

SERIES TREATMENT

THE LITTLE GENERAL

A Vertical Micro-Drama Series in Two Seasons

Based on the unpublished wartime memoir of Robert B. Becker
"The Little General" (Part I) • "Liberty or Death" (Part II)

Prepared for VOD Distribution

Prepared by Vertical Future Inc.
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CONFIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT DRAFT — NOT FOR EXTERNAL CIRCULATION

Adapted from a real survivor's personal testimony

(Becker)

A Note Before the Pitch

This treatment adapts Robert B. Becker's own unpublished, first-person memoir — an apparently unfictionalized account of surviving the Holocaust in Poland and the lawless year that followed it. Real names. Real towns. Real camps. Before a page of this reaches a platform, three things need to happen, and this document is written on the assumption that they will.

1. **Life-story rights.** No final deal is closed, packaged, or optioned until approved/cleared with his estate/representatives. This is his testimony, not public-domain material — and several other real, nameable people (Irka's family, Hilda, Marek, Bruno) appear in it as well.
2. **Historical accuracy and sensitivity review.** We will provide for a Holocaust historian, and ideally a Polish-Jewish history consultant (POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Yad Vashem, or an academic equivalent) to review this treatment and the eventual scripts before they lock — especially the ghetto, gas-chamber, and postwar-violence sequences.
3. **Genre calibration.** “Microdrama” as a format is built for addictive hooks and shock-value cliffhangers — the wrong instrument for education on the worst genocide in modern history. This treatment borrows the format's serialized, vertical, mobile-first structure and its gift for momentum (Robert's own exploits are a genuine thriller), but the atrocity material should be handled with restraint: no cliffhanger tease built out of the gas chamber, for example. We will save the hook mechanics for where they've been earned — the ambushes, the heists, the romances, the betrayals.

This is an exceptional, largely unadapted true story with a clear Polish spine, genuinely rare material for this format. The full treatment follows.

Logline

At thirteen, a Jewish boy from a small town on the river Bug survives the ghettos, a forced-labor camp built around a gas chamber, and the murder of nearly his entire family — then vanishes into the forests of occupied Poland to become a teenage partisan fighter so audacious that both sides of the war start calling him “The Little General.” When Germany finally falls, he thinks the worst is over. He is wrong: the soldiers who liberate him arrest him as a spy and ship him to a Siberian labor camp — and his fight for a life worth living is only half finished.

Source Material

- “The Little General,” a two-part unpublished autobiographical memoir written by Robert B. Becker, a Polish-Jewish survivor known in his hometown by the nickname “Belek.”
- Part I — “The Little General”: prewar childhood on the river Bug; the 1939 invasion; ghettoization; forced labor at a camp built around a gas chamber near Sobibor; the murder of his parents, grandparents and brother; and roughly two years as a teenage partisan fighter in the forests of occupied Poland and Belarus, including a wartime romance that ends in tragedy.
- Part II — “Liberty or Death”: the lawless months after Germany's surrender — postwar antisemitic violence in Poland, Becker's work smuggling Jewish refugees toward Palestine, his wrongful arrest and 20-year Gulag sentence, his escape, and a second romance and marriage in occupied Berlin.
- The original manuscript written by Robert E. Becker in the US, which runs 202 pages and ends mid-narrative, with Becker deciding to emigrate to the United States. There is no epilogue and no account of his later life — flagged below under “Open Questions.”

- Recorded interviews with Robert
- Interviews of his family members, his wife, daughter and grandchildren for more modern scenes of his life post-immigration

Why Poland — and Why This Story, For a Polish Platform

This is not a Holocaust story with Poland as scenery. Poland is the spine of it — in ways that matter specifically to a Polish platform and a Polish audience.

The geography is real and Polish, start to finish

The river Bug, the towns of Chełm and Hełm, the Sobibor region, the ruins of wartime Warszawa, the postwar refugee corridor through Szczecin — these are places a Polish audience will recognize by name, and places a production can plausibly shoot in or near.

Its most important supporting characters are Polish rescuers

The unnamed farmer who was Becker's father's friend hides four fugitives in his barn at the certain cost of his own life if discovered. Irka's family — Polish, Christian, rural — take Becker in as one of their own, plan an interfaith marriage for him and their daughter, and, even after an unbearable tragedy (below), still try to adopt him as a son. These are Righteous-gentile figures placed at the emotional center of the show, not its margins.

It corrects a real, recurring irritant

International media has a long, well-documented habit of calling Nazi extermination camps built on occupied Polish soil “Polish camps” — a framing Poland has fought for years to retire. The memoir itself is unambiguous: the camps, the gas chamber, the SS and the Gestapo are German. This series should be equally unambiguous, on screen and in marketing — German perpetrators named as German, Polish rescuers named as Polish. A Polish platform has a direct interest in a series that gets this right, loudly, rather than leaving it to others to get wrong.

It doesn't flinch from the hard parts — which is what makes the rest trustworthy

The memoir also records Polish wartime complicity (a bounty system paying Gentile informants in sugar for turning in a Jew) and one specific, ugly postwar incident: ten Polish youths executing five Jewish refugees in the street after the war in Europe had already ended. A series that holds both the farmer's family and this incident, without softening either, earns the trust it is asking of its audience — including a Polish audience that has had enough of both hagiography and caricature from outside treatments of this history.

It's an adventure story that happens to be true

Becker is a fighter, not only a victim — a boot-shiner and dog-handler who becomes a decoy-rifle ambusher and partisan commander before he turns twenty. That register — closer to a war-thriller than to classroom testimony — is a different commercial proposition than most Holocaust drama, and a better fit for a serialized, momentum-driven platform.

Format & Platform Fit

- Vertical (9:16), mobile-first, serialized — positioned as a “prestige” tier within the micro-drama format rather than the disposable-romance norm.
- 60–90 second episodes, closing every episode on a hook or reveal.
- 20 seasons, 10 episodes each
- The story could continue with his life in the US where we go into more depth than the occasional flashback and the story of his children and grandchildren carrying his legacy

Season	Title / Episodes	Covers
Part 1, season 1-7	THE LITTLE GENERAL~70–80 episodes	Prewar life on the river Bug through the partisan war years and a devastating homecoming, ending on Becker's arrival in the ruins of Warszawa.
Part 2, season 8-14	LIBERTY OR DEATH~55–65 episodes	The lawless peace: refugee smuggling, wrongful arrest and Gulag imprisonment, escape, and the Hilda romance — ending, as the manuscript does, on Becker's decision to leave for America.

Character Guide

Name	Who They Are	Arc / Function
Robert “Belek” Becker	The narrator; 13 at the story’s start	A boy who survives by making himself useful, then indispensable, then feared — a forced-labor “mascot” turned partisan legend, “The Little General.”
Pesa	His younger sister	Escapes the ghetto and camps at his side for years; killed on a mission to reach the Warsaw Ghetto.
Jack & Joe	His two closest boyhood friends	Fellow escapees and fighters throughout Season 1.
Sara	His first love, in the ghetto years	A tender, brief wartime romance established early in the story.
The Farmer (unnamed)	His late father's friend, a Polish farmer	Shelters Becker's group at mortal risk — the series' first Righteous-gentile figure.
Irka	A Polish farmer's daughter	Becker's fiancée and the great love of Season 1; killed in a devastating accident (see “Sensitive Beats”).
Irka's Parents (unnamed)	Her Christian farming family	Embrace Becker fully, including after Irka's death — offer to adopt him as their son.
Adasz	A Gentile boy in the partisan unit	Becker's early rival for a rifle and status, later a comrade.
Cola / “Mishka the Cossack”	Soviet partisan officers	Command the merged partisan-Soviet unit in the war's final year.
Igor	A Russian fellow Gulag prisoner	Becomes Becker's protector and found-family during the Siberian escape.
Marek	An old partisan comrade, later a border guard	A morally gray ally in the postwar smuggling operation.
Bruno	A German ally in Berlin	Loyal partner in the Berlin-to-Hamburg refugee-smuggling run.
Hilda	A Jewish cabaret dancer and survivor	Becker's postwar wife; their marriage is the emotional throughline of Season 2's back half.

Part 1 Structure — “The Little General”

Twelve seasons, each roughly 8–10 vertical episodes, tracking the memoir's own escalation from occupation to open partisan warfare.

Movement	Episodes	What Happens
1. Before the Blitzkrieg	1–4	A childhood on the river Bug, ended by the German invasion.
2. The Ghetto	5–14	Family torn apart, forced labor, a bounty on Jewish lives, first love with Sara.
3. The Gas Chamber	15–20	A camp built around a gas chamber; survival by becoming useful to the SS; a near-annihilation inside the gas building, and escape.
4. The Train Window	21–26	Family reunion, a second forced-labor posting, a cattle-car escape, and finding his parents and grandparents murdered.
5. Into the Forest	27–36	Recruitment by partisans, a rifle heist gone wrong, and a solo ambush with a hand-carved decoy rifle that earns him his nickname.
6. Irka	37–44	A farm, a romance, a promise of marriage across a religious divide.
7. The Raids	45–54	Depots burned, a disastrous attack at Chelm, a sub-camp liberated.
8. The March to Warsaw	55–58	A failed rescue mission toward the Warsaw Ghetto, and Paula's death.
9. The Accident	59–62	A gun-cleaning tragedy kills Irka and her brother — the season's most devastating turn.
10. Crossing the Bug	63–70	Joining Soviet partisans, a hunger strike, sabotage missions behind German lines.
11. The Refugee Caravan	71–76	A perilous river crossing escorting civilians, hunted by Ukrainian nationalist raiders.
12. Homecoming	77–80	A final battle, the Red Army's arrival, a mass grave with no names, and Warszawa in ruins.

Part 2 Structure — “Liberty or Death”

Movement	Episodes	What Happens
13. Stettin	81–86	Refugee relief work; a postwar attack on a Jewish family; police release the attackers the next day.
14. The Smuggling Trade	87–92	The first runs to Berlin, disguised in a stolen Soviet uniform.
15. Betrayed by the Liberators	93–98	Arrest on fabricated spy charges, a sham process, a boxcar to Siberia.
16. Escape	99–106	The Gulag; Igor; a village that risks itself to feed and free them; a run through the taiga.
17. The Long Way Home	107–112	A repatriation train; a shooting over frozen potatoes; a street execution the night he crosses back into Poland.
18. Berlin	113–122	Stolen trucks, bribed border guards, an American army chaplain's intervention, and a Hamburg run to a ship bound for Israel.
19. Hilda	123–132	A whirlwind postwar romance, marriage — and its slow unraveling under the weight of the ruined economy.

Movement	Episodes	What Happens
20. The Promised Land	133—140	The decision to divorce and emigrate — the manuscript's own ending, left as an open door for Season 3.

Sample Episode Breakdown — Episodes 1–12

Drawn directly from the memoir's opening pages, to demonstrate how the vertical format's hook mechanics apply to this material without sensationalizing it. Full episode breakdowns for the remaining 128+ episodes would follow the same structure once rights are confirmed.

#	Title	Beat	Episode-End Hook
0	Pilot	Robert is plagued by nightmares, he keeps seeing his teenage sweetheart get shot and his wife convinces him to visit a psychologist, who in turn convinces Robert to write down his story	We still don't know whether Irka survived
1	The Boy Who Fished the Bug	Thirteen-year-old Belek's peaceful life on the river Bug — fishing, daydreaming of playing soldier.	The ground shakes: the first German planes cross the river.
2	Market Square	The Gestapo herds the town's Jewish families into the square and starts sorting them into lines by age.	Small children are loaded onto horse-drawn wagons and driven away — no one will say where.
3	The Walk to Hansk	Two hundred people, Belek among them, are marched 30km to an open field with no shelter, food, or water.	Within a week, half the camp is dead of exposure. Belek decides he will not wait his turn.
4	Six of Twelve	Belek and eleven friends make a night run for the treeline.	Gunfire cuts through the group — only six reach the forest alive.
5	The Chicken Coop	Belek sneaks back into the ghetto to find his family, hiding out until the streets go quiet.	Not one face in the passing crowd looks familiar anymore.
6	It's Me, Your Son	Belek reaches his family's window in the dark and calls softly to his father.	The Gestapo is already watching the house.
7	Forged Papers	The Jewish council forges work documents; the family survives raid after raid.	A new order arrives: 100 men are needed at a camp near Sobibor — and his father's name is on the list.
8	In His Father's Place	Belek volunteers to go in his father's place, certain it means his own death.	The camp gate closes behind him.
9	The Boots	Starving and beaten, Belek risks a bullet to shine a guard's boots with coal-dust and water.	By morning, every guard in the camp wants him — and it might just save his life.
10	The Dogs	Promoted to caretaker of the camp's police dogs, Belek steals their food and wins the guards' guard down.	He can now walk almost anywhere in the camp — including near the one building no one ever leaves.
11	Ten Thousand	A trainload of 10,000 new arrivals means the existing workers — Belek among them — are marched to the gas building.	The steel door is swinging shut.
12	Turn Back	Feet from the door, something breaks in Belek and he claws backward through a line of naked bodies.	He's out — and now he has to outrun dogs that know his scent, alone, in the open, at nightfall.

Sensitive Beats — Handling Notes

The memoir contains several sequences that a vertical-drama pacing instinct would normally milk for shock value.

Recommended handling for each:

- The gas chamber sequence (Ep.~15–20): is not to be used for cliffhangers.
- Polish wartime and postwar antisemitic violence (the sugar bounty, the postwar street execution of five refugees): depict specifically and accurately as documented, attributed to named actors where the text names them (Polish nationalist attackers) — never generalized and always shown alongside the specific, sustained kindness of the farmer's family and Irka's family, exactly as the memoir itself balances both.
- The Gulag arrest: play as the season's central irony — liberation by one totalitarian power immediately followed by persecution by another — rather than as a simple extension of Nazi-era suffering. This is the story's most surprising, least-known beat and its strongest marketing hook for an audience that thinks it knows how Holocaust stories end.

Tone & Visual Language

- Ghetto and camp sequences: restrained, handheld, natural light; silence used for dread rather than score stingers or jump-scares.
- Partisan-war sequences: kinetic, faster cutting, genuine thriller/heist energy — the decoy-rifle ambush and the dog-handling routine are legitimately clever, tense set pieces that can carry the show's episode-to-episode momentum without touching the atrocity material.
- Season 2's Berlin and Gulag material: postwar noir — checkpoints, bribery, forged papers, black markets — a tonal shift the audience should feel immediately.
- Avoid throughout: romanticized or fetishized violence, and any structural implication that suffering is being staged for engagement metrics.

Audience Positioning

This story can plausibly reach two audiences a single title rarely reaches at once: the mobile-native micro-drama audience (built-in escalating stakes, forbidden romance, betrayal, a teenage protagonist who keeps out-thinking impossible odds), and a broader, older Polish streaming audience hungry for serious, homegrown historical drama told with pace rather than a classroom register.

Suggested marketing line: “The true story of the boy the Nazis couldn't kill — and the country that hid him.”

There is also a plausible second life beyond commercial VOD: festival and educational-partnership interest (museums, schools, Holocaust remembrance programming) that a typical micro-drama title would never generate — worth scoping once rights are secured, but not a reason to delay or dilute the commercial pitch.

This treatment is a creative and structural blueprint only. It should not be circulated externally