

SMELTERS, Eduards  
Latvia Documentation Project  
Russian  
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In this interview, Eduards Smelters, local resident of Daugavpils, talks about the extermination of Jews in Daugavpils during World War II. He particularly discusses the actions of one of the Latvian policemen, called **Viden'**.

[01:] 00:35:00 – [01:] 02:35:59

He gives his name (Eduards Osipovich Smelters), date and place of birth (April 28, 1925; Daugavpils, Latvia); during the war, he lived in Daugavpils and served in the Soviet army later.

[01:] 02:36:00 – [01:] 08:44:59

He mentions that Germans occupied Daugavpils shortly after the start of the war on June 22, 1941; talks about his family; his father had three private apartments, one of which was rented by Jews, the **Kanfor** family (father, mother, two children); notes that relations between the families were friendly; describes that Jews were terrified by the news of the occupation, they prepared bundles with food, stayed indoors, and expected the worst; relates how an armed policeman, with the name **Viden'**, came one day to arrest the **Kanfors** and sent them to the ghetto in the fortress; **Viden'** wore civilian clothes, but had a sign with a Latvian flag on the sleeve.

[01:] 08:45:00 – [01:] 10:25:59

He tells how two days later another Jewish family was arrested, the **Goldin** family (father, mother, two children); **Goldin** was a butcher; describes how the policemen broke into the house.

[01:] 10:26:00 – [01:] 12:29:59

He mentions hearing from neighbors that two days earlier the rabbi's family was arrested; comments on the rabbi having two children, slaughtering ("shekhtet") chickens, and selling firewood.

[01:] 12:30:00 – [01:] 24:59:59

He talks about how a few days later **Viden'** appropriated the **Kanfors'** apartment for his family; tells that **Viden'** was often drunk; describes a nightly drinking party and scuffle by **Viden'** and his policemen pals; they spoke Latvian, seemed to have come from the rural villages; mentions that once **Viden'** blurted out that they had already shot 1,200 Jews and that they did not waste bullets on small children, but beat them to death with their rifles; tells that everybody except his mother was afraid to confront **Viden'**.

[01:] 25:00:00 – [01:] 26:24:59

He mentions that Jews were being shot even during daytime; relates how the Smelters feared that the Poles would be the next victims after the Jews; discusses that **Viden'** would later disappear for one to two weeks to join execution squads in other locations.

[01:] 26:25:00 – [01:] 30:59:59

He relates how one early morning **Viden'** tried to break into their house threatening to kill the father for being related to the Communists and Jews; describes the constant fear in which they lived.

[01:] 31:00:00 – [01:] 41:21:59

He talks about the purge of German collaborators by the Soviet army; describes how he and his brother managed to have **Viden'** arrested; **Viden'** had been hiding in the woods with other policemen and came to Daugavpils one day to collect his "valuables."

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[02:] 00:30:00 – [02:] 07:09:59

He talks more about **Viden'** being arrested by Soviet security officers; mentions these security officers interrogating his brother and mother about **Viden'** collaborating with the Germans; discusses that **Viden'** was subsequently executed.

[02:] 07:10:00 – [02:] 10:19:59

He relates how once during the war a neighbor – who was an Old Believer – asked Smelters for a large spade to bury the Jews, which was a well-paid job rewarded with 20 marks; after Smelter's father had driven him away, the neighbor came back with a policeman and got the spade.

[02:] 10:20:00 – [02:] 16:49:59

He talks about how he once by accident killed a chicken belonging to **Viden'** and was summoned to come to court for a trial; mentions blurting out to the judge about **Viden'** shooting Jews; tells about a fine of twenty marks he had to pay for killing the chicken (a chicken cost two marks).

[02:] 16:50:00 – [02:] 22:29:59

He talks again about **Viden'** and his family being arrested; describes how in 2003 or 2004 the son of **Viden'** came to their house in Daugavpils to look for Smelters and seek revenge.

[02:] 22:30:00 – [02:] 23:49:59

He mentions that **Kanfor's** wife returned from the ghetto twice; she had been separated from her husband and children and expected the worst; Smelter's mother advised her to take off the yellow star, but she was afraid; comments on Jews not being allowed to walk on sidewalks.

**[02:] 23:50:00 – [02:] 30:14:59**

He describes how immediately after the occupation of Daugavpils, the Germans spread a rumor that Jews had been murdering inmates of a local prison; notes that many uneducated people believed that rumor.

**[02:] 30:15:00 – [02:] 39:48:59**

He talks about having been drafted into the Soviet army in 1944 and stationed in Poland, first in the former concentration camp of Majdanek near Lublin and later in Zamosc (Zamość); describes a visit to a city fortress in Zamosc where Germans had shot people and cremated them in primitive ovens; mentions that reportedly Germans were helped by policemen who had been brought from the Baltic states.