

FOUR BROTHERS SHOT ON THE SAME DAY

by
Donald N. Miller

For a number of years I had heard of the Krieger brothers from the village of Martynovka, Volhynia, Russia. I was told by several aunts, who lived in Zhitomir until their retreat with the German Army in 1943, that in 1937 “the Krieger boys” were all arrested on the same day. They were carted away in a black van, imprisoned for a brief period and then shot on the same day within two minutes of each other. One of them, Daniel Jacob Krieger, was my uncle. All four brothers worked at what was in my parent’s day (1911-1927) the flourmill in Rudnia. The building, though remodeled, is still standing to this day. It is now a butter and cheese factory. In my numerous trips to Ukraine over the last 22 years, I have visited the factory many times, watched the big tankers bring in the milk from the local collective farms and toured the facilities on several occasions. Each time I go there, I am reminded of the fate of the Krieger brothers.

Recently while in a special department of the State Archives in Zhitomir, I came across their files. I literally wept, especially when I read what happened to Daniel Krieger. I thought of Maria, my aunt, who fled to Siberia shortly before her husband’s final arrest with their two sons, Leonard and Hartwick and their daughter, Adela. About a year and a half later in 1939, Maria suddenly died of blood poisoning and her three small children were parceled out to relatives. Adela went to live with one of my other aunts, Ottilie Eschner, who had also fled to Siberia, and eventually came to live with us on our family farm in Camrose, Alberta, Canada.

While in the archives, I had time only to scan the files and make a few brief notes. When Eugene Timirajev, who heads up the special commission to research and publicize the names of all those arrested in the Zhitomir Oblast from 1920 to 1986, heard of my interest in the Krieger brothers, he graciously researched their files and prepared the following document:

“In 1937 four brothers were arrested in the village of Martynovka:

1. **Krieger Daniel Yakovlevich**, born on May 22, 1900, native of the village of Popravka-Vigoda, Pulin volost, Zhytomir district, Volyn province (presently village of Vigoda of the Zhytomir district, Zhytomir region, Ukraine), nationality, German, a descendent of German colonists, illiterate, non-party. Married, spouse, Krieger (maiden name Miller) Maria Mikhailovna, age 28. Children, two sons named Leongard, born 1929 and Gartvikh born 1931 and a daughter name Andry (*author’s note: actually Adela*), born 1936. At the time of his arrest he was employed as a woodworker at the Rudyna dairy, Pulin region. He was arrested on July 15, 1937 by the Pulin Region Department of NKVD. In 1930 he was disposed of his private property. The said person previously had been subject to two repressions. He had been sentenced to four years with

repression of voting rights for five years in accordance with the judgment of the Pulin People's Court as of October 19, 1931 under Article 58-1 of the UkSSR Criminal Code. In 1935 he was re-arrested for anti-revolutionary activities.

2. **Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich**, born 1908, a native of the village of Popravka-Vigoda, nationality, German, a descendant of German colonists, a well-off peasant, illiterate, non-party. Married, spouse, Krieger (maiden name Radatz) Yevgeniya Albertovna, born 1909. Children: a daughter named Druziliya, born 1930 and a son named Shtal, born 1936. He was a resident of the village of Martynovka, worker at the Rudnya dairy. In 1931 he was arrested for an attempt to cross the Soviet-Polish border. He was under investigation for two and a half months. He was arrested again on July 15, 1937.
3. **Krieger Arthur Yakovlevich**, born 1909, a native of the village of Popravka-Vigoda, nationality, German, a descendant of German colonists, literate, non-party, single, mother, Martha Karlovna, age 60. Resident of the village of Martynovka. Job, warehouse keeper at the Rudnya dairy. In 1934 he was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison with repression of civic rights for two years for forgery of documents in accordance with the judgment of the Pulin People's Court. He was released in 1936 before he served the entire term. He was again arrested on July 15, 1937.
4. **Krieger Albert Yakovlevich**, born 1916, a native of the city of Omsk, Akomolin Province, Russia (presently Omsk region). Nationality, German, a descendant of German colonists, literate, non-party, single. Resident of the village of Martynovka. Job: stoker at the Rudnya dairy. In 1932 he was expelled from the Lenin Communist Union of Youth of Ukraine (LKSMU) because his brothers Daniel, Jakov and Arthur attempted to cross the border. He was arrested on July 15, 1937 by the Pulin Regional Department of the NKVD.





“On August 23, 1937, the investigation of the Kriegers’ case was completed and they were officially charged under Article 54-10 of the UkSSR Criminal Code for maintaining contact with the Baptist preacher, Miller Genrikh (from the village of Martynovka, arrested), and the Baptist preacher, Banzmer, Adolf (moved to the USA in 1928). Their case was sent to be reviewed by the ‘troika’ (court of three) in the Kiev Regional Department of NKVD.

“On August 28, 1937, the ‘troika’ of the Kiev Regional Department of the NKVD issued an indictment (Minutes No. 29) charging the Krieger brothers with ‘*being members of an anti-revolutionary group that was actively rebelling against the Soviet power by holding illegal gatherings of citizens attended by anti-revolutionary-oriented persons living in Zhytomyr to discuss issues concerning activities aimed at undermining the Soviet power; and promoting anti-revolutionary and Fascist views among the local population of German origin aimed at persuading them to leave abroad*’ and resolved to execute them. In accordance with this indictment, the judgment was enforced on September 19, 1937. It has been ascertained that Krieger Albert Yakovlevich was executed at 12:12 a.m., Krieger Daniel Yakovlevich at 12:14 a.m., Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich at 12:16 a.m. and Krieger Arthur Yakovlevich at 12:18 a.m.

“In January 1958 Krieger Gartvikh Danielovich, the son of the repressed Daniel Krieger, residing on the State farm in ‘Kauk-Su,’ in the district named after ‘28 Panfilovtsy,’ Taldy-Kurgan region, Kazakhstan, filed an inquiry with the Correctional Institution Headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning his father. In February 1958 he received a reply stating that Krieger Daniel Yakovelevich and his brothers Jakov, Arthur and Albert were sentenced in 1937 to a ten-year term in a correctional institution and died while serving the term: Krieger Daniel Yakovlevich on May 20, 1941 of a heart attack, Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich on September 19, 1943 of pneumonia, Krieger Arthur Yakovelvich on June 18, 1943 of liver disease and Krieger Albert Yakovlevich on March 25, 1942 of cancer.

“In May 1989 after the promulgation of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR as of January 16, 1989 ‘*On additional measures of rehabilitation pertaining to the victims of repressions of the 30s, 40s and 50s,*’ Ilya Krieger filed an inquiry with the Zhytomyr Department of the KGB about his father, Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich and grandfather Radatz Albert Ivanovich. He received a reply containing the true fate of his father Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich and grandfather Radatz Albert Ivanovich, who were repressed in the 30s.

“In November Krieger Aleksandr Gartvikhovich, residing in Kazakhstan, filed a similar request inquiring about his grandfather and his brothers. On November 6, 1989, he was informed about his grandfather and his rehabilitation and received certificates registering their death resulting from executions in 1937.

“Krieger Yakov Yakovlevich was rehabilitated in accordance with the pronouncement of the Zhytomyr Chief Prosecutor as of April 22, 1989, stating that the case falls under Article 1 of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR as of January 16, 1989. That day the same pronouncement pertaining to Krieger Daniel Yakovlevich was issued. Krieger Arthur Yakovlevich and Krieger Albert Yakovlevich were rehabilitated on May 4, 1989.

“All of the above information is based on materials of the scientific editorial board ‘*Rehabilitated by History*’ kept in the State Archives of the Zhytomyr region, prepared by the chief of the Signature (Timirajev). Date: July 19, 2002.”

I have submitted this article for publication in the SGEE Journal for several reasons. Perhaps, first and foremost, is my own need to find healing and closure regarding the mysterious disappearance, and in some instances brutal death, of extended family members during the Stalinist Reign of Terror. For reasons I cannot explain, I am strangely drawn to the sufferings of my forefathers in Volhynia. I feel an affinity with them. First, there was their deportation to Siberia, then the dispossession of their land, followed by their excruciating hunger during the man-made famine of 1932-33, and finally, there was their arrest, imprisonment and, in some instances, execution. In some ways, it’s a story that has yet to be told. It is also a story that is still unfolding with the return of a number of my relatives, now several succeeding generations, to Germany from Siberia and Kazakhstan. In the process of tracing their steps, I am not only finding healing for myself, but discovering long lost family members, all of which is very interesting and rewarding.

Beyond that, I have an interest in seeing others find out what happened to their loved ones who disappeared during Stalin’s reign. You can, of course, visit the State Archives in Zhitomir, Ukraine yourself or write to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But a more practical and cost effective way is to have a reliable researcher dig out the information for you. I know of just such a person who can help you. His name is Alex Brzhezitsky. Alex, until recently was an adjunct university teacher in Zhitomir. He speaks, reads and writes five or six languages

fluently, including German, and has proved himself to be a reliable researcher and translator for me personally. He now serves as national field director of Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine, a humanitarian organization, which I founded in Ukraine in 1993. In his spare time, he is available to do the above kind of research.

The cost for his services is nominal to research the records, extract the basic information, translate it and send it to you by e-mail within 14 working days. (See example of the kind of information you will receive by going to page 9 of the December 2002 issue of the SGEE Journal). Alex is also available to garner additional file information and/or to translate materials from the file. If you are interested in pursuing research of a repressed family member, you can contact Alex directly at quaki@mail.ru

Finally, this article can serve as a vehicle toward greater understanding of the political climate in the Zhitomir Oblast during the 1930s and 40s and the inner workings of the Soviet government through their secret services, the GPU, NKVD and later the KGB.

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