женщин и детей), строго охраняемые полицией. Этот путь был пока сносным, мы не знали, что нас ожидает.

15 ноября мы прибыли в Минск (Беларусь). Слева и справа от поезда мы увидели войска СС, стоящие в плотной цепочке. Поезд остановился и нас выгнали из вагонов с помощью хлыстов. Раздалась первая выстрелы — это был наш прием. Мы увидели первые трупы. Нас погрузили в грузовики и повезли, возможно, в самую бедную и примитивную часть Минска. Здесь мы увидели наше будущее гетто. Типичные русские жалкие бараки. В этих лагучах до этого находились русские евреи, которых также перенесли из одних жилых кварталов в другой. Но за два дня до нашего прибытия их убили. Мы услышали об этом от нескольких человек, которые выжили, спрятавшись в подвале, чтобы избежать смерти. Периодически они выходили из убежища и пытались найти что-нибудь из их собственных вещей. Тут и там везде были слышны выстрелы. Это было разрывающее сердце зрелище. В тот момент мы не могли понять все происходящее. Вскоре мы смогли поговорить с русским евреем из службы, занимающейся стариками. Он сказал нам, что для того, чтобы освободить место для нас, за два дня до нашего прибытия 28 000 русских евреев были убиты. Нас буквально трясло от переживаний. Среди убитых были мужчины, женщины и дети.

У нас не было времени размышлять об услышанном. Вскоре было приказано собраться всем новым жильцам. Нас повели к месту, где хранились мотки колючей проволоки и деревянные столбы. Под наблюдением охранников СС мы должны были окружить нашу жилую зону колючей проволокой. Естественно, это должно было быть закончено быстро, и, конечно, под страхом избития. Тем временем, наши женщины начали чистить ужасные бараки. Эти дома, если эти строения можно назвать домами, были постоянно жильем для разных людей в течение последних месяцев. Жилцы постоянно менялись. Люди были измучены постоянными преследованиями по любому поводу, они, словно, вынуждены были ждать смерть по ежедневому

Thank you!

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