

Summary of Oral History: Oral history interview with Stepan Davidovskiy.

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This Summary was written by a USHMM Contractor 06/2022

Stepan Davydovskiy, born on September 7, 1926, lived in the city of Busk, (then Poland, present day Ukraine.) He says that the Jews came there in the 1450s-1500s, they were immigrants from Poland and Germany. In the late 1930s – early 1940s, the city was home to about 3,000 Jews, and the economy was in their hands. They were blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, and tailors. The same proportion of Poles and Ukrainians lived in the city. There were no ethnic disputes. They studied together, the interviewee names his classmates.

In 1939, some Jews (about 30) moved to Busk from the German-occupied Polish territories. In 1941, about six months after the invasion, the Jews were taken to the ghetto. The streets were fenced in, 2 blocks, where until the end of June 1942, they lived and worked for the Germans (building.)

Inside the ghetto was the Jewish police "Judenrat", and many Jewish polizei tried to make a name for themselves with the Germans to save themselves from death.

The interviewee worked in the ghetto at a lemonade factory that worked for the Germans, so he had a German pass and was free to enter the ghetto. The conditions were terrible: congestion, disease, famine. The Jews were taxed, they had to give away all their income, and the rest was secretly exchanged for food, and almost every day someone died. When asked why they did not oppose the Germans, did not rebel, they replied that it did not make sense, because it is written in their Scripture.

Before the ghetto, the Jews wore a white armband and blue heraldry, a hexagonal star on a white background. If they were spotted without a band, they were shot.

The "action" (extermination of the Jews) lasted 1 day. The Jews were gathered in the square, and from there taken to Chuchmany (Chuchman forest), Hrabovo, part of them were taken to Sokal concentration camp. There were about 20-30 such vehicles, accompanied by 100-200 German gendarmes. According to the interviewee, the local police did not take part in this.

Those who tried to escape were shot, bodies were lying in the streets. Some people tried to hide in the basements, in the fields. The Germans caught them and took them to the Jewish cemetery in Busk. There are 17-20 pits there. It was said that the Jews themselves dug those pits for themselves, then they were ordered to undress and lie face down, and they were shot there. The Germans took all the things. Some Jews, 50-70 people, managed to escape into the woods. The villagers helped with food. Then in 1944 the Jews returned. The interviewee mentions some of the Jews who managed to escape and their future, and the people who hid the Jews.

During the war, Busk's population of about 9,000 was reduced to about 2,000. A lot of people were taken to work in Germany, they died in bombings,

some were shot by Soviet authorities, and deported to Siberia. Those involved in the formation of Ukrainian statehood, the UPA, were shot dead. There were cases of hanging by the Soviet authorities.

The old houses of the Jews were destroyed by the Germans, and in the new ones later settled visitors, many party members, soldiers of the Russian army and so on.

Names:

Olga Datsko and Ilko Lutsyk (worked together at a lemonade factory in the ghetto).

Rabbi Dranch

Roman Polinskyi (returned from work in Germany, was accused of espionage)