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THEY WERE KILLED ON THE SPOT: THE DESTRUCTION OF JEWS DURING THE NAZI OCCUPATION IN THE TERRITORY OF THE LVIV REGION

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The destruction of the local Jewish population during the Nazi occupation was carried out mainly in two ways: by shooting (especially from June 1941 to November 1943) and by the forced deportation to the Belzec death camp (from March 1942 to December 1942). It should be noted that shooting was a permanent phenomenon throughout the whole period of the Nazi occupation. But, before the beginning of the activity of the Belzec death camp and after the end of its work, shooting was the main way to destroy the Jews who lived in what is now Lviv region. There were also another kinds of executions such as hanging and burning alive, but they happened rather sporadically and were exceptional. Also, many Jews died in the result of the “Extermination through labor” (*Vernichtung durch Arbeit* in German). Inhuman conditions of existence in the forced labor camps caused the death of many people.

Key words: Holocaust, Jews, Gestapo, German, District of Galicia, Lviv region.

In modern society, the Holocaust is associated with extermination camps, mainly with Auschwitz-Birkenau, but due to the newest investigations we can say that there was practically the same number of victims, and in some cases even more, after the executions on the spot. A German researcher Dieter Pohl wrote, “Of the 5.6–5.8 million murdered Jews approximately 2–2.2 million died in mass executions, 2.5 million in extermination camps and approximately one million due to other circumstances, in ghettos, other camps or during death marches”¹. If we speak about the District of Galicia, the correlation between killing by gas in the death camps and killing on the spot was practically the same one. We know that approximately 525 000 – 530 000 Galician Jews were murdered as a whole². More than 250 000 out of them were deported to Belzec³. Rest of them mostly died because of mass executions on the spot.

¹ Dieter Pohl, “Historyography and Nazi Killing Sites,” *Killing Sites – Research and Remembrance* (Berlin: IHRA series, Vol I, 2015), 37.

² Thomas Sandkühler, *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 460; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 396

³ Aleksander Kruglow, “Yevreis’ki vtraty v Ukraini, 1941–1944 rr (Ukrainian),” *Shoa v Ukraini* (Kyiv, 2015), 394.

It is important to elucidate what is the subject of the research. A mass execution can be defined as the killing of ten or more people who were herded together and shot in one place in order that the corpses might be buried in a mass grave⁴. We will try to learn more about this type of murder which was commonly used on the territory of the District of Galicia. Historians had not been paying proper attention to mass executions as a specific kind of crime till 1990s. So it is important to focus on this. Many researchers such as Eliyahu Yones⁵, Zhanna Kovba⁶, Aleksander Kruglov⁷, Dieter Pohl⁸, Thomas Sandkühler⁹, Jakub Honigsman¹⁰ and Dieter Schenk¹¹ have studied the Holocaust in the territory pointed out above. Their researches are considered to be the best works on the theme. But the subject we are discussing here has not been studied separately before.

The first known execution on the territory of the Lviv region took place on 22 June 1941 in the town of Sokal. At the local Roman-Catholic church Germans shot 11 Jewish men who were chosen on accident in a street¹². At first, in summer 1941, Nazis shot communists and intellectuals of Jewish origin. This category of people was considered to be the danger to the Nazi regime. Elderly and disabled people often became the first victims, too. Since autumn 1941 Nazis started to destroy just such categories of people in a large scale, especially when the Jewish population was forced to remove into the ghettos' territories.

In summer 1941 mass shootings were carried out by two special units (Einsatzgruppe C and Einsatzgruppe zur besonderen Verwendung). The main power responsible for the mass executions in autumn 1941 was the Security police (Sicherheitspolizei). Local civilian administration took a special part in the organization of the deportation of Jews to the Belzec death camp in March 1942. Starting from May 1942, the SS was the major force implementing the Holocaust on the territory of the Lviv region. Its members were responsible for the "Great Action" in August 1942. The Galician Jews were taken mainly to Belzec. Then, everyone who did not have a job or whose job from the Nazis' point of view was not useful became a victim. The

⁴ Pohl, "Historyography and Nazi Killing Sites," 32.

⁵ Eliyahu Yones, *Yevrei L`vova v gody Vtoroi Mirovoi Vojny i katastrofa yevropejskoho yevrejstva 1939–1944* (Russian) (Moskva, 1999).

⁶ Zhanna Kovba, *Liudyaniŝt` u bezodni pekla. Povedinka miscevoĥ naseleennyi shidnoji Halychyny v roky ostatochnoho rozvyazannia yevreiskoho pytannia* (Ukrainian) (Kyiv, 2009).

⁷ Aleksander Kruglov, "Deportacje ludności żydowskiej z dystryktu Galicja do obozu zagłady w Belczu w 1942," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego instytutu historycznego* 3 (1989): 107.

⁸ Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996).

⁹ Sandkühler, *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996).

¹⁰ Jakub Honigsman, *Zagłada żydów Lwowskich* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2007).

¹¹ Dieter Schenk, *Noc morderców. Każd polskich profesorów we Lwowie i holocaust w Galicji Wschodniej* (Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2012).

¹² Derzhavnyi archiv L`vivs`koi oblasti, m. L`viv (The State archive of L`viv oblast', later DALO), P-3/1/ 278, p. 15.

head of the SS and police in the District Friedrich Katzmann used battalions of the police of order (Ordnungspolizei) in the second half of 1942 on the regular basis. Also, the Ukrainian auxiliary police was involved in actions. The last train with Jews was sent to Belżec at the beginning of December 1942. After that shooting became the main killing option. Executions continued till June 1943, and then the District was announced to be “Judenfrei”. Only 21 156 Jews remained in the forced labor camps on its territory. They were murdered in summer or autumn 1943.

Working only with archival documents, we can learn more about the executions, about those who did them, and about the number of victims. But in many cases it is not entirely clear how the process took place itself. There are still many gaps. How did the scene of the crime look like? Who dug the pits? How was the process of shooting going on? Who closed the pits after every murder? What was the role of the local people in all this? What were the specific features of the crimes?

We will build the structure of the article on the bases of evidence of numerous eyewitnesses that have been recorded by the Yahad-in-Unum International Association (later YiU) (Paris, France) and are stored in its archives. We can definitely say that a large number of local people unwillingly had a chance to watch the executions. Their evidence was used by the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission (later SESC) just after the liberation. However, in this article we will mainly use the memories of the witnesses that have been recorded by the YiU in recent years. With the help of these interviews we will try to analyze what happened at the last stage of murders on the spot of the Jewish population. We will not research the deportations to the Belżec camp. We will concentrate our attention on shootings and other kinds of mass executions on the spot. The goal is to study the process from the point of view of direct eyewitnesses who did not belong to neither criminals nor victims. For this purpose we will use the YiU’s oral testimonies.

To prove that the executions had a lot of common features, let us have a look at one episode of mass killing in the District of Galicia. Analyzing it, we can see that all of them had a typical structure. It is known, that on 1 May 1943 the camp from the town of Velyki Mosty was moved to the town of Rava Ruska which is located 37 km to the west. There were 300-400 Jews there. On 10 June 1943 at night Nazis encircled the camp, and all the prisoners together with all those who were in the town were taken to the village of Borove. All of them were shot and the corpses were buried in one large pit. According to the report of the SESC, 1,500 people were killed there and the size of the grave was really huge, 13 m long and 8 m wide¹³. But the details of the execution were unknown. Only thanks the YiU’s archives we have an opportunity now to add some important facts.

Every shooting was prepared in advance. The scene of a crime was chosen by Nazis beforehand. So it was in the case we are going to speak about. Local people

¹³ DALO, P-3/1/278, p. 10–12; Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi archiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnya, (Kyiv) (Central State archive of the public authorities, later TSDAVOVU) 4620/3/288, p. 60.

knew very well about this crime¹⁴. There were many witnesses. They particularly mentioned the fact that before the execution, in early June, people noticed there a German officer who had never been seen in the village of Borove before. According to the witness, the officer was choosing a place for the future execution¹⁵. It was located near the village in the woods. There was a pasture at the side. Mr. Yaroslav¹⁶ was a shepherd. Being close to the pit, he watched everything that happened there. A group of Jews had been preparing the pit for several days. Every day they were brought to the place and transported backward. The pit was so deep that the workers used a ladder and buckets. Once, when the Jews got out of the pit, one of the Germans laid beneath it. Then he ordered to continue the work. As soon as the Jews started to work, there was an explosion. The witness saw how human remains flew onto a tree. The Germans fired the machine guns into the parts of the body, so that they fell down and after that the soldiers pushed them into the pit. This happened only to the first group, digging the pit. The other groups were simply shot. At the beginning, the SS men killed dressed people, but after one incident they forced the victims to undress. This happened when one group was carried by a truck and a young Jew threw a package on the sidelines. A German soldier ordered to stop the truck. He picked up the package, opened it and took out the contents. Apparently, there were jewels.

The pit in Borove was closed by local people, and bleach was strewn there by them, too. The locals thought it was lime because they had never seen bleach before¹⁷. Few days after the shootings, ichor started to flow out of the pit. Local people closed both the pit and the ichor, flowing out. Witnesses Mr. Martyn-Hryhorii and Mrs. Liubov were forced to do so by the local authorities who were following the order of Germans¹⁸. Mrs. Liubov saw a human body on a tree near the scene of the shooting. This fact can be explained by studying the evidence of the above-mentioned Mr. Yaroslav. There is one more interesting fact. Mr. Hryhorii said that later a Ukrainian policeman carried the clothes of the killed Jews on a cart the shooting, and threw out some of them to the people, standing near the road¹⁹.

After the war there were the signs of marauding on the scene of the murder. The pit was dug out and there were human skeletons around it. Someone was looking for valuables²⁰.

As we see, the shooting in Borove had its own peculiarities, and we can mention them. The fact that Jews were digging the pit was not an exception. In many cases they were forced to do so before shooting. A special feature of this case is the fact that the work had been lasting for several days. Some Jews were brought there to

¹⁴ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 1–3 U.

¹⁵ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 13 U.

¹⁶ Now and later we will mention only the first name of a witness.

¹⁷ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 142 U.

¹⁸ Ibidem, Testimony 11–12 U.

¹⁹ Ibidem, Testimony 13 U.

²⁰ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 57 U.

dig. Then, they were taken back to the camp, and the next day another group was brought to the pit. While Jews were working, the Germans, guarding them, amused themselves. They had a small table with food and a gramophone on it. The Nazis were listening to music²¹. At first, the Jews did not put off their clothes before shooting, but, later, after the case with the hidden jewels they were forced to do this. It is more likely that Nazis thought that the Jews could still hide something. The fact that the locals were taken by Germans to close the pits just immediately after the murder and later is also interesting. The local administration forced the people to do this too. We will mention about the participation of the local population in the studied cases later on in this article.

The given example of the village of Borove has common details typical for all the shootings. You can track all the stages of the crime here: 1) searching of a place, 2) preparation (digging of a pit), 3) murder (at first there was a usage of explosives and then shootings), 4) closing of the pit, 5) the scene of the murder after the crime (in this case – marauding). Taking into consideration this structure, we will analyze other cases.

As for the scenes of the crimes, executions in forests were very common. Germans were looking for a deserted place and it had to be not far from towns, ghettos or camps. In particular, the execution of Jews in Rava Ruska was carried out in the forest near the village of Borove, located about 3 km from the town. The same happened in the other cases. The Jews of Lviv were shot in the forest near Lysynychi²², the Jews of Sambir in the Ralivka forest, the Jews of Drohobych in the Bronytsia woods²³. Some Jews from Busk were shot near the village of Yablunivka in the woods²⁴. The Jews were destroyed in the woods nearby their towns in Rudky²⁵, Yavoriv²⁶, Horodok, Velyki Mosty²⁷, Boryslav²⁸, Stryi²⁹, Novyi Yarychiv, Brody³⁰, Zhovkva³¹, Zhydachiv³² and Khodoriv³³.

A field, a valley or a ravine situated near the settlement was as well used as a place of execution. The shootings near the Yaniv camp in Lviv were held in a ravi-

²¹ Ibidem, Testimony 142 U (The second interview).

²² Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi archiv hromads'kykh obyednan', (Kyiv) (The Central State archive of the Civil Communities, later TSDAGO), 57/4/37, p. 142; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/ 289, p. 54; TSDAV-OVU, 4620/3/ 287, p. 15–18; DALO, P-3/1/278, p. 51.

²³ Yahad - In Unum's Archives, Testimony 43 U.

²⁴ Ibidem, Testimony 300-302 U.

²⁵ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 819.

²⁶ Ibidem, 785.

²⁷ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 55 U.

²⁸ Ibidem, Testimony 1520 U.

²⁹ Bundesarchiv (Ludwigsburg), (later BARCH), 162/180, p. 133.

³⁰ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 1778 U.

³¹ DALO, P-3/1/278, p. 7–8.

³² Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 1507 U.

³³ Ibidem, Testimony 765, 766, 767, 768 U.

ne. The representatives of the SESC found the traces of destruction of the evidence of the crime on its territory and within its boundaries. Ashes and milled human bones were buried in more than 60 places. In summer 1943 a special *Sonderkommando 1005*, which consisted of Jews, dug out and burned down the remains of the dead co-religionists³⁴.

Killings occurred at the Jewish cemeteries happened frequently, however there is a peculiarity. If we take into consideration the number of mass executions at the cemeteries, it is bigger than those which took place in the forests or fields outside the settlement. Also, we must say that even the Jews, taking cover elsewhere and found, were usually shot at the cemeteries. So, many individual executions took place there too. Mostly, Jewish cemetery was a part of a ghetto. It was the place where murderers were able to kill. It was convenient for them. They did not hide. Very often the executions were on public. The locals saw a lot of them. Shootings at the cemeteries, as we have mentioned above, were common happenings. So, it happened practically in every town or city on the territory of the actual Lviv region where Jews were mostly concentrated.

One of the biggest executions held at a cemetery was that in Rava Ruska. From 7 to 11 December 1942 Nazis killed 5,000 Jews of the local ghetto there³⁵. Four pits were found at the cemetery later. 2,500 people more were sent to Belżec by four trains³⁶. *SS-Obersturmfürer* Hildebrandt, *SS-Obersturmfürer* Willhaus, the commandant of the Yaniv camp, and *SS-Sturmführer* Rokita came from Lviv to carry out this massacre. They worked together with the local Germans Schneit, Klein, Hager, Holz, Strechholdt, Laski, Hromikita and others³⁷. In the vicinity of Rava Ruska few shootings occurred. They were usually held at the cemeteries. For example, all the Jews from the village of Rata were taken to Rava Ruska, but several people were also shot at the cemetery. Mrs. Jadwiga's grandfather was a Catholic, but he was killed together with Jews. Though the Germans were told they were making a mistake, no one listened to the people³⁸.

Another cemetery where thousands of Jews were murdered was in Sambir. At first, frequent shootings occurred on 4 August 1942 during a mass action and in early September (before 4 September). There was also a shooting on 18 April 1943. Four days before, on 14 April, 1,200 people were detained in the Sambir ghetto. 900 out of them were shot at the cemetery³⁹. Some local people watched the executions. They climbed onto the roof of the brick-yard on both sides of the cemetery and

³⁴ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p.134.; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/ 288, p. 56.

³⁵ Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944*, 242.

³⁶ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 821.

³⁷ DALO, P-3/1/278, p.12.

³⁸ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 295 U.

³⁹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 825.

watched everything that happened⁴⁰. A Sambir Jew Lion Akiva was hiding in his mother's-in-law house (his wife was a Catholic) in the town. When on 4 September 1942 the searches began, his relative kicked him out. Akiva went to the Jewish cemetery where he saw many corpses. He heard an exclamation, "Stop!" and fell down at once. There was the police at the cemetery. They guarded valuables and clothing. Akiva had been lying for some time and then crawled over the corpses to the side of the river Dniester. The man was lucky because nobody noticed him⁴¹. A Jew Hermann Rieger also mentioned the events that happened on 4 September. He remembered that the Jewish police was doing verification⁴².

Sambir was not the only place of mass killings on cemeteries. Several executions were held at the cemetery in Turka⁴³. Mr. Viacheslav repeatedly witnessed them. One of shootings took place in winter⁴⁴. Unfortunately, the witness did not remember the year. However, we know that there was only one shooting in Turka at this time of a year. It was held on 7 January 1942 and the Nazis killed then about 500 Jews⁴⁵. Mr. Mykhailo from the village of Silets saw how SS men shot Jews in Kamianka Buzka (former Kamianka Strumyl'ova) on the feast of Our Lady that is on 21 September (this day is celebrated as the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin)⁴⁶. This happened at the Jewish cemetery⁴⁷. Another action also took place on 21 September 1942 when 600 Jews from Kamianka Buzka were shot near the village of Zabuzhe⁴⁸. So, due to the above-mentioned evidence we can say that some shootings were held then not only in Zabuzhe, but in the town of Kamianka Buzka, too. On 15-16 January 1943 Zipo-SD of Lviv liquidated the ghetto in Novyi Yarychiv. 1570 Jews were killed in the woods and about 1 000 at the cemetery⁴⁹. On 21 May 1943 the liquidation of the Busk ghetto took place. Zipo, Ukrainian police and Volksdeutsches broke to the dwellings of Jews and forced them to go to the main square. Then all of them were led to the Jewish cemetery and the Nazis killed the people there⁵⁰. On 9 November 1942 in Yavoriv the German gendarmery shot at the local cemetery those Jews who were taking cover⁵¹. Individual executions took pla-

⁴⁰ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 752 U.

⁴¹ Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, (Warsaw) (later-AŻIH), 301/2238.

⁴² AŻIH, 301/ 3773.

⁴³ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 1522, 1524, 1528 U.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, Testimony 1522 U.

⁴⁵ Aleksander Kruglow, *Khronika Holokosta v Ukraine, 1941–1944* (Russian) (Zaporozhye: Premier, 2004), 74.

⁴⁶ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 39 U.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 15 U.

⁴⁸ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 789.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 783.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 768–769; Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 33, 136, 296, 297, 298, 301–302 U.

⁵¹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 785.

ce there permanently⁵². Later on the representatives of the SESC found six graves with the remains of 500 people at the Jewish cemetery in Yavoriv⁵³.

The executions held simply in the streets of the settlements most often occurred during the liquidations of ghettos in May and June 1943. In Lviv and Brody some Jews managed to get weapons and started fighting with Nazis. In particular, the witnesses recall there were a lot of dead bodies in the streets of Brody⁵⁴. However, the situation in Drohobych was a little bit different. On 19 November 1942 an action was held there, which the local Jews called the “Wild Thursday”. 230 people were shot in the streets of the town⁵⁵. As a rule there was certain information about every action’s beginning just before it, but not at this time. Gestapo announced that a Jewish pharmacologist wounded a finger of *SS-Scharführer* Hübner. Every Jew seen in the street was shot. It was just then that a famous writer and artist Bruno Schulz was shot. He was a protégé of *SS-Hauptscharführer* Felix Landau. This was just the reason for *SS-Scharführer* Karl Günther to kill Schulz as Landau had killed Günther’s Jewish dentist before that. It was a kind of revenge. Being asked by Landau why he did so, Günther replied, “Du erschießt meinen Juden, Ich erschiesse deinen Juden! (You kill my Jew and I kill Your Jew)”⁵⁶.

Preparation of the scene of assassination was an important part of every crime. A large pit was required. In rare cases the killers used natural ravines or valleys and preserved antitank ditches. In most cases those who would dig the pit were required, too. The work was done either by the victims themselves, or exceptionally, for example, by the Jewish policemen who were escorting their co-religionists to the execution scene. Those were the people who dug the pits in Horodok during the shootings, according to the recollections of local residents⁵⁷. Mrs. Iryna from Boryslav watched a convoy of Jews led toward the slaughterhouse. The executions took place there. The witness recalled that the Jews dug the pits themselves⁵⁸. Just the same happened to the Jews of Yavoriv who put off their clothes before the shooting and prepared their own graves themselves⁵⁹. In Sambir the Jews were digging the pits, too. The Germans threw living children there. The Jewish police was engaged in gathering their co-religionists and escorted them to the cemetery⁶⁰. For instance, the

⁵² Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 744 U.

⁵³ DALO, P-3/1/ 278, p. 19.

⁵⁴ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 1781 U.

⁵⁵ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 775.

⁵⁶ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 43 U.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 727 U.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, Testimony 45 U.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, Testimony 742 U.

⁶⁰ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 750 U.

Jews killed in Khodoriv⁶¹, Tartakiv⁶², Olesko⁶³, Rozdil⁶⁴, Zozuli⁶⁵ dug their graves themselves, too. In particular, in Turka in some cases this was done by Jews and by the locals in the others⁶⁶. However, the locals, Ukrainians and Poles, were sometimes forced to dig pits. Mr. Ivan from the village of Vilkhivtsi watched a shooting of Jews who were led in a column and locked in a shed, guarding by police. The pit was digging by village people. Those who dug the pit were present at the shooting and closed it. The witness said there were 78 Jews. Maybe they were from Zhydachiv⁶⁷. The same story was told by a witness Mr. Mikhailo from the village of Dovzhanka who, as a little child, saw carts, carrying naked corpses of murdered Jews from Horodok. They were buried under a mountain. Pits were dug by local people⁶⁸.

The memories of Mrs. Olga from Novyi Yarychiv are rather an exception from the rule. She noted that Nazis prepared everything needed in advance. They threw a grenade because they want to make a pit and only then shot the people at the place⁶⁹.

The evidence that the pits were prepared by the *Baudienst* units also should be referred to as individual cases. There is evidence that young men from the *Baudienst* dug pits in the following case. Jews from Stryi were taken to be shot near the villages of Grabovets and Holobutiv. The pit was dug there just by the *Baudienst* men⁷⁰. Executions in Holobutiv occurred several times. On 22–23 September 1941 Zipo and Ukrainian police shot 830 Jews from Stryi there⁷¹. On 28 February 1943 Zipo, assisting by the Ukrainian police, shot from 1,000 to 1,500 people⁷². In March 1943 another 2,600 people were killed there. On 21 May 1943 1000 more people were shot. On 5 June 1943 shootings took place in Holobutiv and at the Stryi cemetery. On 22 August 1943 a few more Jews from the prison in Holobutiv were killed, and this was the last shooting on the spot⁷³.

If a mass shooting took place within a settlement, the Jews were most often taken to the place of execution (in this case we speak about a cemetery, first of all) on foot and in columns. Much evidence of this has preserved. The witnesses frequently were surprised because of a large number of Jews in the column and a small number of guards. There were only a few of them, repeatedly 6–10 men. And if we

⁶¹ Ibidem, Testimony 768 U.

⁶² Ibidem, Testimony 18–24 U.

⁶³ Ibidem, Testimony 37bis U.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, Testimony 1517, 1518, 1519 U.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 51 U.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 1522, 1523, 1525, 1526 U.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 1509U.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, Testimony 730 U.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, Testimony 42 U.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, Testimony 1510 U.

⁷¹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 835.

⁷² BARACH, 162/180, p. 133; *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 835.

⁷³ BARACH, 162/180, p. 133.

compare the number of Jews it will be a large difference. Every time there were 50, 70, 100 or more Jews in a column. In most cases Ukrainian auxiliary police was in charge of escorting the victims to the killing place. They encircled this place while the shootings were going on.

Rarely carts were used. For instance, Mr. Volodymyr of Zhydachiv saw a murder of Jews at the cemetery. Some 50 people were shot then. The Jews went on foot to the place of the execution, but some of them were brought on carts⁷⁴. To the place of shooting, situated outside the settlements, the Jews were taken by trucks. Though, it was quite different in Khodoriv. Witness Mrs. Stefania says, “All the people were directed by Germans into the woods, even the Jewish police. All of them were going on foot. The distance to the forest was about 1.5 km”⁷⁵. There is also one known case in Sambir when the Jews from the ghetto were brought in a column to the shooting place to the nearest village of Ralivka and further into the forest. Mrs. Bronislava saw a column of Jews escorted along the village street. The column was lagging along the middle of the road. It was at lunch time in summer⁷⁶. Mrs. Paraskevia’s father, instead, was watching the shootings at the same time. He remembered the Jews were brought from Sambir by trucks⁷⁷. Likewise, Mrs. Teresa saw a truck with people taken to the forest⁷⁸. All this took place on 5 June 1943 during the liquidation of the Sambir ghetto. The last Jews were confined and on 10 June 1943 they were shot in the forest of Ralivka⁷⁹. So, we can say it was a lack of trucks, and the murderers, exceptionally, organized special marches to the killing site.

When everything was ready at the place the representatives of Zipo, Schupo, or Orpo started shooting. One or two boards were usually put across the pit. Firstly, the board was located at the edge, but then Germans or collaborators shifted it to the centre and to the other edge. Jews, one by one, or in a group of few people got upon these boards. In most cases the victims put off their clothes and piled them, though there were exceptions. Nazis stood at the pit and on the sides of it while the victims were putting themselves upon the board. Several soldiers were shooting at the same time. They fired the submachine guns, rifles and pistols. Sometimes they used a machine-gun.

We can show some examples how the executions happened from an eyewitness’s point of view. Mrs. Stefania from Khodoriv recalled that Jews threw off all their things and undressed themselves. Then they got upon the board put across a large pit (10 m long). The Nazis fired, standing on the sides⁸⁰. This shooting occurred on

⁷⁴ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 1507 U.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 766 U.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 753 U.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 758 U.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, Testimony 755 U.

⁷⁹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 825.

⁸⁰ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 766 U.

5 February 1943. The German police with the assistance of the Ukrainian one killed all the Jews of Khodoriv who were still in the town at that time. This happened near the fields of sugar beets⁸¹. On 20 March 1943 the Jews of Zhovkva were driven away to the forest called Bir. Several pits had already been prepared there and wooden boards lay across them. The Gestapo men compelled the Jews to undress and forced the naked victims to get upon the board by turns. As soon as the latter got there, they were shot at once by the bursts of machine-gun fire. The killed and wounded people fell down into the pits. So, about 2,000 people were shot during the day⁸². There were mass shootings of Jews on 22 May 1943 during the liquidation of the Brody ghetto. Close fights took place there then. Some Jews had weapons⁸³. Jews were transported by open trucks to the forest. They were stripped. The people got upon the boards put across the pit. The witness watched how the execution was taking place. The pits were long and were 3 m deep. Groups of 6 people by turns got upon the board. There were no more than 5 or 6 Germans there⁸⁴. Mrs. Anna from the village of Yazlivchyk saw the truck, driving the Jews from Brody (3 km away). They were taken to the place near the Jewish cemetery. Looking for her lost cow in the forest, she stumbled over a dead body. Probably that was a man who tried to run away and was killed. The body was naked. Mrs. Anna watched how Jews got upon the board and were fired at⁸⁵. Mr. Anton watched the shootings in the village of Ralivka nearby Sambir in spring 1943. Pits had been prepared in advance and boards were put across them. The Jews took off their clothes and got upon the boards. The Nazis stood on the sides and fired the submachine guns⁸⁶. We can say for sure that Mr. Anton saw an execution held on 20-22 May 1943 when several hundred people were shot⁸⁷. The parents of a Jew Iren Langer were taken from the Sambir ghetto just on 22 May. She thought they were brought to Bełżec⁸⁸, but on this very day the Jews of Sambir were shot in the Ralivka forest. Another eyewitness Mr. Ivan from the village of Batiatycki nearby Kamianka Buzka watched a column of Jews led to be shot. A part of them was sent somewhere by train and another part was shot in a trench. The victims took off their clothes and got upon the board. The Nazis fired the machine gun at them. According to the evidence of Mr. Ivan, about 500 people were killed there. He knows that allegedly one person managed to get out of the pit and survived⁸⁹. In Zolochiv the witnesses saw a shooting at the cemetery. This happened in summer soon after the beginning of the

⁸¹ Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944*, 250; *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 770.

⁸² DALO, P-3/1/ 278, p. 7.

⁸³ Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944*, 258.

⁸⁴ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 1778 U.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 1779 U.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 756 U.

⁸⁷ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 825.

⁸⁸ АЗІН, 301/ 1747.

⁸⁹ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 38 U.

war. There was one truck. The pit was 10 m long and 10 m wide. It was not deep. That was a dinner time or just after dinner. Two or three soldiers fired the submachine guns. The Jews did not put off their clothes. However, it is known that most of the Zolochiv Jews were killed in the villages of Yelykhovychi and Zozuli⁹⁰. In the nearest settlement of Bibrka the shooting took place on 13 April 1943. It was committed by the Lviv Zipo, too⁹¹. Mr. Yevstafii remembered the Jews, putting off their clothes and being killed. He says he was passing by the school with boys and saw a naked man, running across the field. The man managed to escape. The witness stated that the people who lived around there could not sleep until the next night as they heard screaming cries. The reason was that Nazis finished off with spades those Jews who got out of the pit⁹². As during the shootings many people fell into the pit still alive, they had a little but a chance to escape. A very important factor was the support of relatives (non-Jews), neighbours, acquaintances, or simply those who sympathized with the fate of Jews. These people were few. Hiding Jews during the occupation was a crime. There was only one punishment and it was the death one⁹³. Mr. Petro served in the *Baudienst*. When they worked not far from the Yaniv camp he saw a shooting of a group of Jews. There were about 100 people there⁹⁴. Mr. Mykhailo from Lysynychi near Lviv, recalled that the scene of execution was enclosed with a barbed-wire fence. He watched how naked people were going to the pit and Nazis shot at them⁹⁵. Mr. Adolph watched trucks, carrying people every day. The trucks were mostly open and the people there were singing in Polish (“Matko Boska, pod twoją obronę”) and in Hebrew. Mr. Adolph knew there were those who tried to escape, but they were shot, and the local people were forced to carry the dead bodies by their carts and horses. The witness watched shootings. The pits had been ready already⁹⁶.

Eyewitnesses also described non-typical ways of executions. Mr. Viacheslav from Turka mentioned some details. He said that Germans ordered the Jews to run and jump into the pit, and the soldiers tried to shoot the victims while they were flying in the air. During this execution there were only two Germans present and both of them were drunk⁹⁷.

The attempts of Jews from Lviv and Brody to organize an uprising are well-known facts. During the actions of liquidation Germans suddenly met with a rebuff. However, there are not enough examples of Jewish resistance during the executions. Yet we can give one. When the Jews, working in the Yaktoriv forced labor camp, were led to the place of execution, one of them attacked a German and start-

⁹⁰ Ibidem, Testimony 2114 U.

⁹¹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 750–751.

⁹² Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 733 U.

⁹³ DALO, R-35/6/228, p. 17.

⁹⁴ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 739 U.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 53 U.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 132 U.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 1522 U.

ed to strangle him. The second guard ran up to them and killed the Jew who was just lying on the first German⁹⁸.

After shooting, Nazis, usually, did not deliver “mercy shots” to the Jews only wounded initially. However, a Soviet forensic medical examination ascertained that there were cases of delivering “mercy shots” and killing with a bayonet near the Yaniv camp in Lviv⁹⁹. All the witnesses from different areas stated that many still living people fell down into the pit. They were either simply wounded or fell down there because of fear. After the pit was closed, the ground had been moving for several days. Since many people fell down into the pits being alive, so those who closed the pits became directly involved in their deaths. If the question “Who was digging a pit?” is easy to answer, then the question “Who was closing the pit?” is sometimes more difficult. This is due to the inability of witnesses to observe the execution for a long time. Only several witnesses watched everything from beginning to end, and the performers themselves did not mention such details during the post-war trials.

Rarely, but still there were cases when Germans left several Jews alive to close pits. During a shooting in Horodok, the Jews Singer and Wollsfeld were wounded and were compelled to close the pit. Singer’s mother was still alive at the bottom but he did what he was ordered to do. After that both of them were told to dig a pit for themselves, and Germans shot them there¹⁰⁰. After the liquidation of the Brody ghetto, on 22 May 1943 some Jews who escaped were caught and kept alive in the camp for a period of time in order to bury those who were shot¹⁰¹. The above-mentioned facts were not a trend. In fact, they were mostly local people who closed the pits as they were ordered to do so by the Nazis and the occupation administration. They were also used for the supporting work. For example, to transport the Jewish clothes.

The following cases approve our statement. In Busk everything took place in the early morning on 21 May 1943. At almost 5 a.m. The pits had been ready already. After the execution the locals were forced to bury the dead bodies. They were given the clothes that remained as recompense¹⁰². Mr. Anton recalled they were just the local people forced to carry the bodies¹⁰³. In Turka the local people also closed the pits after the murder¹⁰⁴. During the liquidation of Jews, working in the Pluhiv forced labor camp, one German fired a machine-gun. All the people, going to the pit, were naked. Local residents closed the pit. There were four of them, and they had been closing it for half of a day. The territory was encircled by the Ukrainian

⁹⁸ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 138 U.

⁹⁹ TSDAVOVU 4620/3/288, p. 57–58.

¹⁰⁰ DALO, P-3/1/ 278, p. 2.; *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 778.

¹⁰¹ *Svitlo v temryavi: Rozpovid’ Simona Sterlinga, jakyi perezhyv Holokost rozkazana nym Fillis Sterling Jakobs* (Ukrainian), (Kyiv: Ukrain’skyi centr vyvchennia istorii Holokostu, 2012), 27.

¹⁰² Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 33, 136, 296, 297, 298, 301–302 U.

¹⁰³ Ibidem, Testimon 136 U.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, Testimony 1522, 1523, 1525, 1526 U.

police. Later on a Jew got out of the pit and escaped¹⁰⁵. Mrs. Olena from the village of Khvativ noted that two trucks came from Olesko (near Busk). She watched the execution. There were approximately 10 Germans. The Jews took off their clothes. Later on, when there was a fetid odour at that place the local people were ordered to close the pit¹⁰⁶. In Medenychi near Drohobych there was a shooting of Jews on the outskirts of the village. The Germans used the pit where the local people took clay. According to one witness (Mrs. Maria), there were about 100 Jews. Then one of the elderly men was forced to close the pit¹⁰⁷. On 9 April 1943 the Lviv Zipo-SD shot 1700 Jews from Rudky near the Bzhezyna forest¹⁰⁸. Before the execution the Jews took off their clothes and valuables. Germans used the local Ukrainians to load things on the trucks¹⁰⁹. In Novyi Yarychiv the ghetto was liquidated on 15–16 January 1943. Speaking about this action, Mr. Orest noted that the locals who had horses and carts were forced by Germans to carry things¹¹⁰. On 27 May 1943 approximately 3,000 Jews of Sokal¹¹¹ were shot by the road Sokal-Tartakiv in an antitank ditch at the distance of 2 km from the town and 1 km from the settlement of Ravshchy-na¹¹². The Nazis threw small children alive into the ditch, and then the adults were taken down there, stripped and forced to lie down naked on the children. After that they were shot. Thus, the pits were “filled up” and then covered with a thin layer of earth. The pits with corps were found by the road Sokal-Tartakiv after the Germans defeat. The first pit was 124 m long, 7 m wide and 3 m deep. The second pit was 100 m long and 3 m deep¹¹³. Eyewitnesses recalled the events especially because of the fact that the local people were forced then to bury the dead bodies. Also, the people remembered how the exhumation conducted by the members of the SESC took place, and how the pits were digging out¹¹⁴.

The common feature in all these cases is that the Germans or the administration chose bystanders, or those who lived nearby to help them. It should be noted that people had not an opportunity to refuse. There is an evidence that one man in Tartakiv was beaten because he did not want to help and to drive a cart to the place of the execution¹¹⁵. However, of course, there were those who did this work voluntarily for profit. Mr. Myroslav from Khodoriv recalled that one man served as a cart

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 143 U.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 37 U.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 1821, 1822 U.

¹⁰⁸ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 819.

¹⁰⁹ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 760 U.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, Testimony 141 U.

¹¹¹ DALO, P-3/1/278, p. 4; *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 830.

¹¹² TSDAGO, 1/23/1068, p. 142–160.

¹¹³ DALO, P-3/1/278, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 18–22 U.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem, Testimony 24 U.

driver in the local Gestapo. He had a cart and horses. His sons began to dress well. Then it turned out that their father brought gold teeth home. It was known that he was present at the executions. He told later that one more man and he were waiting until Jews would undress themselves and their task was to pack Jewish clothes into sacks, put them on the cart and transport everything to the Gestapo building. These two cart drivers even moved boards above the pit¹¹⁶.

The residents of Ralivka knew the pits in the forest were closed just by the members of a *Baudienst* unit¹¹⁷. On 1 April 1943 Germans murdered children. The corpses lay unburied at the Sambir cemetery. Then several men from a *Baudienst* unit came there and dug the graves¹¹⁸. This role of *Baudienst* was an exceptional one.

In general, we know that 111,592 people from the territory of what is now Lviv region were brought to the Belzec death camp¹¹⁹. However, about 90 thousand Jews were executed on the spot¹²⁰. So, about 45% of the local Jewish population was mainly annihilated by shootings. Other kinds of executions such as burning or hanging occurred infrequently. We cannot say there was any tendency at all. Besides, it should be emphasized that some local people were criminals, too. Over 10 Jews were burnt alive in the Peremyshliany synagogue on 4 July 1941 and in the Velyki Mosty synagogue on 6 July 1941¹²¹. This was done just by the local people. In Khodoriv, on the contrary, Germans burnt the synagogue in summer 1942. Escaping Jews were shot¹²².

The facts of setting fire to ghettos during their liquidations are also known. Thus it was in Lviv in early June 1943. The same happened in Yavoriv on April 16 of the same 1943. Only four houses survived. The witnesses heard sounds of shooting. The houses, neighbouring to the ghetto territory, started to burn. Local people extinguished the fire themselves¹²³. It is mentioned in the SESC's documents that there were Jews who burnt alive¹²⁴. On 1 April 1943 300 Jews of Lviv were driven to Horodok to work. Later on, they were placed in a house, which was poured with gasoline and burnt. Germans shot the Jews who tried to escape and threw grenades at them¹²⁵. All this happened on 22 June 1943 in the building of the former choco-

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, Testimony 768 U.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem, Testimony 755 U.

¹¹⁸ АЖИИ, 301/ 1747.

¹¹⁹ Counted according to: Krugłoy, "Deportacje ludności żydowskiej z dystryktu Galicja do obozu zagłady w Belżcu w 1942," 102–107.

¹²⁰ Counted according to: *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 750–751, 755–759, 768–770, 774–778, 781–786, 789–790, 802–810, 815–820, 823–826, 829–831, 834–836, 849–854.

¹²¹ *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol 2: Ghettos in German Occupied Europe, part A, 808, 815.

¹²² Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 765, 766, 767, 768 U.

¹²³ Ibidem, Testimony 738, 744 U.

¹²⁴ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 50.

¹²⁵ DALO, P-3/1/ 278, p. 2–3.

late factory¹²⁶. There is a lot of evidence about this case. Local people remembered quite well that Gestapo did all this at night¹²⁷. The eyewitnesses proved that all the people were locked in the house which was poured with gasoline. Then the house was set on fire. The windows and doors were hammered in with boards¹²⁸.

One should separately mention the destroying of the trails of their crimes by Nazis in summer and autumn 1943. Mass executions took place near the Yaniv camp and the village of Lysynychi nearby Lviv. The corpses were destroyed by the Germans just there, so there was no evidence. Mr. Roman mentioned that Jews were shot and their bodies were burnt. There was a fetid odour in Lysynychi. Mr. Roman heard powerful engines, working there. He did not know what it was¹²⁹. Mrs. Iryna also noted there was a fetid odour¹³⁰. Barbara Blai told about the same things immediately after the war. She testified to the SESC experts that in summer 1943 nobody could pass by Yaniv Street in Lviv as there was a strong smell of burnt corpses. In such a way the dead bodies were destroyed¹³¹. The witnesses of Lysynychi remember there was a special team of Jews, burning corpses¹³². This happened in autumn 1943¹³³.

The above-mentioned evidence is an addition to the well-known facts about the existence of a special 1005 team. Because of the successful Red Army offensive in June 1943, Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsminister* of the Third *Reich*, gave a personal order to conceal the trails of the mass murders of civilians. According to this order the chief of the police and SS in the District of Galicia, *SS-Brigadeführer* Friedrich Katzmann ordered to dig out the corpses of killed people and to burn them. A whole system of organizations and teams with a large staff, devices and equipment was set up for this¹³⁴. In particular, the *Sonderkommando 1005* was formed in Lviv. *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Schellak was its commander and *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Sawizki was Schellak's assistant¹³⁵. *Sonderkommando 1005* started its work on 15 June 1943¹³⁶.

The “death brigade” was a part of this detachment and consisted of 126 people, mostly Jews, imprisoned in the Yaniv camp. Its main task was to exhume the corpses¹³⁷. The bodies were stacked and burnt just at the same places where they had been exhumed. The “death brigade” did it like this. The corpses extracted from the pits,

¹²⁶ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 49–50.

¹²⁷ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 731 U.

¹²⁸ Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 727 U.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, Testimony 54 U.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, Testimony 133 U.

¹³¹ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/287, p. 13–14.

¹³² Yahad – In Unum's Archives, Testimony 41, 132 U.

¹³³ Ibidem, Testimony 131 U.

¹³⁴ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p. 141.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, p. 142.

¹³⁶ Martin Gilbert. *The Jewish tragedy* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1987), 585.

¹³⁷ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p. 141; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/ 289, p. 55.; TSDAVOVU, 3538/1/52, p. 38.

were stacked on special grounds with firewood in the gaps between them¹³⁸. From 1,200 to 1,600 human bodies were put on each woodpile¹³⁹. The stacks were poured with tar or gasoline and were set on fire. Each pile had been burning for 3–5 days. A brigade of stokers was always near the fire, and they raked the piles for better combustion of corpses¹⁴⁰. The nature of the ashes (which consisted of small pieces of bones and larger brittle bone fragments), as it was stated later by a forensic medical examination, testified that the burning of the corpses was done at high temperature¹⁴¹.

After that the rest of the ashes and bones were sifted through special sieves to collect gold objects such as crowns of teeth, cufflinks, watches, etc¹⁴². According to the Jewish survivors Hamaides, Weliczker and others, it is known that after five months of work the brigade found 110 kg of gold after sifting the human ashes and sent them to Germany¹⁴³.

Ashes were gathered and scattered in the field, or buried in 2 m deep pits with 45 cm thick separate layers¹⁴⁴. There were 60 such burial grounds near the Yaniv camp. Taking into account the area of burying and dispersion of ashes (2 sq km), the experts of the SESC suggested that the number of the burned corpses was more than 20 thousand¹⁴⁵.

We can learn how the Jews became the members of the “death brigades” from the evidence of Heinrich Hamaides, “12 of us were taken to be shot. At this time the chief of SD was driving nearby. He ordered to count off six people out of twelve and to send them to Pisky (Dolyna Smerti – “Death Valley”)¹⁴⁶.

The “death brigade” was formed out of 10 groups. Each group was led by a German SS man. To speed up the work a special machine was designed, which crushed the bones that had not burnt. The Germans did not manage to destroy it, and it was found in the territory of the camp by the SESC members¹⁴⁷.

The commission of Soviet experts, basing on technical calculations and evidence of the witnesses, came to the conclusion that the bones crusher milled up to 3 cubic meters of bones per hour. According to the recollections of witnesses, and basing on the results of the forensic medical examination, the fact that there were two main places in Lviv where the corpses were burnt was confirmed. The first place was called Pisky (the Sands), which consisted of 3 ravines behind the Yaniv camp and between the railroad tracks and Yaniv and Jewish cemeteries. The second place was a ravine in the Lysynychi forest.

¹³⁸ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p. 142.

¹³⁹ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 55.

¹⁴⁰ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p.142; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 55; TSDAVOVU, 3538/1/52, p. 38.

¹⁴¹ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/ 288, p. 60.

¹⁴² TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p. 143; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 55.

¹⁴³ TSDAVOVU, 3538/1/52, p. 38.

¹⁴⁴ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p. 143; TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 55.

¹⁴⁵ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/ 288, p. 60.

¹⁴⁶ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ TSDAGO, 57/4/37, p.142.

Not far from the highway Lviv-Vynnyky and near the yeast factory¹⁴⁸ the representatives of the SESC revealed 45 large pits. There were from 500 to 3,500 corpses in each of them¹⁴⁹. It is interesting that Nazis disguised the pits by planting young trees in their places¹⁵⁰. A Jew Heinrich Hamaides recalled that in September 1943 when they (the “death brigade”) burnt all the bodies (near the Yaniv camp), they were taken to the Lychakivski Pisky (Lysynychi), and the machine that could grind bones was immediately brought there, too.¹⁵¹ So, the YiU witnesses from Lysynychi were able to hear how the above-mentioned machine worked.

Leon Weliczker Wells, a member of the “death brigade”, mentioned they went to “work” in Briukhovychi, Dornfeld, Bibrka and Yarychiv. The remains were transported from there to Lviv and burnt¹⁵². Mr. Orest from Novyi Yarychiv recalled that after shootings the corpses were dug out and transported by trucks to the city¹⁵³.

The subject we are discussing here was not studied enough, and it would be difficult to study it without using of new sources and approaches. So, we decided to base our article on the oral testimonies. The evidences collected by the international association Yahad-in-Unum allow us to look at the already known facts in a new light, and, also, in some cases we have an opportunity to add new information, or specify the one that is known. However, the main goal was to reproduce an algorithm of committing the shootings.

It is important to say that when we are researching the destruction of Jews in the territory of the District of Galicia we should notice that mostly the dates of the executions are well-known. This also concerns the numbers of victims, or German units responsible for the killings. But even now some kind of information is very hard to find. First and foremost YiU’s interviews allow us to research the process of the executions. Thanks to them we can learn more information, telling us what the murderers, the victims, the collaborators and the bystanders did in the last minutes. We can understand what kind of places the Nazis chose for the executions and how they brought the Jews to these sites. It is interesting to know who dug the pit. We have also an opportunity to understand in what way the perpetrators and the victims behaved. It may sound terribly, but we can learn more about the “technique” of the murders. One of the most important things to understand is the question: who closed the pits? The last thing to learn is like this: what happened with the shooting place after the murder?

The main method of the murder on the spot was shooting. However, very often the perpetrators did not use bullets for children. They just beat them and threw to

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁹ TSDAVOVU, 4620/3/289, p. 54.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 56.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 3.

¹⁵² Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Janowska road* (Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1999), 217.

¹⁵³ Yahad – In Unum’s Archives, Testimony 141 U.

the pits. We can also notice such kinds of extermination as “the destruction through labor” in camps, burning alive and hanging. The last two happened rarely.

Generally, the large-scale massacres were carried out near big settlements, in the forests (as a rule no further than 3–5 kilometers), or, sporadically, in fields, when there were no any forests. We can explain this because of the fact that the Jewish population was concentrated in the cities or towns ghettos. Jewish population of the small settlements was forced to move to the biggest one. The only exceptions are the forced labor camps. Also, executions took place at the cemeteries within a city or a town. There were less victims then. But the number of shootings which occurred at the cemeteries is high. If a killing happened in any settlement where Jews lived, even a murder of a few people, it was carried out at the cemetery. Those individual executions were held practically at every Jewish cemetery on the territory of the present Lviv region. Of course, there were exceptions. For instance, we can pointed out large-scale massacres happened at the cemeteries in the towns of Rawa Ruska, Sambir, Turka and Busk.

During the abolishing of ghettos, there were victims on their territory. Although, there were cases when Nazis carried out their actions in the streets of the settlements like in Drohobych in November 1942. Otherwise we can not say it was a system.

Preparation of the killing site was connected with preparing needed practical conditions on the spot. The pits very often were dug by Jews just in time of the crime. In some cases the pits had been already prepared before. The locals and the members of the *Baudienst* (Holobutiv near Stryi, Ralivka and Sambir) did it. Sometimes the murderers used natural valleys or ravines, or antitank ditches and trenches, for instance. We have only one testimony (Novyi Yarychiv) where Nazis prepared the pit themselves. They throw a grenade there.

The Jews were delivered to the killing sites in two ways. The first one was on foot in columns, when the final destination was within the settlement. The victims were transported to the place of a murder by trucks in other cases.

Before the execution begun, the victims mostly had been already naked. The murderers forced them to divide into two groups. The smallest one was directed to the shooting place. The others, waiting for their turn nearby, were guarded. There was one or two board putt on the pit. At first, the board was located at the edge, but then Germans or collaborators shifted it to the centre and to the other edge. Jews were forced to get on it. The Nazis shot at them using cross-fire. Although, there was another technique in some cases. The Jews from Sokal lay face down in the pits and thus they were killed. According to the evidence in Turka Jews were forced to run and jump into the pit. The Nazis were trying to shoot them in the flight. The last example was an exception.

A lot of Jews were wounded and after that they were still alive. Since many people fell down into the pits being alive, so those who closed the pits became directly involved in their deaths. The victims who were stronger or were not wounded had a

possibility to run away. Nazis did not close the pits. Mostly, the locals were in charge of this. They were forced to do this by the local administration and by the Germans. In some cases the perpetrators were walking through the settlement and looking for diggers. Local people, either Ukrainians or Poles did not want to do this. There is evidence that the German troops or the members of Ukrainian police sometimes gave the locals Jewish clothes if they dug the pits. There was such a case in Busk.

After the executions, the locals observed the killing sites, and they noticed that the ground was moving. We can say that some wounded people were able to survive, so they got out of the pit. However, it was not the hardest thing to do. Surviving was more real only if the victim had some acquaintances among Ukrainians or Poles. In many cases the locals hide Jews.

Starting from summer 1943 Nazis started to destroy facts of their crimes. For instance, using the “death brigade” in Lviv they burned practically all the corpses which were buried near the city. But this did not work. The authorities of the SESC investigated all the places where the “death brigade” was working and the number of victims was counted there.

The learning of the Holocaust’s history implies not only a reproduction of a sequence of dates, events, numbers of victims and the ascertainment of the amenability of the criminals. Without a doubt, they are the principles of any research. However, it is equally important to reproduce an algorithm of committing the crime. This is just what we are going to reveal in this research on the example of the destruction of those Jews who lived in what is now Lviv region. This territory was a part of the District of Galicia formed on 1 August 1941. The territory of the present Lviv region was the region the most settled by Jews in the whole Ukraine. That is why it was a special one.

“ЇХ ВБИЛИ НА МІСЦІ”: ЗНИЩЕННЯ ЄВРЕЇВ ПІД ЧАС НАЦИСТСЬКОЇ ОКУПАЦІЇ НА ТЕРИТОРІЇ ЛЬВІВСЬКОЇ ОБЛАСТІ

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У статті на матеріалах міжнародної асоціації Yahad-in-Unum (Париж, Франція) проаналізовано процес здійснення масових страт єврейського населення під час нацистської окупації на території сучасної Львівської області. Велику частину галицьких євреїв вивезли до табору смерті Белжець (з березня до грудня 1942 р.). На досліджуваній території ще з середини жовтня 1941 р. була розбудована ціла система таборів примусової праці, де тисячі євреїв вмирали від виснаження і знущань. Перші

численні розстріли були проведені айнзатцгрупами відразу ж після початку німецько-радянської війни. На території новоствореного дистрикту Галичина масові екзекуції сталися на початку жовтня 1941 р. і здійснювались постійно протягом двох років. Вони стали одним із основних способів “остаточного вирішення єврейського питання”. На території дистрикту Галичина в роки окупації було знищено понад півмільйона євреїв. Приблизно половину з них було розстріляно на місці. У даному дослідженні, вивчаються етапи проведення розстрілів: пошук місця, його підготування, екзекуція, закопування ям, місце вбивства опісля. Проаналізовано усні свідчення очевидців, на основі яких вдалося прояснити ситуацію, що робили вбивці, свідки та жертви під час страти.

Ключові слова: Голокост, євреї, гестапо, Львівська область, дистрикт Галичина.

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