

"Yurovichi", Kalinkovichsky News. 06/12/2011

Online: <http://www.knews.by/?p=1163>

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The terrible fall 1941 (Жудасны лістапад 1941-га)

On the night of 21/22 June 1941 members of an amateur arts circle were staying for the night in a local orphanage. In the morning they were going to go to Mozyr to participate in a contest. But the steamer moored to bring awful news – the war had broken out! On the 25th of August fascists marched into the town. They organized a police department from local scoundrels. All the Jews were resettled to the reservation – ghetto which was located in the heart of the town. For about 2 months ex-craftsmen and their families had lived in fear waiting for a miracle. Despite the awful tortures, night exactions, outrage of local police who stole their gold, child sexual abuse, the Jewish population believed in high standard of German high command. They did not have an idea that operation code-named Selection had entered a completion phase and their fate had been predetermined. In the beginning of November the German commissar Gans Jocham Kolmorgen, the commandants of Narol, Elsk and Kalinkovichi, burgemeesters and commanders of platoons came to the town for a private conference. They discussed the operation's details with scrupulousness inhering to Germans: the march routes of prisoners column, the quantity of arms and ammos and so forth. The Jewish population extirpation operation was planned to be carried out on November 19. In the article "Poluveka tomu nazad nad Pripatuy" in the columns of "Kalinovicheskie Novosti" newspaper Vladimir Smolyar tells what happened that day: "They walked in an uneven column being surrounded by armed escorts and trained sheep dogs. The old went ahead; women held their children in arms, teenagers held each other hands keeping the heads down. It looked like a funeral procession. You could see desperation, suffering, tears and sorrow in their eyes. It was hard to keep their feet on ice-covered ground. The old fell to the ground and women fainted. A prayer of the damnation they were singing mournfully sounded over the column. They led them out to the only town square. They stopped? Why? They consulted and told something over for a while and then go beyond the village where the Pripyat flows into the Dnieper. A sandy hill and steep riverside... They were allowed to sit down for a while. Old folk heading their faces eastward bowing low to the ground were singing Kedysh very loudly. They didn't notice the moment when machine-guns started their monologue hailing people with bullets. Terrified people tore around but bullets caught them. Only desperate young men plunged into the water. Only one of them survived according to people stories". Vladimir Smolyar devoted himself to journalism and has spent many years finding records of Holocaust in Yuravichi and Kalinkovichi district. As a result a lot of his articles were published in "Kalinkovicheskie Novosti" newspaper columns. The article "Krasnii Sneg" (The red snow) published in "Kalinkovicheskie Novosti" newspaper runs about the events on November 1941 in Yuravichi: "Everybody knew the house of an old man Zalman. He was very professional in shoe-making. He mastered her daughter Hruma this craft. And later she surpassed him. People called her Hruma the Milliner or Hruma the Seamstress. Girls and women came to the village from neighborhood. She was a hard-to-find beauty: a fancy face, gypsy dark eyes jet-black braids. Not only Jewish guys but noblemen from the whole town chased her. She married and became a widow early. She brought up her daughter alone. She truly loved her husband so she refused all the offers of hand and heart. Three or four years before the war all the folk

were talking about Hruma's wedding. Her fiancé Vasiliy was a handsome accordionist but he was fond of the bottle. People were surprised because she was Jewess. But nobody knew what was happening in Zalman's soul. He told dashing away his tears that she would not be happy. He might feel it. Hruma gave a birth to two girls. Zalman became happier though his beard went grey. The war broke out. Vasiliy joined local police. The old Zalman was resettled to ghetto. When Jewish children and old folk were escorted deathwards Hruma was begging Vasiliy and burgomaster to save her father. She was threatened and turned out. Few people saw her then in the town. They only knew that she lived at Vasiliy's mother place. Vasiliy himself hit the bottle badly. But before spring people found another two naked corps of Hruma and her elder daughter near the place where Jews were executed. Everyone knew that this was Vasiliy who killed them. Later somebody remembered Vasiliy leading Hruma and her daughter deathwards. Some people said that they were walking holding their heads proudly and Hruma was begging Vasiliy not to touch her daughter. Two shots returned an echo. He run back and didn't look back because he was afraid to hear the victims' voices. He burst into the house. His eyes glowed feverishly and his face was convulsed. "Where are they? Where are the Jewish spawn? I will kill'em all!" - He cried. His mother rushed to children, put her arms around them and held them tight. She fell on her knees and said: "Kill me first, kill our innocent souls". Vasiliy jumped out from the house. She was staring at the holy Virgin Mary icon crying for mercy. She disavowed her son at heart and was begging to save his sinful soul. She regained consciousness when snow whirl opened a closed door. Vasiliy didn't appear at home since that time. But villagers saw him in the fall of 1944. He was escorted to Yuravichi from Mozyr prison to show the place where he had killed his wife and daughter. He was digging out the grave himself. What about the twin-girls? They did not know who their parents are. They called a mother their grandmother Akulina. And people did not tell them about that trouble. The children were brought up by grandmother. Well it didn't last long. She had been ill for a long time and died peacefully. The girls were moved to Yuravichi orphanage. Then they moved out of the town. They didn't have an idea where their grandmother had died and where was buried. They only knew that they had spent the childhood here in Yuravichi near the walls of the ancient catholic church. The Nazis crimes emergency state investigation statement is still being kept in Mozyr branch of State Archives. It was signed on the 9th of December 1944 and it runs about terrible crimes of Nazis and local police of the town in 1941. The massacre on Pripyat was the first step in operation Selection. The commission that signed the statement consisted of its president M.A. Belyai, the president of Yuravichi rural soviet, I.O. Yushkevich, a doctor of Yuravichi hospital, L.M. Gorchanko, the headmaster of Yuravichi junior high school, K.V. Telesh and P.S. Kasyano, collective farmers of kolkhoz Krasnaya Zorya, a priest of Yuravichi church S.I. Jmichenko with commissioner of Kalinkovich district commission of investigation of crimes Nazis committed during the temporary occupation. On first days of 1941 on the order of chief of police Kojemyak and his deputy Emelyanov Jewish population was moved in Padgornaya street. Few families lived in a house. Nazis robbed their houses without their permission on the order of German authorities including cattle which belonged to locals. Jewish people were forbidden to move in another street after they had been resettled or they were executed by shooting. They had to wear yellow arm-bands. On the 18th of November 20 policemen came to Yuravichi from Kalinkovich aboard. Together with Yuravichi Nazi police they drove about 200 people of all ages out to market place. Then under threat of being shot they drove them out to Yuravichi suburbs where at the Pripyat riverside they were shot down. They used a machine gun and other arms to killed absolutely innocent people. They left the corps for animals and dug them only after 7 days. On the 27th of November 1941 and then in the beginning of December they committed such massacres of Jewish again. It was the same story: marketplace, ravines, shots...Thus Nazi monsters killed more than 400 people including 207 children, 128 old men among which more than 100 were ill. The check-roll of killed without guilt is attached to the statement. The postscript says that 414 people are not on the list because their names have not been defined.

Derailing trains (Ляцелі пад адхон эшалоны)

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Last update: 2023/03/05 02:57

