



The Extermination of Two Ukrainian Jewish Communities

TESTIMONY OF A GERMAN ARMY OFFICER

Oberleutnant (Lieutenant) ERWIN BINGEL
P.O.W. No. 2406004

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Wednesday, 15.8.1945

This Report deals with the mass shootings of Jews in the years 1941–42 in Vinnitsa and the town of Uman and its sub-district.

MY TRAINING unit was the 87th Infantry Regiment, Wiesbaden. We were part of the 36th Division of the Twelfth Army. In this unit I participated in the 1940 Western Campaign. On June 14, 1940, I was wounded and taken to Hanau on Main, Germany, where I was confined to a military hospital. I was discharged from there in December, 1940. My disablement made it impracticable for me to re-join an infantry regiment, but, on the other hand, my application for discharge from the army had been rejected, I was attached to Landeschützen Battalion 783, which was also part of the 12th Army. It was the task of this unit to guard prisoners-of-war taken captive during the Western Campaign. In the initial stage, this task was accomplished by the unit in strict conformity with existing provisions.

On 1.9.1941, we were replaced by another unit and ordered to proceed to Lvov. Meanwhile, the Battalion had been reinforced by G.V.H., Av. and D.U.¹ people from the different units.

Our new task was to take over a transit camp. The guard unit consisted of the 3rd Company led by Hauptmann (Captain) Becker; the 4th Company led by Oberleutnant (Lieutenant) Riecke, and the 2nd Company was led by myself, until the following events had taken place.

[p. 2] At first I remained with my Company in Germany, handing

¹ G.V.H.=fit for home guard duty

Av. =fit for physical labour

D.U. =fit for military service.

over the respective camps to the succeeding units, whilst the other two companies were already on the move eastwards.

On 7.9.1941, I reached the Polish frontier. Our marching route led us through Galicia, in the direction of Lvov. Unless one was particularly devoid of feeling, one could not help noticing the measures adopted in this part of Poland against the Jewish population. For example, when SS soldiers walked on a footpath and some Jews approached from the opposite direction, it seemed to be the order of the day to deprive these people of their right, by kicking them like dogs off the footpath. Or, if they had forgotten to take off their hats in time, they would find themselves lying on the road. These occurrences were not likely to make one raise one's head with soldierly pride. On the contrary; one had to be ashamed of wearing the uniform of a country in which things like these were permissible.

Deeply disappointed, we travelled towards our destination.

On 12.9.1941 we arrived at Vinnitsa where we met the unit which had already taken over the transit camp at the Vinnitsa airport. The guard duties at this camp were the responsibility of the 3rd Company under Hauptmann Becker.

This Company was soon to earn a reputation for the acts of cruelty which it committed in the camps under its control. A detailed account of these deeds is given at the end of my report, as is a list of names and particulars of the persons involved.

[p. 3] We had been barely two days in Vinnitsa when we received orders to proceed to Uman. We arrived there on September 15. I reported to the Town Commandant's office and received further orders. These were: firstly, to have all railroads in this area guarded permanently; secondly to surround the airport of Uman. To these orders, a Special Order had been added, to the effect that the airport of Uman was to be closed the following day to all traffic, including members of the German Army.

On the appointed day, my Company, strengthened by reinforcements, marched to the airport. There was a certain disquiet prevalent among the troops, as it could be presumed with certainty that something special was bound to happen. From the town, voices of a crowd of people singing Russian melodies could be heard, intimating that large masses of people were on the move and drawing near. The

² In the original erroneously: three.

main streets could be seen very clearly and along them huge columns marching six abreast came by, singing all the time, approaching the confines of the airfield. We soon observed that they included not only men, but also women and children of all ages. Nobody could imagine the possible purpose of bringing this crowd of people there, and the whole affair became still more mysterious when I was given orders to withdraw my guards from the nearest posts. These guards were replaced by Feldgendarmerie-Oberleutnant (Lieutenant of Field Gendarmerie) Georg Baier, whose detailed description is to be found at the end of this report. I consequently withdrew my men up to a distance of 400 metres, with the exception of those maintaining a few main posts stationed on the Uman-Kiev road. The latter were separated by a distance of only 200 metres from the place where the people had been brought. In the meantime, it became light and it was possible to see everything most exactly. As we could not approach the site, the only alternative we had was to find out by attentive observation what was the meaning of this rally.

[p. 4] When the people had crowded into the square in front of the airport, a few trucks drove up from the direction of the town. From these vehicles a troop of field gendarmes alighted, and were immediately led aside. A number of tables was then unloaded from one of the trucks and placed in a line at distances from each other. Meanwhile, a few more trucks with Ukrainian Militiamen commanded by SS officers had arrived. These Militiamen had work tools with them and one of their trucks also carried chloride of lime.

I now have to revert to the preceding day. On that day, long ditches . . . had been dug in the square in front of the airport.

The truck now drove alongside these ditches and the men on it unloaded 6-8 sacks of chloride of lime at intervals of 15-20 metres.

In the meantime, a number of transport planes (Model 'Junker 52') had landed at the airport. Out of these stepped several units of SS soldiers who, having fallen in, marched up to the Field Gendarmerie unit, subsequently taking up positions alongside it. As could be discerned from the distance, the two units were obviously being sworn in. I was then informed by my interpreter, who was Jewish—which fact, however, was known only to me personally—that he had learned that the people had been brought together following upon an order which had been posted in the streets of Uman and, which

had been given the widest publicity throughout Uman sub-district by the Ukrainian Militia. The order was worded as follows:

Concerning the Jewish population in the town of Uman and its sub-district:

[p. 5] Order

For the purpose of preparing an exact census of the Jewish population in the town of Uman, and its sub-district, all Jews, of all ages, must appear on the day appointed hereunder at the respective places of registration.

Persons failing to comply with this order will be punished most severely.

The result of this proclamation was, of course, that all persons concerned appeared as ordered. This relatively harmless summons, we thought, could be connected in some way or other with the preparations we were observing.

It was because we took the matter so lightly that we were all the more horrified at what we witnessed during the next few hours.

One row of Jews was ordered to move forward and was then allocated to the different tables where they had to undress completely and hand over everything they wore and carried. Some still carried jewellery which they had to put on the table. Then, having taken off all their clothes, they were made to stand in line in front of the ditches, irrespective of their sex. The commandos then marched in behind the line and began to perform the inhuman acts, the horror of which is now known to the whole world.

With automatic pistols and 0.8 pistols these men mowed down the line with such zealous intent that one could have supposed this activity to have been their life-work.

Even women carrying children a fortnight to three weeks old, sucking at their breasts, were not spared this horrible ordeal. Nor were mothers spared the terrible sight of their children being gripped by their little legs and put to death with one stroke of the pistol-butt or club, [p. 6] thereafter to be thrown on the heap of human bodies in the ditch, some of which were not quite dead. Not before these mothers had been exposed to this worst of all tortures did they receive the bullet that released them from this sight.

The people in the first row thus having been killed in the most

inhuman manner, those of the second row were now ordered to step forward. The men in this row were ordered to step out and were handed shovels with which to heap chloride of lime upon the still partly-moving bodies in the ditch. Thereafter, they returned to the tables and undressed.

After that they had to set out on the same last walk as their murdered bretheren, with one exception—this time the men of the alternative firing squad surpassed each other in cruelty, lest they lag behind their predecessors.

The air resounded with the cries of the children and the tortured. With senses numbed by what had happened, one could not help thinking of wives and children back home who believed they had good reason to be proud of their husbands and fathers, who, they thought, were fighting heroically in the ranks of the German Army on behalf of the Fatherland, whilst the so-called Elite troop, always referred to as unique, perpetrated the most horrible acts of cruelty in the honourable uniform of a nation.

Two of my men who had been standing closest to the scene, left their posts before the appointed time of relief.

Oberfeldwebel (Sergeant-Major) Renner, whose description and private address I have included at the end of this report, withdrew his men up to our line. This Sergeant-Major and another man were taken to the Lvov [p. 7] field hospital the following day, both having suffered a complete pervous breakdown.

The whole 'action' took place between 8 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. At 5 p.m. the square lay deserted in deadly desolation and only some dogs, attracted by the scent of blood in the air, were roving the site. The shots were still ringing in our ears. The whole thing might have seemed to me to be a terrifying nightmare but for the sparsely covered ditches which gleamed at us accusingly.

All this was so incomprehensible. How could a nation have the audacity to perpetrate, through its supreme leader and his Elite troop, acts as such as these for which there could be no excuse under any circumstances?

When we returned to our living quarters, my men rushed at me and asked me to make representations at the Commandant's office, requesting a justification for what had happened. I acceded to this request by going with the Company Officer to the Town Commandant, demanding an explanation from him. I was given to under-

stand that a special, express order had been issued by Reichsführer SS Himmler, and personally signed by him.

Upon request, I was allowed to see this document. It read:

Soldiers of the Waffen-SS!

In the forest of Vinnitsa, District of Kiev, six of our best officers were found assassinated, hanging on a tree.

The details are as follows:

They were found naked, with their legs pointing upwards, their bodies slit open and their intestines showing.

[p. 8] As a result of this case, I have decided upon the following measures: As it may be taken for granted that this action was carried out by Jewish partisans, I hereby order that in the District of Kiev 10,000 Jews—irrespective of sex or age—are to die for each of the six officers mentioned above.

Even the child in the cradle must be trampled down like a poisonous toad.

May each one of you be mindful of his oath and do his duty, whatever may be demanded of you.

We are living in an epoch of iron during which it is also necessary to sweep with iron-made brooms.

This was the wording of the Order directly issued to this murder unit to be carried out in the most gruesome and horrible way.

Proof is available that 24,000 persons were shot dead that day. The figure was computed by my men and was included in the total figure of 62,000 Jews shot dead, which was later mentioned in a press report. All the other figures I have furnished in this report were also confirmed at the time by the free Ukrainian press.

On the following day, I was told that two of my men had been arrested. They had taken snapshots of the action and after having developed the pictures, had apparently been betrayed by someone, since they were apprehended and detained by the field gendarmerie. Some of these photographs are still in the possession of the persons named at the end of my report. Both men were subsequently sentenced to one year's imprisonment and served their term in the military prison [p. 9] of Gernersheim on Rhein.

The only thing I could do for them was to get hold of some of their personal belongings, including some of the snapshots they had

taken. I made it a point to see to it that these belongings were taken back home and handed over to their wives. I can therefore presume with certainty that they can still be procured upon demand.

Subsequent to the incident described above, we were again ordered back to Vinnitsa, where our Company was ordered to clean up the airport area. On 19.9.1941 I was compelled to send 20 per cent of my men on leave of absence, since, as a result of their recent experiences, they were quite incapable of performing any duty.

On September 22, 1941, we witnessed an action, that did not lag behind that of Uman in any respect, the only difference being, that since we were then on duty, the spectacle took place in close proximity to our quarters. I was hence in a good position to take two complete reels of film, thus securing reliable proof of this second wicked act which I hoped would be brought to the attention of world public opinion at the appropriate time. These pictures have also been preserved to this very day and can be obtained at any time.

The number of Jewish victims proved to have been killed in this 'action' amounted to 28,000. This figure, too, was later confirmed by the free Ukrainian press. The remaining 6,000³ of which the figure of 62,000 falls short, were shot or beaten to death during a manhunt against the Jews. Details of this murderous drive will follow. The particulars of those responsible are also included at the end of this report.

Erwin Bingel

[p. 10]

Friday, 17.8.1945

Continued from the report of 16.8.1945. Number of last page: 9.

After the two mass murders in Vinnitsa and Uman, described above, another 'action' was initiated as detailed below:

The higher authorities apparently presumed—and rightly so—that this 'action' whereby the so-called Elite-troop had been ordered to execute abominable, murderous acts, had resulted, or might result in a lose of prestige impairing the German war effort. The following new line of action was thus taken:

The Ukrainian, SS-trained Militia was ordered to move into Uman. This body was again commanded by a small group of SS officers and N.C.O.'s.

³ Thus in the original.

By this manouevre, the events which were about to take place would assume a national-Ukrainian character. This purpose was fully attained, as transpired from the report carried by the so-called free Ukrainian press following the new 'action'.

The large headlines read as follows: "Popular justice is meted out! A nation passes independent judgement!" The report that followed was clear and outspoken, although I must, point out, it was far from disclosing the whole truth. The aforesaid 'action' took another 6,000 human victims, which figure was officially confirmed. I should like to point out in this connection that I saw only a fraction of the occurrences. The same applies to my men whom I have enumerated as witnesses in this report.

In the morning, at 10.15, wild shooting and terrible human cries reached our ears. At first, I failed to grasp what was taking place, but when I approached the window from which I had a broad view [p. 11] over the whole of the town park, the following spectacle unfolded before my eyes and those of my men who, alerted by the tumult, had meanwhile gathered in my room.

Ukrainian Militia on horseback, armed with pistols, rifles and long, straight cavalry swords, were riding wildly inside and around the town park. As far as we could make out, they were driving people along before their horses—men, women, and children. A shower of bullets was then fired at this human mass. Those not hit outright were struck down with the swords. Like some ghostly apparition, this horde of Ukrainians, let loose and commanded by SS officers, trampled savagely over human bodies, ruthlessly killing innocent children, mothers and old people whose only crime was that they had escaped the great mass murder, so as to be eventually shot or beaten to death like wild animals.

This sort of activity was headlined by the Ukrainian press: "A country destroys its torturers."

During the next few hours, we were to see the following spectacle. In the municipal park of Vinnitsa there is a pit; in front of this pit human corpses, that had been brought hither from the entire neighbourhood, were dumped on the ground. The bodies were those of some of the murdered Jews. These corpses were then placed into the above-mentioned pit, layer upon layer, and covered with chloride of lime.

In this way 213 bodies were finally disposed of, after which the

opening of the pit was bricked up. With the insertion of the last brick the bloody deed was well camouflaged—but not forgotten for a long time to come.

We did everything to produce documentary evidence for future reference. Photographs were taken, and reports signed by eye-witnesses were drafted in order that a unique collection of documentary evidence would be our disposal.

[p. 12] How correctly we had acted was to be confirmed by an event that took place some time later. I had meanwhile left Vinnitsa and my Company had been commissioned to guard the Vinnitsa-Uman railway-track.

One day I had to attend to some urgent business in Lvov. I had a car made ready and proceeded there. On our way we passed through Vinnitsa, where the driver stopped at a newsstand. My interpreter bought a newspaper and read aloud to me a report which sounded so strange that I decided to get to the root of the matter.

In this official press bulletin we read that 213 corpses had been unearthed in the Vinnitsa town park and that this discovery was presumed to be the remains of so many people shot by the Russian G.P.U. The type and manner of the bullet-wounds, it was stated, supported the credibility of this theory. At the end of the communique mention was made of a number of medical experts who had confirmed this conjecture. The experts came from the Baltic countries, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Norway and the Balkan countries.

All these gentlemen, led, of course, by a few German personalities, wished to certify—and subsequently did—that they were familiar with G.P.U. methods as well as with the various forms of fusillade practised by them. How baseless and utterly ridiculous the whole frame-up actually was, may be concluded from the following. My interest in this specific case having been aroused, I promptly went to our former quarters to have a look at the strange affair in the town park.

What I saw was this: in front of the previously-mentioned pit the corpses had been laid out in long rows so that town's population could not fail to be aware of them. [p. 13] These corpses were the same that had been placed in the pit two months previously. There was not the slightest doubt that this was so.

Deeply shaken by this base manoeuvre which sought to shift the blame for murders committed by our own people to others, we left

the gruesome sight. It is now my task to produce proof that these suspicions raised against an official institution of another state are absolutely without foundation.

That proof is contained in a written statement drafted and signed by myself and underwritten by eye-witnesses. *Erwin Bingel*

[p. 14]

Saturday, 18.8.1945

The particulars of those responsible for the Uman and Vinnitsa massacres were secured with the help of the authorities in Germany and a few persons who had had direct contact with the persons concerned or who had watched the ruthlessness at close quarters from the rear-lying forward positions where they had been posted.

From the day of their departure, Obergefreiter (Corporal) Herbolt (whose particulars will be found in the attached list of witnesses) received orders from me to ascertain the names of all officers involved in these murder-gangs.

Under some pretence, he set out on his journey and trailed the units concerned for fourteen days. His information was checked by me and added to the other data and evidence already compiled so as to give an overall picture. To the best of my knowledge, all the individuals who took part in the investigation (their particulars are included in the attached list of witnesses) are still alive. Consequently, a relevant inquiry should be possible at any time.

In the following pages, the persons concerned are mentioned by name and details are given of their connections with the particular actions associated with them. In addition, photographs are available of most of the men involved, which were taken with a view to constituting, in due course, incriminating evidence and documentary proof against them.

Erwin Bingel

[p. 15]

Saturday, 18.8.1945

The particulars of the leader are as follows:

SS-Hauptsturmführer (*Captain*) *Willers Georg*.

Age: 38; Height: 184 cm; Oval face, broad, Nordic nose; strong set of teeth; fixed, cruel, smile; long feminine hands. Scar from left ear to corner of mouth. Married, 2 children. Address: Berlin-Charlottenburg.

The task of this man was, firstly, to swear in the two units, and then to see to the execution of the order.

He discharged this duty in the most brutal way.

His Deputy was: SS-Hauptsturmführer (*Captain*) Ernst Kohlhammer. [p. 16]

Kohlhammer's particulars are as follows:

SS-Hauptsturmführer's (*Captain*) Kohlhammer Ernst.

Age: 39; *Height* 174 cm; *Hair*: black; Full, fresh face, looks 28 or 30; square, athletic build; big birthmark on his right cheek; sharp, penetrating regard; easily excitable disposition. Address: *Stuttgart 13 a*.

It was this man's task to supervise the undressing of the victims and the removal of their valuables and to drive them to their graves, which he did with a display of abuse such as can hardly be imagined and in the most brutal and cruel manner possible.

He was assisted by Obersturmführer (*Lieutenant*) Hans Joachim.

[p. 17] The particulars of Hans Joachim are as follows:

SS-Obersturmführer (*Lieutenant*) Hans Joachim.

Age: 37; *Height*: 176 cm; *Hair*: dark-blond; Strong eyebrows; ears somewhat excessively large; strongly curved nose; very broad hands, with hairy surface; overconfident manner. Married, 1 child. Address: *Kottbus, Arheiligenstrasse 52*.

This man was Kohlhammer's assistant and competed with him lest he be outdone by his commander. He complied with all orders in the most brutal way. He considered that to be humane was to be weak, as he is reported to have said on several occasions.

He was assisted by Oberscharführer (*Sergeants*) Karlheinz Bencke, Siegfried Heidemann, Erhard Markhuber, Karl Junghans.

[p. 18] The particulars of the Oberscharführer (*Sergeants*) Bencke, Heidemann, Markhuber, Junghans are as follows:

SS-Oberscharführer Karlheinz Bencke.

Age: 26; *Height*: 174 cm; *Hair*: black, parted on the left. Bushy eyebrows meeting in the middle, wide mouth, small scar on right cheek. Single. Address: *Breslau 17*.

SS-Oberscharführer Siegfried Heidemann.

Age: 26; *Height*: 174 cm; *Hair*: dark-blond, strongly curled. High forehead, big, narrow nose, narrow mouth; cold and reserved ex-

pression; wears a heavy, silver signet-ring on left hand, as well as gold, foreign-looking ring over his wedding ring. Married. Address: *Troppau* (Silesia)[!]

[p. 19] SS-Oberscharführer Erhard *Marckhuber*.

Age: 27; *Height*: 181 cm; *Hair*: bright-blond, parted on right side. Broadly-built, muscular figure, broad face; somewhat irritable; always bombastic, voice somewhat too hard. Single. Address: *Munich*.

SS-Oberscharführer Karl *Junghans*.

Age: 26; *Height*: 173 cm; *Hair*: bright-blond, slightly curled. Slim figure, forehead somewhat excessively sloped, self-confident demeanour, talks slowly, and has a good command of the Russian language. His father was in Russian captivity during the First World War. Single. Address: *Darmstadt*.

These four men did not fall short of their mentors.

[p. 20] The particulars of Obersturmführer *Kruzek* are as follows:

SS-Obersturmführer (*Lieutenant*) Josef *Kruzek*.

Age: 37; *Height*: 176 cm; *Hair*: bright-blond. Full, round face with healthy complexion; broadly-built figure; large hands; limps on left leg, probably as a result of a wound he is purported to have received. Married. 1 child. Address: *Düsseldorf*.

This man directed the chase [in the park of Vinnitsa], and was consequently one of its most brutal participants.

Feldgendarmerie Hauptmann (*Captain of Field Gendarmerie*) Friedrich *Wolf*.

Age: 42; *Height*: 170 cm; *Hair*: dark-blond, slightly grey, parted on the right. Broad, full face, mouth a little too small, penetrating look; arrogant, commanding tone; provocative posture.

He too urged his unit, over and over again, to carry out the abominable deed.

[p. 21]

Sunday, 19.8.45

Particulars, of 18.8.45, continued.

The particulars of the accessory Feldgendarmerie Leutnant (2nd *Lieutenant of Field Gendarmerie*) Keller are as follows:

Feldgendarmerie Leutnant Walter *Keller*.

Age: 40; Height: 173 cm; Hair: dark-blond, very thin, with bald patches round the temples. Head somewhat large, imprint of uniform cap always visible on his forehead, strong body; wears two wedding rings. Widowed. Address: Mainz.

This man directed the burial operation and the reception of confiscated jewellery. He was assisted by his overzealous collaborator Feldgendarmerie Hauptwachtmeister (*Head Constable of Field Gendarmerie*) Georg *Neidhammer* who cooperated with him in every possible way.

[p. 22] Feldgendarmerie Leutnant (*2nd Lieutenant of Field Gendarmerie*) Franz *Knorr*.

Age: 43; Height: 174 cm; Hair: black, progressively grey. Bushy eyebrows, deeply set eyes, somewhat bony jaw, of robust appearance; an extreme pedant; talks in a very roundabout manner and at great length; holder of the Baltic Cross. Married, 2 children. Address: Zwickau, Upper Silesia [!]

This man molested the mothers walking to their graves, snatching their children out of their arms and hurling them into the air before they fell into the ditches filled with corpses.

Feldgendarmerie Leutnant (*2nd Lieutenant of Field Gendarmerie*) Hans *Fasshuber*.

Age: 40; Height: 170 cm; Hair: dark-blond, short. Low forehead, small nose, and sensual lips; very mean manner of speech, leaves almost all sentences uncompleted; easily irritable and explodes in anger, always wears an expression of dissatisfaction.

He, too, did not fall short of Herr *Knorr*.

Address: *Munich*.

[p. 23] Feldgendarmerie Oberleutnant (*Lieutenant of Field Gendarmerie*) Joachim *Keller*.

Age: 42; Height: 174 cm; Hair: black, always neatly parted, with slightly grey patches round the temples. Narrow face, youthful appearance, voice is in marked contrast to facial expression. Married, 2 children. Address: Essen Barbeck.

This man, too, took his commission very seriously, and did not lag behind the others in any way.

Feldgendarmerie Hauptwachtmeister (*Head Constable of Field Gendarmerie*) Georg *Neidhammer*.

Age: 39; *Height*: 174 cm; *Hair*: blond, slightly curled. Nose somewhat broad, otherwise expression of face—mediocre; strong body build. Married, 2 children. Address: *Kassel* in the military living quarters. His place of departure was *Mainz-Gonsenheim*. He was the right-hand man of Oberleutnant *Keller*.

[p. 24] The enquiries regarding these particulars were conducted by Obergefreiter (*Corporal*) Max *Herbort*.

Residence: *Mainz*. Profession: *Employee of a Detective Agency*. His calling guarantees meticulous discharge of his commission. He also photographed these men. *Herbort* is an educated person, with a very contemplative personality, soldierly appearance, speaks curtly and sparingly. He is married and has two children.

I must add that all enquiries conducted in this case date back to the winter of 1941/42. With regard to ascertaining the places of residence, we obtained the information at that time through the different registration offices in the districts where the accused had been registered.

The above-mentioned men were the leaders and perpetrators of the murders at *Uman* and *Vinnitsa*. They led various units which were composed as follows:

The SS unit consisted of men whose job it was to raise the siege on *Rostov*. At that time they formed an SS marching company which as yet had no field post designation. They were given such designation only after being attached as Reserve group to a certain Company. Their place of departure was *Breslau*. They were intended for service in the "Totenkopfverbände" (the Death Skull units) employed in the South-Eastern sector.

[p. 25] The unit of the Field Gendarmerie was led by Hauptmann *Wolf*. His unit had been trained in *Mainz-Gonsenheim* and was intended for service in *Serbia* and *Croatia*. His unit consisted of men who, prior to their training course for front-line activities, had been attached to the ordinary police (*Ordnungspolizei*), and for the most part, had also been members of the SS.

The unit numbered 240 men and was subordinated to SS Hauptsturmführer Georg *Willers* who also swore it in.

From observing the manner in which they discharged their duties,

it was impossible to claim that they did what they did under coercion. On the contrary, my impression is that they were selected people who had volunteered for this operation.

The witnesses of all these occurrences are mentioned in detail on the following pages. I have included only those eye-witnesses who were still alive in February 1945 and with whom I had a conference in *Hanau on Main* on the 2nd of February on the subject of this case, at which time we came to a clear conclusion as to what steps we had to take in this matter.

Erwin Bingel

[p. 26]

Monday, 20.8.1945

The persons eligible as witnesses are enumerated hereafter:

1. The soldiers of my Company who were on duty in the immediate neighbourhood of the site of the shooting.

2. The interpreter of my Company.

3. My Company Officer who, in addition, took an active part later on in procuring the photographs, and thus also played a major role in compiling the evidence. The Company Officer referred to, Lieutenant (*2nd Lieutenant*) *Berger*, was charged with arranging for the discharge of a section of the Russian P.O.W.'s from the battalion. The prisoners in question were living in a transit camp within a radius of 60 kms. from the town of Uman. The reason for their release was the desire of the German Army to make a generous gesture *vis-à-vis* these captives; but the main reason seems to have been, the acute shortage of food, which had to be brought through the supply lines, making it quite impossible to feed the prisoners-of-war even on a minimum basis.

In consequence of this commission, Lieutenant *Berger* was in a position to act quite independently, had his own service area and, at leisure, was able to set about procuring the necessary documentary evidence which, in addition to his official duties, he did most conscientiously. His sensible nature demanded justice and punishment for the terrible, abominable murders he had witnessed.

[p. 27] The first witness is my Company Officer, Lieutenant der Reserve (*2nd Lieutenant of the Reserves*), *Siegfried Berger*.

Age: 44; Height: 175 cm; Hair: dark-blond, parted on the left. Has a scar on his right cheek, a narrow, oval-shaped face, athletic figure; high-pitched voice; narrow hands, signet ring on finger of right hand. Berger is married and the father of two children.

In 1936 he came to Germany from America with his family and was most unfortunate in being unable to obtain an exit visa to return there. His visit thus turned into a compulsory, permanent residence in Germany. He was promptly recruited to the army and from then on unable to get his discharge.

His address is: *Wiesbaden*, Newabergasse [?] 174.

His Regiment is 7/I.R.87 Wiesbaden, 36 Div., 12.A.K.

His last station in the army was *Würzburg* where he probably surrendered to the American military authorities. My presumption is due to the fact that we had been in agreement as to what course of action we should take when the time came.

[p. 28] The second witness in this matter is my personal interpreter, whose particulars are as follows:

Name: Samuel Metzger; Age: 37; Height: 178 cm; Hair: black, cut short.

Samuel *Metzger* served in the Red Army and was captured by the Germans in the battle of the river Bug. He is the son of the hosiery shop owner Metzger of *Frankfurt am Main* and very well known to me from that town. When the persecutions against the Jews set in, he fled with many others to Poland, stayed for some considerable time in Galicia and later sought to make Bukowina his home. From there he had to flee again when the Germans entered the region. He subsequently joined the Russian armed forces.

I found him in a transit camp for prisoners-of-war, from which I arranged for him to be attached to my Company to spare him the inhuman treatment to which war prisoners were being subjected. He is, consequently, also a witness of the cruelties that took place in this camp where he had had to languish before I took him with me.

[p. 29] As third witness I can mention Obergefreiter (*Corporal*) Ernst *Velten*.

His particulars are:

Obergefreiter (*Corporal*) Ernst *Velten*.

Age: 32; Height: 168 cm; Hair: dark-blond, parted on the left. Arched forehead, slightly curved nose, somewhat wide mouth, his complexion always pale; talks rapidly. His training unit was Infantry Regiment 87, Wiesbaden. He was stationed at a position near the landing strip from which he could follow what was happening.

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Velten was sentenced to one year's imprisonment in Gernersheim on Rhein, for taking pictures of the atrocities, as I mentioned previously in this report. Address: *Mainz—Gonsenheim*.

Witness No. 4 is Obergefreiter Hans *Burkardt*.

Age: 32; *Height*: 169 cm; *Hair*: black, wavy, parted on left. Small face, small mouth, solid figure. Burkardt served together with Velten in the I.R. 87, Wiesbaden, he, too, took photographs and like Velten, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

Both are simple, honest men with a strong sense of justice. Address: *Wiesbaden-Erkenheim*.

[p. 30] Witness No. 5 is Gefreiter (L. Cpl.) Heinz *Ruppenthal* who together with Velten was stationed in the vicinity of the landing strip. *Gefreiter Heinz Ruppenthal*.

Age: 29; *Height*: 170 cm; *Hair*: dark-blond, parted on left side. Smooth, oval-shaped face, slightly curved nose.

Ruppenthal, too, is a member of Regiment 87.

Address: *Saarbrücken, Kohlenhalde 14*.

Witness No. 6 is Unteroffizier Kurt *Velter*.

Age: 31; *Height*: 172 cm; *Hair*: black, parted on the left. Full, round-shaped face; simple manner of speech, very reticent, scrutinizes his fellow-men intently. He was the leader of the guard unit on the landing strip. He lives in *Sossenheim* near Mainz, and his home regiment is also the I.R. 87.

Witness No. 7 is: Unteroffizier Heinz *Hochrath*.

Age: 32; *Height*: 174 cm; *Hair*: dark-blond, parted on the right. Thin, but tall-looking figure, quiet disposition, very sparing in his speech. Hochrath was posted on the main road leading to Kiev. Address: *Kaiserslautern*.

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List of witnesses of 20.8.1945, cont.

Unteroffizier Peter *Krumeich* may also be regarded as an important witness. From where he stood, the whole field could be observed, more or less. His particulars are as follows:

Age: 32; *Height*: 178 cm; *Hair*: ginger-red very curly. Full, freck-

led face, a shooting scar on his right cheek, stocky, athletic build. Married, 2 children. Address: *Sobernheim* near Wiesbaden. His home garrison: *Wiesbaden*, I.R. 87, Gersdorfkaserne.

Oberfeldwebel (*Sergeant Major*) *Renner* is also very important as a witness. He had to withdraw his men before the usual time of relief, as they were unable to watch these murders passively.

His particulars are as follows:

Age: 45; *Height*: 169 cm; *Hair*: light-blond, short cropped. Quiet, full features, speaks in Viennese dialect. Married, 4 children. Address: *Vienna*.

[p. 32] In concluding this list of witnesses, I should like to state the following:

The individually mentioned persons, all of whom belonged to my Company, have all been active in procuring and accomplishing the photographic and documentary evidence. Each one of these men has submitted his own report, without any outward pressure or influence, in his own style and wording. I believe that thus a clear and overall picture for the benefit of the prosecution has been created.

Other individual witnesses may also be questioned on conditions in the transit camp of Uman. I shall report on this camp in my following report.*

On concluding the compilation of documentary evidence on the first case, I hope that at long last the day will come for which all the members of my Company have been waiting, when the guilty will receive the just punishment they have earned.

Erwin Bingel,
POW No.2406004

* [Not printed here. Testimony concerning this camp was taken from Bingel on 27.12.45 by the Soviet Prosecutor who presented extracts from it at the session of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg on 13.2.46. Cf. *IMT*, Vol. VII, pp. 395-397.]