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STAROKONSTANTINOV

Pre-1941: Starokonstantinov, town and raion center, Khmel'nitskii oblast', Ukrainian SSR; 1941-1944: Starokonstantinov, Rayon and Gebiet center, Generalkommissariat Wolhynien und Podolien; post-1991: Starokostiantyniv, Khmel'nyts'kyi oblast', Ukraine

Starokonstantinov is located 107 kilometers (66 miles) northwest of Vinnitsa. According to the January 1939 census, the Jewish population stood at 6,743 people; Jews accounted for 31 percent of the total population.

After Nazi Germany attacked the USSR on June 22, 1941, some Jewish men were drafted or volunteered for the Red Army, and other Jews were able to evacuate to the eastern regions of the Soviet Union. Thus, about 6,000 Jews remained in the town at the start of the German occupation.

Units of the German 17th Army occupied Starokonstantinov on July 8, 1941. In July and August 1941, a series of local military commandant's offices (Ortskommandanturen) governed the town and formed a local administration and an auxiliary police force recruited from among local inhabitants. In September 1941, authority passed to a German civil administration. Starokonstantinov became the administrative center of the Gebiet, which also included Rayons Ostropol,

Staraja Sinjawa, Polonnoje, and Grizew. In total, the Gebiet included some 200,000 inhabitants and 196 collective farms. The Gebietskommissar was Regierungsrat Schröder, who was later replaced by SA-Standartenführer Curt Rolle. The Gendarmerie-Gebietsführer from the spring of 1942 on was Leutnant der Gendarmerie Otto Gent.¹ The Ukrainian police and Gendarmerie posts were under his command.

In May 1942, an outpost of the Security Police (Sipo-Aussendienststelle) was created in Starokonstantinow, headed by SS-Hauptscharführer Karl Graf. This outpost carried out anti-Jewish Aktions in 1942 in the Gebiet Starokonstantinow and also in adjacent Gebiete. Graf received orders to carry out such Aktions from the Kommandeur der Sipo und SD (KdS) in Równe, SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Pütz.

In the summer and fall of 1941, a series of anti-Jewish measures were implemented in Starokonstantinow. A Jewish Council (Judenrat) was formed; Jews were required to wear distinctive symbols (initially, an armband with a Star of David; later, a yellow circle sewn onto the front and back of their clothing); they were compelled to engage in forced labor; and they were forbidden to use the sidewalks.

In July 1941, soon after the occupation of the town, 20 Jews were shot.² On August 3, another Aktion took place. On this day, four companies of SS-Infanterie-Regiment 8, SS-Panzer Grenadier-Brigade 1, arrested 1,404 Jews (812 women and 592 men) in the town, of whom 489 (302 men and 187 women) were shot. The remaining Jews were divided up into several groups for forced labor.³ The supposed pretext for this "reprisal" Aktion is described in Einsatzgruppen report no. 59:

In Starokonstantinow . . . Jews were engaged in cleaning the barracks. Since Jews had not been reporting to work recently, the military units already were forced to round up the Jewish work force early in the morning. While working, the Jews behaved impudently and even refused to work. Of the approximately 1,000 Jews engaged in field labor, only 70 showed up to work on the following day. Furthermore, acts of sabotage on the harvesting machines were discovered. The Judenrat even spread rumors about a Russian offensive, which the Jews immediately used as a pretext to publicly threaten and curse Ukrainians.⁴

According to the account of a Jewish survivor, however, about 1,100 Jewish men and women were ordered to assemble and then transported out to the barracks. Here they were assigned to various work tasks, and those who were sick (including some who hoped to avoid work by feigning ill health) were loaded onto 18 trucks and taken away. Subsequently it was learned that these people were shot in the Novitskii Forest.⁵

Two weeks later, on August 18, 1941, approximately 150 more young Jewish men and women were shot in the Novitskii Forest.⁶ Another anti-Jewish Aktion took place in the town on September 2, 1941. On this day, Police Battalion 304, which was in the town from August 21 through September 4, captured and shot at least 500 Jews.⁷

In the fall of 1941, probably in late September or early October, a ghetto holding about 5,000 people was established in the town. This first ghetto consisted of a group of houses surrounded by barbed wire, guarded by the local police. It was located behind Middle School no. 8 and extended back to the Ikopot River. Conditions in the ghetto were very crowded: people had to sleep on the floor in rows. Ghetto inmates received little food. Only craftsmen were permitted to leave the ghetto, wearing a black stripe across their yellow circles to denote this privilege.⁸

At the beginning of 1942, the ghetto was moved to the district along Iziaslav Street, on the road to Shepetovka, not far from the Novitskii Forest. Here there were a few old Jewish houses and some barracks. The new ghetto had about three times the area of the old ghetto; however, conditions deteriorated, as inmates received no food or heating materials. The unsanitary conditions caused disease to spread. A Russian woman who had close relatives there smuggled some medical supplies into the ghetto. The new ghetto was also more closely guarded, making it harder for the Jews to barter illegally. On the inside, there was a Jewish police force that wore armbands and carried clubs. Outside, the barbed-wire fence was guarded by the Ukrainian police.⁹

Just before May 20, 1942, the Germans demanded from the Judenrat payment of a "war tax" of about 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of gold and 30 kilograms (66 pounds) of silver.¹⁰ Then, also on May 20, 1942, another Aktion was carried out. A team of the Sipo and SD under the leadership of SS-Hauptscharführer Graf, aided by the German Gendarmerie and the Ukrainian police, shot most of the Jews from the ghetto, as well as some of the Jews who were brought into Starokonstantinow from the surrounding Rayons at that time. Approximately 6,500 people were murdered on this day. The Jews were driven to the "red barracks" near the Machine Tractor Station (MTS), where a ditch had been dug. Skilled craftsmen and their families were separated and returned to the town (some lived outside the ghetto), and the remaining Jews were forced to lie down in groups of 10 in the ditch, where Graf and another SS man, Werner, shot them with submachine guns.¹¹

At the time of the May 20 Aktion, Jews from the surrounding Rayons of Grizew, Ostropol, Staraja Sinjawa, and Polonnoje were brought into the ghetto. A Jewish survivor, Anna Nasarchuk, recalls arriving in the empty ghetto with about 400 others from Ostropol just after the previous inmates had been shot. The German official in the ghetto, Hedrich, warned them that the others had been killed for refusing to work and carry out German instructions. No water was available in the ghetto, and people were permitted to fetch it from the river only once a day. Nasarchuk was made to work cleaning the German barracks. The guards mistreated the ghetto inmates, and on one occasion German soldiers raped two young Jewish girls.

Over the summer there were frequent shootings of Jews from the ghetto in the nearby Novitskii Forest. In the weeks before the ghetto's final liquidation, the Jews were assembled

regularly on Sundays at the Zhdanov kolkhoz, where a few people were killed publicly as a warning. One Sunday, for example, 11 alleged saboteurs, all non-Jews, were hanged along with one Jew who had failed to report for the assembly.¹²

At the end of November 1942, the ghetto was completely liquidated. On this day, all the Jews in the ghetto were escorted to a field near the Novitskii Forest. The Jews were then led in groups of 10 to a ditch 300 meters (328 yards) away. They were forced to undress and lie down in the ditch, and then German and Ukrainian policemen shot them with carbines and submachine guns. The shooting was supervised by Graf. The Ukrainian Schutzmannschaftsbatallion 101 also took part in the operation, and its members, on the orders of the battalion commander Hauptmann Paul Salitter, cordoned off the execution site.¹³ Approximately 4,000 people were shot during this Aktion.¹⁴

At the killing site, Anna Nasarchuk recognized another Jewish woman from her village of Chishniki who was trying to flee, but the cordon guards shot her. Anna subsequently fell into the grave unconscious, not seriously wounded. After dark she escaped with her child, and she was even helped by a local Ukrainian policeman, whom she convinced that she was not Jewish and had been arrested by mistake.¹⁵

Altogether, some 11,000 Jews were killed in Starokonstantinov during the years of 1941 and 1942.

The commander of the 8th SS-Infantry Regiment, SS-Standartenführer Hans-Wilhelm Sacks, the commander of the 1st battalion of this regiment, SS-Sturmbannführer Hermann Schleifenbaum, and the commander of the 2nd battalion of this regiment, SS-Obersturmbannführer Erwin Tzschoppe, were primarily responsible for the Aktion of August 3, 1941. Sacks was fatally wounded in battle on August 19, 1941; Schleifenbaum died on August 30, 1943. The investigation in Germany regarding Tzschoppe was terminated following his death on August 21, 1972.

In the 1970s, in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), several former policemen of the 304th Police Battalion who participated in the murder of over 500 Jews in Starokonstantinov in early September 1941 were found guilty and sentenced. SS-Hauptscharführer Graf, who was primarily responsible for the annihilation of the town's Jews in 1942, died in Germany on November 19, 1953.

SOURCES A brief article on the annihilation of the Jews of Starokonstantinov can be found in *Podillia u Velykii Vimchyznianii viini (1941–1945 rr.)*. *Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv* (L'viv, 1969), pp. 75–77.

Documentation regarding the murder of the Jews of Starokonstantinov can be found in the following archives: BA-L (II 204 AR-Z 441/67 and 442/67); DAKhO; GARF (7021-64); YVA (M-33); and ZSSSt-D (45 Js 20/73).

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NOTES

1. BA-BL, BDC, SShO 2432, Organisationsplan der besetzten Ostgebiete nach dem Stand vom 10. März 1942, hg. vom Chef der Ordnungspolizei, Berlin, March 13, 1942; BA-

L, II 204 AR-Z 441/67, Abschlussbericht, March 20, 1973. Gent died on April 11, 1956.

2. ZSSSt-D, 45 Js 20/73, concluding report (Abschlussverfügung), August 10, 1976.

3. See the report of the 1. Mot. SS Brigade dated August 3, 1941, for the period July 30 to August 3, 1941, published in A. Kruglov, ed., *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov ob unichtozhenii natsistami evreev Ukrainy v 1941–1944 godakh* (Kiev: Institut iudaiki, 2002), p. 232.

4. USHMM, RG-30, Acc.1999.A.0196 (NARA, RG-242, T-175), reel 233, Ereignismeldung UdSSR, no. 59, August 21, 1941. According to the Einsatzgruppen Report, only 438 persons were shot (300 Jewish men and 138 Jewish women).

5. BA-L, II 204 AR-Z 442/67, Bd. I, Galina M. Bolshovskaia, March 29, 1973.

6. ZSSSt-D, 45 Js 20/73, Abschlussverfügung, August 10, 1976. The Soviet Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK) report of March 11, 1944, notes that 300 civilians were shot near the Nove Miasto Forest by the Gestapo and SD field units in August 1941 (DAKhO, R683-2-42, pp. 31-34); an English translation is available in A.F. Vysotsky et al., eds., *Nazi Crimes in Ukraine, 1941–1944: Documents and Materials* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka Publishers, 1987), pp. 134–138.

7. See the verdict of Bezirksgericht Halle, October 26, 1978, concerning three members of Police Battalion 304, extract published in Kruglov, *Sbornik dokumentov*, p. 300.

8. BA-L, II 204 AR-Z 442/67, Bd. I, pp. 320–327, Aleksandra A. Mysnikova, March 27, 1973.

9. *Ibid.*, Bd. I, pp. 246–250, Nikolai Bugaishchuk, March 28, 1973; pp. 262–266, Iuvenalii Gulenko, March 29, 1973.

10. *Ibid.*, Bd. I, pp. 320–327, Mysnikova, March 27, 1973.

11. ZSSSt-D, 45 Js 20/73, concluding report, August 10, 1976; Aleksandr Kruglov, *Entsiklopediia Kholokosta: Evreiskaia entsiklopediia Ukrainy* (Kiev: Evreiskii Sovet Ukrainy, 2000), p. 182.

12. BA-L, II 204 AR-Z 442/67, Bd. I, pp. 328–340, Anna Nasarchuk, March 28, 1973.

13. ZSSSt-D, 45 Js 20/73, concluding report, August 10, 1976. Most sources give November 28, 1942, as the date of the Aktion, but some date it just before or just after this. The commander of the local Ukrainian police in Starokonstantinov at this time was Kononchuk; see BA-L, II 204 AR-Z 442/67, Bd. I, pp. 358–362, Andrei Sagoruiko, March 29, 1973.

14. *Podillia u Velykii Vimchyznianii viini (1941–1945 rr.)*, p. 76.

15. BA-L, II 204 AR-Z 442/67, Bd. I, pp. 320–327, Mysnikova, March 27, 1973.

Abbreviations used in Sources and Notes.

- BA-B Bundesarchiv Berlin (German Federal Archives Berlin)
 BA-BL Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (German Federal Archives in Berlin-Lichterfelde)
 BA-L Bundesarchiv Aussenstelle Ludwigsburg (German Federal Archives External Branch Ludwigsburg)
 BDC Berlin Document Center (now BA-B and NARA)
 CHGK Chrezvychnaia Gosudarstvennaia Komissia (Soviet Extraordinary State Commission)
 DAKHO Derzhavnyi arkhiv Khmel'nyts'kyi oblasti (State Archives of the Khmel'nyts'kyi Oblast'), Ukraine
 GARF Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii (State Archives of the Russian Federation), Moscow
 NARA United States National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, MD
 SShO SS Hängerordner (BDC collection, miscellaneous files)
 USHMM United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC
 YVA Archive of the National Institute for the Memory of the Victims of Nazism and Heroes of the Resistance, Yad Vashem, Israel
 ZALFJ Zwangsarbeitslager für Juden (Forced Labor Camp for Jews)
 ZSSSt-D Zentralstelle, Dortmund (Central Office for the Investigation of National-Socialist Crimes in Dortmund) (=ZSD)