

Letters sent by the police secretary Walter Mattner, an administrative officer for the SS and Police Garrison Commander at Mogilev, to his wife (excerpts), 22 September 1941 – 19 April 1942

22.9.1941

If I were not already a National Socialist, the first day of my wartime deployment would have turned me into one through and through.

29.9.1941

At the most we arrange things, i.e. everything is taken away from the Jews

2.10.1941

I should actually have already turned in, it's already 9 p.m. and I've volunteered for a special operation tomorrow. Reveille is at 4:30 a.m. and we're moving off at 5:30 a.m. Tomorrow I'll also have the first opportunity to use my pistol. I'm taking 28 rounds with me. Probably won't be enough, but another comrade will lend me his pistol or carbine. I don't even know if I'm permitted to tell you this, but that the Jews are our misfortune, that's something you've known for a long time, and it's something we saw again and again on our journey to Warsaw and on to here, just how many comrades are already resting in the cool earth. [...] And this is how many young men are sleeping, single and married, the prime of our German nation, to protect our home from the monsters we have gotten to know here. It is quite simply dreadful to have to look at these Asiatic hordes. What we Europeans feel when seeing this. [...] You can understand bitterness that takes hold of me, and which everyone here feels when thinking of our home and our great fateful struggle which we have to wrestle through here for our people. What are one thousand, two hundred Jews, who are too many in yet another city and have to be bumped off, as the saying goes. It is only the just punishment for all the suffering they have inflicted, and continue to inflict, on us Germans. Until I arrive home I shall tell you nice things. But enough for today, otherwise you'll believe that I'm bloodthirsty.

5.10.1941

There's still something else I have to tell you. I was in fact also present at the enormous mass killings the day before yesterday. For the first truckload my hand trembled slightly when shooting, but one gets used to it. By the time the tenth truck arrived I was already aiming steadily and fired surely at the many women, children and infants. Bear in mind that I also have two babies at home, to whom these hordes would do the same, if not ten times worse. The death we gave them was a nice, short death, compared to the hellish torture meted out to thousands upon thousands in the dungeons of the GPU. Infants flew in a wide arch

through the air and we blew them away while still in flight, before they then fell into the pit and the water. Let's get rid of this brood which has plunged the whole of Europe into war and is still mongering in America until it drags them into the war as well. Hitler's words are coming true, what he once said before the war began: if Jewry believes to be able to incite a war in Europe again, it won't be the Jews who'll triumph, but it will herald the end of Jewry in Europe. [...] M.[ogilev] has now lost a number with 3 zeroes, but that's of no consequence here. I'm already looking forward to it, and many here are saying that when we return home, then it's the turn of our local Jews.

9.10.1941

A neighbour at my table, a first lieutenant [Oberstleutnant] of an SS formation, had just gotten back from a prisoner transport and told about the savageness of the imprisoned Asians, saying: 'from the dead who snuff it on the way they cut off the asses, put them in the frying pan and eat them. And they often don't even have a knife because they have to hand over everything, but use tins as cutting tools'. You can image the cannibals we find ourselves among here. Often seen them walking by, staggering faces. Tomorrow another group of gypsies will be dispatched. / Around 50 / And thus it goes on every day. Always something going on. Human life is worth nothing here. Nevertheless, it is a delight to be alive, and I'm still glad to be allowed to experience this fateful struggle of our people and to take part in the fight.

27.10.1941

Didn't get to writing today. Too tired. ¼ 11. Just one thing: at dinner I learned that in our district 27000 Jews are already bumped off. And in Kiev 24000!

19.4.1942

In the 7 months I've been here and although I'm always together with hundreds of others, I have yet to hear any ranting against a party, it's the honest truth, because here everyone feels themselves to be 'German', and German today is 'Nazi'. There's nothing else.

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Here from: Deutscher Osten 1939-1945. Der Weltanschauungskrieg in Photos und Texten. Hrsg. v. Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Volker Rieß u. Wolfram Pyta. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003, S. 27 f. 65 (Veröffentlichungen der Forschungsstelle Ludwigsburg der Universität Stuttgart, Bd. 1).