

Testimony: Karolina Michailona Semelak (1976)

The witness Karolina Michailona Semelak lived in Podhorodze all her life. She reported in an interview in 1976:

„When the executions happened here in 1941 I was eleven years old, but I still remember it as it were yesterday. Menten was in command ... ordered all the people of the village to come watch the executions, children also.

He himself didn't shoot, but each time the order was given by him. It was shortly after the German invasion of 1941. Menten came back here to Podhorodze, ordering his soldiers to assemble all Jews and communist activists in the garden of Isaac Pistiner house.

Pistiner didn't live there anymore. I saw it all with my own eyes. Everybody, the whole village was there. All the victims were brought together in Pistiner's house. And next they had to come out in groups of three and five and walk across a plank which has been placed across the grave. When they'd get to a point in the middle they were shot.

I can still very vividly see Pistolak walk the plank first – the local leader of the communists - he fell, shot into the hole. The commands were given by Menten. On that day, the seventh of July, only men were killed. But on August twenty-eighth it was the turn of the women and children. Their grave is right next to the first.

Yet there was one woman murdered at the first execution, she was called Novicka. When her husband Novicky, had to walk on that board, she wouldn't stop her frenzied screaming at Menten, upon which he ordered his soldiers to shoot her. The second execution also, I saw it with my own eyes, and again Menten was in command. He must have been a very high ranking man, for he gave his orders to a German officer, who then ordered the soldiers to shoot.

It is impossible that I should be mistaken that this man was really Menten. When Menten before the war came to Podhorodze he was a very well-known man in our village, and when he returned in 1941 wearing a German uniform, people of course recognised him. They all said, „That is Menten, Petro Menten.““

Source: Victor Smart, Pieter Menten. The „looting Dutchman“. In:
<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/economics/menten.html>