

wounded, and half-dead tumbled into the ditches. Afterward, the ditches were filled in with earth. These slaughters were carried out once a week, without fail, on Saturdays.

They collected children who had survived their parents, more than two hundred of them. They took them by the legs and slammed their heads into stones or pillars.

The whole city was horrified, in deep gloom from these unheard-of atrocities.

Throughout the summer of 1942, the Germans were bringing Jews from Western Europe to Minsk. They were supposedly bringing them to work. The Jews arrived with suitcases and handbags. On the Mogilev Highway, eight kilometers from Minsk, there is an abandoned military base. That was where they took the Jews from Western Europe. They dug ditches, and the Germans, so as not to waste cartridges, gassed them. They drove them up to the ditches in hermetically sealed vehicles and tipped out the corpses of those who had been asphyxiated. They sent us there to pick up pieces of lumber, and I struck up a conversation with one of the Jews working there. He said that he had been brought from Czechoslovakia.

In August, 1942, I managed to escape.

Yefim Leyno

March 14, 1943

GAJF f. 8114, op. 1, d. 956, ll. 184–185. A typewritten manuscript. Ehrenburg archive, vol. 2, ll. 139–142. Signed.

52. The gassing of inhabitants of Minsk in mobile gas vans and the shooting of Minsk Jews

STENOGRAM OF THE INTERROGATION OF A GERMAN OFFICER NAMED JULIUS RAIHOF

JULY 21, 1944

FROM THE DOCUMENTS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY STATE COMMISSION

Interrogation begun in Minsk at 1:00 PM, on July 21, 1944.

Q: What do you know about the truck known as the mobile gas van, its construction, and how it was used?

A: While stationed in the village of Menyatino, Spassk-Demensk district in Smolensk Region,²⁰ I had occasion more than once to meet the commander of the field gendarmerie of the German 267th Infantry Division, Oberleutnant Evald Homaier. In a conversation with him at the officers' mess of the division in September 1942—I do not recall the exact date—Homaier told me that a special vehicle called a mobile gas van was being used by operatives of the SD in Minsk for the extermination of Soviet citizens. He did not give me their names. The mobile gas vans were constructed as follows: they were in the form of a heavy truck with a sealed frame. A pipe was run from the engine of the vehicle into the bed into which

20. In Kaluga Region today.

the Germans loaded Soviet citizens with the intention of gassing them. The vehicle was hermetically sealed, and the people in it were poisoned within several minutes by the emitted gasses. As for the length of time that the mobile gas vans operated in Minsk and the number of Soviet citizens that were killed by that method, I do not know.

Q: Do you know precisely which of those SD operatives took part in the poisoning of Soviet citizens with the help of the mobile gas vans?

A: I had no occasion personally to see a so-called mobile gas van, by means of which the mass poisoning of Soviet citizens was carried out. I heard of it for the first time from Oberleutnant Evald Homaier and subsequently from inhabitants of the city of Minsk with whom I was acquainted. Which of the SD operatives operated the mobile gas van in Minsk and poisoned Soviet citizens with the aid of these vehicles, I do not know, and am unable to provide any material information on the matter in question.

Q: On whose orders was the poisoning of Soviet citizens by means of the mobile gas vans carried out?

A: All of these atrocities and the extermination of Soviet citizens with the mobile gas vans were carried out in accordance with the orders and decrees of the German government, of which I spoke earlier in a previous interrogation.

Q: Who is Oberleutnant Evald Homaier?

A: Evald Homaier, rank Oberleutnant, was the commander of the field gendarmerie of the German 267th Infantry Division, in the field tribunal of which I served as the presiding magistrate. Several months before the arrival of the Red Army, I left for Germany and did not subsequently return to the 267th Infantry Division. I can further say with regard to Evald Homaier that he personally executed approximately fifty Soviet citizens by shooting, but as to when these crimes were committed by him, I am unable to say.

Q: What else do you know concerning the bestial actions committed by the Germans against Soviet citizens in the city of Minsk?

A: Following the occupation of the city of Minsk by the Germans in the early days of July 1941, the entire Jewish population of Minsk was assembled by punitive units of the SS on the pretext of sending them to work in Germany. Once having assembled the Jews in one place, on the outskirts of Minsk, the SS divided them up into groups, threw large tarpaulins over them, and shot them with machine guns that they had deployed ahead of time. All told, several thousand members of the Jewish population of Minsk were shot that day. Who in the SS was the direct organizer of the atrocities committed against the Jews in Minsk, I do not know, since the facts in question were recounted to me by an NCO named Büchel, who was serving in the 268th Infantry Division at the time as the commander of a signals group, and who in November 1943 was transferred to the Italian Front along with the 268th Division. Where he is at present, I do not know.

Interrogator: Senior investigator, investigative section NKGB BSSR Senior Lt. State Security (Myagkov)

Stenographer: Sergushkina

GARF f. 8114, op. 1, d. 940, ll. 105–106. A typewritten, notarized copy.

Cities and Shtetls of Belorussia

53. Shootings, gallows, human torches

ACCOUNTS OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF STARYE DOROGI

RECORDED BY M. GRUBIAN

TRANSLATED BY D. MANEVICH

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee has received a series of new documents and depositions concerning the bestial cruelties perpetrated by the Germans against the Jews in Belorussia. Shchorbatov, a Belorussian and inhabitant of the town of Starye Dorogi who escaped from the German hell to the Soviet side, tells of the mass shooting of Jewish families in his town: in one day the SS killed 363 families. Shchorbatov tells of the terrible acts of vengeance directed at those Russian and Belorussian people whom the Germans suspected of concealing Jews. An old doctor named Shapelko lived in Starye Dorogi. In one of the sections of the hospital in which he worked, two ill Jewish women were concealed in great secrecy. In the end, the Gestapo learned of this "crime." They dragged the sick women from their beds and shot them, then hanged the doctor.

The same fate befell the agronomist Kunbin and Anna Koroleva, both Belorussians. The Germans accused them of collaborating with the partisans and hiding Jews in their homes. A Russian resident named Sipnov, who was captured by the Germans and escaped, tells the following story:

"When I was captured, they sent me and several others like me to a camp for prisoners on the banks of the Druch River. One day, through the barbed wire fence, we saw the German guards chase several dozen completely naked Jewish women and children into the river, yelling at them "Wash up, you dirty kikes!" When the poor unfortunates tried to swim, the Germans opened fire on them. Not one of them came back from the river."

The Belorussian partisan Mikola B., recently returned from the Polotsk District, reports:

"In the village of Zaborye in the Polotsk District, the Germans herded together eighty Jewish men and twenty women, the wives of Belorussian partisans, locked them in a small local blacksmith's shop, doused the shop with kerosene, and put a match to it. They forbid anyone to put out the fire. One hundred people died in the flames in awful suffering."

The list of German atrocities grows longer every day. Anyone arriving from an area occupied by the Germans can tell dreadful stories of the evil acts of the blood-thirsty occupiers.

GARF f. 8114, op. 1, d. 961, ll. 328–328ob. A typewritten manuscript with handwritten corrections.

54. Extermination of the Jews in Western Belorussia

AN ACCOUNT BY L. SHAUS

TRANSLATED BY D. MANEVICH

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee has received a number of new materials concerning the physical extermination of the Jews in Western Belorussia. The extermination began on the first day of the Germano-fascist occupation, but the liquidation of the Jewish population took on its cruelest form in 1943.

In Grodno, there were some twenty thousand Jews at the time of the Hitlerite invasion, including several thousand driven there from nearby towns. In the spring of 1943, eleven Jews were left in the entire city all of whom were being forced to work on the construction of a new garage for the Gestapo.

The majority of Grodno's Jews were sent to the nearby shtetl of Kolbasenka (Kolbasin), where the Hitlerite scoundrels shot many of them, while the rest died from hunger and epidemic diseases. Those left alive were sent to the terrible death camp of Treblinka. There, the remainder of the Jewish population of Grodno perished in mobile gas vans.²¹

The Jews in Baranovichi numbered 12,000. They were shot in three different stages: 2,400 Jews were killed on March 4, 1942; 5,000 were killed on September 22, 1942; and 3,000 were shot in 1943. The rest were taken to various torture camps. Some managed to escape, and they joined partisan units.

There were 6,700 Jews in Lida before the war. They were all shot in the vicinity of the town of Kotorovo. The Hitlerites dug an enormous mass grave there, herded living men, women, and children into it, and opened fire on them all with machine guns. After the extermination of the Jewish population of Lida, they gathered the Jews from shtetls surrounding Lida—Voronovo, Skidel, Dzhentsol, and others—then shot them in groups.

At the beginning of the war there were more than 1,600 Jews in Smorgon. The Hitlerites locked them away in a ghetto consisting of several half-destroyed shacks. At the beginning of 1943, the entire population of the ghetto was wiped out.

There were more than 700 Jews in Nemenchina. They were driven into a local school. For several days they were given no food or water, and then they were taken to a nearby forest. One hundred people managed to escape. The remaining 600 were shot.

In Rodoshkovichi the Hitlerite bandits shot every last one of the Jews.

In Molodechno 2,000 Jews were exterminated. A sign posted at the station read: "No Jews here—clean."

21. Mobile gas vans were not used at Treblinka.