

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

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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)

The first mobilization took place on the 24th of November. 267 soldiers from Yuravichi went to war. The ones who stayed began to live according to the rules of wartime. The war moved inland so it was necessary to save national and kolkhoz property, think about harvest and future life. But it was not easy. The ex-headmaster of Yuravichi school who was a commissar of partisan detachment during the war Boris Katsen remembers that time: «After Stalin's speech on the radio on the 3th of July 1941 I conducted party meeting. All the 12 communists joined voluntary military forces. Komsomol members, teachers and other locals joined them. I was summoned to district committee where they proposed me to become the commissar of detachment. I suggested enrolling all the young men of pre-induction age. The offer was accepted». B.B. Milyavsky had been appointed as a commander of detachment. He did military service and held sergeant rank. Soldiers were given weapons and accommodated in barracks. They stood guard and check document of strangers. Alerts took place and they also caught parachutists. They created military bases with arms, equipment and provisions at hard-to-reach places at Litvin Lake. On the 22nd of August when enemy was reaching Kalinkovichi we went to the woods. The chairman of Yuravichi rural committee Simanovich has always been blamed that he didn't evacuate property in time. "We should not push the panic button!" – he claimed. Nevertheless a part of cattle was moved to Orlovskaya province. Some people also moved out from Yuravichi. There often were commotions which turned into panic. On the 24th of August retreating Red Army units moved through Yuravichi. Some of the soldiers moved even in the morning on the 25th of August when few hours later 30 enemy motorcycles burst into the town. They entered people houses like hosts and seized the best things. The first victims appeared. At Aron Kantor's place where artel was located they found a small-bore riffle. Aron was shot. Gershun was also shot. On first day of the occupation Yuravichi town council headed by burgomaster Redeh was established. Police office and gendarmerie were located there. They also elected the burgomaster and the headman of Yuravichi. Yuravichi police commandant's office was organized in October. Its members were bitter enemies of Soviet power. They were armed with rifles and also they had 2 machine-guns. Everybody in the town was supposed to register there. The local Jews suffered in particular. They were robbed, turned out of houses, shot down. The land and provisions were divided like a kolkhoz harvest: 5 sheaves a workday. The major part was taken by local police. Families of communists, partisans and active workers didn't get anything. Partisan units allocated in the forest near Yginecs. There were 40 people there during the first war fall. The president of Yjinecs kolkhoz S.Bobrov was a commander. I was a commissar. Pavel Dubanecs was a party whip. Two machine-guns, two assault rifles and rifles were in the inventory. On the third day of staying in the forest Bobrov went to the village to bring oxen to the detachment. But he met deserters on his way and they killed him. The delinquent was sentenced to be shot. The death of the commander had a bad influence on the detachment. People began to break up. Some of them headed to front, the other came back home. Only 15 people who were devoted to motherland stayed. The ex-head of People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs commissar Bogdanov headed the unit. Partisans distributed leaflets and committed the act of sabotage at the railroads near Galyavicsi. They blew up gas-filling station at the highway. They also had run-ins with local police who repeatedly tried to catch partisans in forests. Bochar was killed in the fall under puzzling circumstances and the case stayed cold. On November the detachment split up. A part of partisans joined the Red Army. The ones who stayed became the core of Kalinkovichi partisans unit. After a few months since the beginning of war a komsomol-youth group headed by Vasily Lyavko was organized without regard to the terror on Nazis. Georgiy Yanushkevich, Nikolay and Vladimir Telesh, Valentin and Leonid Micskevich, Stanislav Kozlovskiy and others joined the group. Young patriots helped to collect arms and ammos and carried out partisans tasks. In 1942 many

armed dwellers of Yuravichi went to the woods to revenge on enemy for humiliation and violence, tears and blood of friends and families. M.L. Kozlovsky, I.M. Lucskevich, I.A Gorchanko, A.I. Yashcenko, I.R. Yashcenko. Y.M.Kasyan, M.P.Telesh and many others were among them. Whole families joined partisans units: the families of kolkhoz blacksmith I.I.Micskevich and kolkhoz driver S.M.Buldik.

People who saw atrocity of Nazis at every step burnt with revenge. Their hearts were full of hatred against those bastards. And the place started to get too hot for Nazis. In the national archive of Belarus there are documents which contain details about it. For example Voroshilov partisan unit command report says: "On the 23th of June 1942 on the road Yuravichi-Kalinkovichi a cargo-truck was blown up. Twelve policemen were killed and wounded". ... In the beginning of July 1942 on the river Pripayt near Yuravichi two barges loaded with grain were destroyed. A steamer and raft were damaged. The commissar of Shchorsa partisan detachment V. Komarov remembers the organization of partisan struggle in his article "Leteli pod otkos esheloni" (Derailing trains) which was published in "Flag Kommunizma" newspaper: We located an interim partisan camp tot far from Chornovshcina village in Kalinkovichi district. We started to communicate with local communists. Sons of Vasiliy Levko who were among them told us where the warehouse with arms was located. They also told important information about the number of enemies in Kalinkovichi and Yuravichi. We got ready for our first attack at that time. We placed the arms in operational readiness. Timofei Semenchuck from Moldova, Dzemenkov from Syberia and Hromov form Ivanov province were my fellow-fighters. We set connection with Voroshilov partisan unit in Kalinkovishi district that was headed by Kuzma Bakun.

In summer 1942 they started to attack. The first baptism of fire took place at Yuravichi. They shattered the garrison of local police. But it didn't go off smoothly as Komarov described. His fellow-fighter Leonid Volkov wrote about that event truthfully: "The operation of Yuravichi garrison crushing defeat was decided to be carried out at dawn when policemen are tight asleep. Liaison officers Grigory Panglish, Vasiliy Levko, Georgiy Yanushkevich gave accurate information about guard-posts and their plans of the day. We approached the town in the evening, defined the tasks and waited till dawn.

The operation started unsuccessfully. When the partisans walked down Yuravhichi hill to the town and began to take up positions the guard noticed them and opened fire. A shoot-out set off. The partisans lied down while policemen fired from two-storied building. The fight dragged out. Some of policemen tried to escape but came under fires. The chief of police escaped through gardens and hid in the house next door. But partisan Pyatro noticed it. The chief was shamefully shot under the bed. The partisans approached the two-storied building and started to toss grenades to windows. They also tried to set it on fire but they were not able to do it. Nevertheless a tossed grenade set it on fire. They might win this fight but they received a message that Nazi units from Mozyr went to rescue fascists. The order was to go back. Partisans managed to set a leather factory on fire and take trophies: clothes and ammunition. Everybody gathered at the assembly place when they heard a powerful explosion. Mine-layer Alesha touched a mine. A 22-year-old boy died. They carried him to barn in the suburbs of the town, covered him with canvas and hid. We left Yuravichi. There were many injured among us. The operation dished it out to occupants but we didn't relish the victory. As we found later nobody was going to help them".

It was hard to teach people to fight. But without regard to the first fails the national struggle gathered its pace: they derailed trains and fascists lose comfort day by day.

Fascists didn't rely on local police so they reinforced the garrison with Slovaks. Slovak rifle battalion located in temple complex in Yuravichi. But partisans got in their hair anyway. In the morning of March 22, 1943 Chernigov partisan unit headed by A.F. Fedorov attacked Yuravichi garrison. Fedorov

writes in his report: "The opposition was neutralized and partisans now control the village. We are still taking fire from the group of Germans which is in the church's building". After this fight Hitlerite command reinforced the local garrison with Hungarians. All the more they didn't trust Slovaks. This is why Slovaks left the garrison and came over to partisans. The evidence is an archive document signed by commander Belay and commissar Borisenko of partisan unit named after Frunze. It says that civilians who helped partisans were enlisted to local police. They distributed leaflets and gave partisans information about intentions of Germans against partisans. five policemen in Yuravichi garrison actively helped partisans. They stole eight rifles, twenty grenades, a great amount of cartridges and tobacco. Eighteen policemen of Yuravichi garrison came over to partisans. Liaison officers helped them to carry it out. A Slovak garrison was disbanded as well. As a consequence of undercover work in the garrison fifteen armed Slovaks came over to partisans. It had been planed that the whole company would come over but the garrison was relocated. Slovaks destroyed a prison, eliminated guards, set free three partisan families and sent them in vehicles to forests. Rudolf Lyandatsky, Milan Mitak, Nicolay Revelak were among the Slovakian anti-fascists. A liaison officer of the underground Nina Tapliga organized meetings with them.

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