

organized by the partisans. For the heroism that he displayed, Lunin was awarded the Partisan Medal, 1st Class, and the Order of the Red Star.

Based on what we know from the partisans and the surviving inhabitants of Minsk, the liquidation of the Minsk ghetto was organized in the following way:

In accordance with the plan drawn up by the Gestapo ahead of time, they first moved the Jews from one residential district. This area, which was now "liberated," was excluded from the ghetto. Then they moved the barbed wire barriers to the next district. In this way, they removed block after block from the ghetto, which became smaller and smaller.

They took the Jews away to Trostyanets and Khasonovshchina, not far from Minsk. These two places were also the site of mass killings of Jews. They brought them there in enormous groups of five or six thousand people, stripped them naked, and drove them into a ditch, after which motorcyclists with machine pistols would drive up and down the ditch shooting these unfortunates. They covered the dead and wounded with a thin layer of earth, whereupon they smoothed the burial site over with tractors.

Not long before their retreat from Minsk, the Germans began driving Soviet POWs to Trostyanets and Khasonovshchina, making them drag out the bodies of the slaughtered Jews and burn the remains.

The advance of the Red Army was so rapid that the German mobile gas vans did not have time to complete their diabolical work, and several thousand bodies remained in stacks in the uncovered ditches.

GARF f. 8114, op. 1, d. 958, ll. 15–15ob. A typewritten manuscript.

46. They were dealing in children

ACCOUNTS OF MARIA GOTOVITSEVA, MARFA ORLOVA, AND FENYA LEPESHKO
RECORDED BY A. VERBITSKY

When the war broke out, hundreds of Minsk's Jewish children were in summer camps, kindergartens, and nurseries. On the very first day of the war, many children were evacuated from Minsk to surrounding villages, where the threat of bombing and strafing did not seem as great as in the city. Many of the Jewish children stayed in the camps and nurseries, too, along with Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Russian children.

After taking Minsk, the Nazis paid no attention for a long time to the children who were wasting away, concealed in hiding places and orphanages. In the summer of 1942, it came to the attention of the local fascist authorities that there were many Jews among the unsupervised, orphaned mass of youngsters. So they decided to go about liquidating thousands of young Soviet citizens.

The gassing buses or mobile gas vans fished Jewish children out of the streets, courtyards, hospitals, and orphanages. Children filled the enormous vehicles. The Germans tossed piles of small bodies into ditches in the village of Bolshoy Trostyanets.

Some were alive, still breathing. Several were crying out, but the plans for fascist banditry included the burying or burning not only of the dead, but of the living as well; this was how they dealt with the children, too.

The extermination of Jewish children went on for many months. They drove small children away to Trostyanets—to their deaths—on the slightest suspicion or denunciation. In the spring of 1943, an entire barracks full of children was discovered in one of the ruined collective farms in the Minsk region. They had been left to fend for themselves. The peasants had been bringing them things; seven-year-olds had been looking after three-year-olds. Many of them had perished from cold and hunger.

The Germans burst into the barracks and made it their first order of business to find out from the children which of them were Jewish. The children were so small that they were unable to say anything in reply. Unable to sort the matter out, the Gestapo decided to kill [all] the children. They loaded them onto freight cars and sent them to the Minsk train station. There the children suffered without food and water for two days. Three of them tried to escape into the city, but the Germans shot them down. What the German fiends were waiting for, no one knew.

They decided to make use of the crying mass of youngsters by holding a sale. News that the Germans were selling children at the train station quickly spread through the city. Heartsick women made their way toward the station. It was an unbelievable auction. The Germans disposed of the children for twenty-five or thirty marks apiece. The women would select a youngster, put their money down on a German overcoat, then take the child. Belorussian women rushed to save innocent children from the clutches of the Nazis.

Here is what was told to us by Maria Gotovtseva, who now works at the Minsk radio factory:

"I was at the train station by chance. The Germans were beckoning people in, appraising the children, haggling. I saw one old woman, weeping and sighing, take away two little girls. When most of the children had been sold, the Germans began letting the orphans go for ten marks. The children were crying, holding out their little hands, as though saying: 'Buy us, otherwise they'll kill us!'"

Minsk native Marfa Orlova, who lives at 42 Gorky Street, showed us a four-year-old boy whom she had bought at the station that morning for twenty marks. Orlova is looking after the child and hopes that little Yuri's parents will return soon and collect their son.

At 26 Torgovaya Street, we saw a Jewish girl of six and a boy of five or six who had been bought from the Germans for fifty marks. The children are being looked after by Fenya Lepeshko, the mother of two sons at the Front.

"You see this child?" says Fenya Lepeshko. "He's already smiling now, he's blossomed. But when I took him in, he was almost dead. He didn't speak, all he did was moan and call out for someone. I thought he'd die, and here he's survived, the little trooper. I couldn't even tell you what his name is or how old he is. Ignatenko, the lady

just next door, bought a four-year-old girl from these scoundrels. She was very sick. The poor little thing didn't pull through. She died."

GARF f. 8114, op. 1, d. 959, ll. 197-199. A typewritten manuscript with handwritten corrections.

47. Minsk Hell

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF THE TEACHER SOFIA OZERSKAYA

At the end of June, when the fascists landed their troops in Minsk, I was in the country with the children on their summer holidays at camp. Along with the rest of the camp staff, I was concerned most of all that the children be returned to their parents. I myself was unable to get out of Minsk before the Germans arrived.

In the first days of their occupation of Minsk, the Germans set aside twelve small streets as the Jewish ghetto and herded Minsk's Jewish population of 75,000 into it. And that was not all. They also brought in Jews from every small town and collective farm in the Minsk region. In unimaginably cramped quarters, amid the ruins of bombed-out city blocks, on the ashes of burned-out houses with collapsed roofs and gaping holes where once there had been windows, thousands of unfortunate, hungry creatures trembled with fear.

At first, the fascist barbarians had the idea of erecting a high wall around the Jewish ghetto, and had already begun hauling in the bricks, but then they gave up on the idea and limited themselves to running barbed wire around the Jewish quarter.

It was forbidden for Jews to leave the ghetto. When, on rare occasions, a Jew received permission to go into the city, he was forced to wear a special patch on his chest, a yellow circle no smaller than ten centimeters in diameter. Any Jew who showed himself outside the ghetto without this mark was subject to death on the spot. Any Nazi could kill any person who looked to him like a Jew violating this rule. And no small number of Russians, Poles, and Belorussians perished because the fascists had taken them for Jews coming out into the city without the yellow patch on their chests. But even this badge did not always save a Jew from death. On the contrary, it often served as a target for the foul bullet of a fascist.

To mock their unfortunate victims, the fascists offered them "self-government" in the form of a "Jewish Council." The ghetto, in fact, was outside the rule of law, and the "Council" was given only one right: to count the number of Jews killed, the number who had fallen at the hands of the crazed enemy. Sometimes the "Council" was granted one additional "right"—that of organizing the looting of the poor, destitute Jewish population. From people who had lost all of their property in air raids, fires, and endless rounds of robbery, they demanded that they bring several thousand knives, forks, and spoons, then several thousand articles of warm underwear and clothing, then dishes, pots, and pans. And all of it by the thousands, and all of it under the threat of death!

Alongside the organized looting, unorganized looting flourished as well. No more than a few hours each day would pass before this or that Nazi unit would burst into the ghetto and, making the rounds of these pathetic quarters, snatch everything that came to hand.

No one even thought about protest or resistance. People were happy if they stayed alive during these endless plagues of locusts. Submissiveness did not help anyone much, though. Not a single bandit raid passed without a blood sacrifice. Irritated by the fact that there was nothing to steal from the impoverished residents, the Nazi youths let all their bile flow out in murders and bloody acts of violence.

One of the forms of organized mass murder of Jews was the system of special concentration camps for Jewish men. The Nazis created dungeons in the form of labor camps, where in systematic fashion they killed scores of innocent people on a daily basis. It was known in the ghetto that to be sent to the so-called concentration camps was tantamount to inevitable death.

The fascist beast knew no bounds in his striving to exterminate the Jewish people. Not confining themselves to the systematic, day-in, day-out extermination of Jews, the fascist barbarians organized particularly grandiose massacres on Soviet holidays.

On November 7, 1941, on the anniversary of the great October Socialist Revolution, large armed units of fascists broke into the Jewish ghetto at 5:00 A.M., surrounded five of its twelve blocks, and herded everyone into the street—men and women, the elderly, and children. The howls of mortal fear and horror, the cries of desperation, the weeping of children, and the sobbing of women filled the surrounding areas and could be heard throughout the city. The fascists chased the crowd in its many thousands onto a nearby square, where they formed them into columns and then, after loading them onto trucks, transported them out of town. There, by the old German cemetery, outside of Kalvaria, long deep trenches had been excavated ahead of time with the help of dynamite. Several days before that, rumors had been going about in the city that these trenches had not been dug for no reason at all, that the fascists were preparing mass murder. But the human brain refused to believe in the possibility of such an atrocity. However, the foray of the Nazi bands into the Jewish ghetto and, most important of all, the dispatch of many thousands of people in the direction of the trenches, unsettled the whole of Minsk. Many Russians and Belorussians who had friends and relatives in the ghetto rushed there to see for themselves if the rumors that had reached them were true, and became witnesses to the savage treatment meted out to defenseless people. Many—and I was included in their number—followed the trucks on foot right up to the place of slaughter. What we saw there makes us tremble from horror to this day.

When the enormous crowd of Jews condemned to death by the Nazis had been assembled beside the trenches, the German soldiers began throwing them in while