

Oivitella,  
Arezzo.

2 November 44.

STATEMENT OF :-

MENCHETTI Alduina, Female,  
Oivitella, 23 years.  
Arezzo.

Who saith,

My husband was murdered by the Germans on 29 November 44. He was twenty eight years of age. We used to keep a club in the village; here we sold vino, sweets, and other things. All the villagers came to the club for a game of cards and to pass the time of day.

On Sunday, 18 June 44, four German soldiers came into the club. It was between 1700 hours and 1800 hours. There were two floors to the club. One was the ground floor, this was one big room. Leading from this by means of three steps going down, there was another room at the rear. The first room was used for playing cards and the second for selling vino. The German soldiers were playing cards amongst themselves; they were quite friendly, and not causing any trouble with the civilians. At this time they were in the first room. I can not describe these soldiers apart from saying that they were Germans; two carried pistols and the other two had, what we call, a machine gun rifle each.

About 2015 hours, one German came into the rear room and he stood watching some Italians who were playing cards there. The three remaining Germans, I presume, had finished playing cards and were listening to a wireless set which was playing in the front room. The soldier had been in the room about ten minutes, when suddenly, there was a burst of machine gun fire followed by a few single shots. This firing was in the front room.

There were about ten Italian men, myself, my husband and the German soldier in the rear room at this time. My husband and I together with other two civilians and the German ran into a small room, in which we used to keep vino. We remained in this room for about five minutes or so, then I ran outside and home to my mother. As I ran through the front room, I saw three German soldiers lying on the floor. Only one of these soldiers was moaning or showing any sign of life.

I told my mother what had happened and remained at her house being afraid of what the Germans would do when they heard of this affair. I did not know up to this time who had done this thing and it was not until the following morning that I heard people talking; everyone seemed to believe it was the Partisans.

About 2100 hours the same evening, I was standing at the front door of my mother's house when I heard my husband calling me from further up the street. I went to my husband and he told me that he was leaving the village as he was afraid of the German reprisals. He told me where he was going and we made arrangements so that I could take food to him the following day. The next day I took food to my husband and remained with him until the evening of the 24th or 25th, then we returned to the village about 1700 hours.

The Germans did not say anything to me upon my return to the /...

/me upon my return to the village and they did not publish any handbills about reprisals or Partisans. Everyone thought that some reprisal would be taken but no one knew definite, to the best of my knowledge.

Everything was quite quiet in the village until Tuesday or Wednesday, 28 June 44; then the Germans came round with a lorry collecting every radio that they could find. My radio from the club, I heard, had been taken the day that the Germans collected the bodies from there.

On the morning of Thursday 29 June 44, I did not go to church. My husband, brother and I were in the street about 0715 hours to 0730 hours when we heard machine gun fire from just outside the village. Everyone who was about at this time, thought that this firing which we could hear, was due to the British chasing the Germans out of the area. We had heard tales of the Germans taking young men and making them work for them when they were forced to leave a locality. In consequence of this I told my brother, FALSETTI Pietro, 19 years to go to the hills and remain there until the fighting ceased. This he did immediately and so he is alive today. My husband and I decided to take refuge in the church as it was the day of St. Peter and Paul, and everyone seemed to be making in that direction. It was a little after 0730 hours by the time we got to church and the Mass was more than half finished. When Mass did finish the sound of the fighting had got nearer and the priest told us all that if the German soldiers attempted to take any property or food as they left the area, we had not to interfere, but to let them take whatever they pleased and in that way hope to avoid any trouble.

About 0800 hours a German soldier came into the church. He was shouting what appeared to be "Bouss", and waving a rifle about at everyone. We were terrified, and people were already praying for help. I cannot describe the soldier as I was too afraid to take a great deal of notice. As my husband and I came out of the church, we passed three or four German soldiers who were standing just outside the door. They had weapons of some kind held in front of their bodies. These soldiers did not speak. There is a small clearing in front of the church and here several German soldiers were lying behind machine guns. These soldiers were laughing and jeering at us. We got about fifteen metres from the church when a German soldier came and got hold of my husband. This soldier did not speak, he just took my husband amongst other civilians who were guarded by Germans with machine guns.

At this time I did not think my husband was in any great danger and I noticed that all the women were leaving the town. None of the soldiers spoke to me, so I left also. I took the road leading to FOGGIALI and this road was crowded with women and children, all fleeing from CIVITELLA. As I left the village a woman, PAGGI Elda, came up to me. She was only wearing a nightdress which was covered with blood, and had four children with her. She was screaming, "They have killed my husband". Of course, she was referring to the Germans.

By the time I had gone half a kilometre from CIVITELLA, I passed the bodies of five men, Italian civilians. Two of these men were uncles of mine. I had a good look to see if I could help them but they were beyond my aid. There was a bullet wound in all the bodies about the chest and head. I then proceeded on towards FOGGIALI.

About 0900 hours the same day, I arrived at the

Orphanage at FOGGIALI./....

/arrived at the Orphanage at BOGGIALI. Nearly all the women and children from CIVITELLA were there and everyone was weeping and wondering what had happened to their menfolk. About 1230 hours CALDELLI Uliana, and I left the Orphanage as we could not stand the suspense any longer. We had decided to return to the village and find out what had happened to our husbands.

When we were coming back, the five bodies that I had seen earlier, had been removed from the road and thrown into the fields at the side. It was about 1330 hours when we reached CIVITELLA. The place was deserted and I did not see a living soul.

The village appeared to be a different place; all the houses had been blown up and buildings were blazing everywhere. CALDELLI Uliana and I decided to go to her house first to see what we could find there. On the way we had to pass the house of my brother-in-law LAMMIONI Giovanni Battista. Outside his house there are some steps leading to the front door. At the bottom of these steps we found three bodies:- The body of my husband, the body of the husband of CALDELLI Uliana, and the body of the priest. All the bodies had been burnt. My husband had not been burnt about the face very badly and part of his boots was left. That was how I recognised him. He only had one bullet wound through the heart. It is difficult to say how he was burnt as only particles of his trousers and parts of his boots were all the clothing left on his body. I appeared as though he had been covered with petrol or burnt by a flame thrower. My husband's watch could not be found and I believe he was robbed by the Germans before being so brutally murdered.

All that was left of the priest, DON LAZZERI Aloide, was his chest, arms and head. We could easily recognise him by his face which was not badly burnt. The bottom half of the priest's body has not been found.

We could easily recognise the body of CALDELLI Ibo as it was by far the best preserved of the three. His clothing was slightly burnt and I think he had been killed in the same manner as my husband.

There was nothing we could do then and we were terribly upset by the horrible sights that we saw everywhere. The place was just one horrid scene of carnage. We were also afraid that the Germans might return and repeat this massacre upon the women and children.

I next went to my home, a house which was shared by my father-in-law MENCHETTI Luigi. He was 68 years of age. My house was not on fire. My house was alright but when I went into the room occupied by my father-in-law, I found him lying on the floor in a pool of blood with a bullet wound in the side of his head.

I then lost control of myself and ran outside screaming for my mother. She could not have been hiding very far away as she very soon came running down the street. I explained to my mother the things that we had seen. We decided to get some blankets from my home and to spend the night outside the village. This we did and slept in a wood about two hundred metres north east of CIVITELLA. We remained in the wood all night and returned to the village about 0900 hours the next morning, Friday 30 June 44. Several women had by this time returned but

no men could/....

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no men could be found anywhere.

We women then got together and helped one another to remove the bodies or the remains of our loved ones. We carried them to what was left of their respective homes. There we washed what remained of their bodies. Then we wrapped them up in what white sheets we could find and carried them to the church. Even the church had not escaped the attention of these German brutes; part of it was burnt and it had also been mined. Somehow we managed to clear up the church and then we laid out the bodies for Benediction.

Then we had the job of making coffins for all these dead. This was done by collecting odd bits of wood from all over the village, doors, floorboards and so forth. I managed to get a man from TEGOLETO and he made the coffin for my husband.

I spent Saturday 1 July 44, assisting other women of the village to bury their dead. About 1400 hours on this day, the man from TEGOLETO arrived with the coffin I had ordered. We took it to the church and managed to get my husband's body into it. The coffin was then put on a handcart, which already contained three bodies, and pushed to the cemetery by the women. Here he was laid at rest by me. There was no priest present and consequently no Benediction.

My husband MENCHETTI Torquato, aged 28 years, had never been a Partisan and had never taken any part in any of their actions. Neither was he interested in politics nor did he belong to any political party. He was a Fascist until the collapse of MUSSOLINI, like everyone else. He had to belong to this party or starve but that is the only time in his life that he had belonged to any political party.

I left CIVITELLA on the evening of Saturday 1 July 44, and returned when the British were occupying the village. For three days I lived in the woods around CIVITELLA and then went to SELVA GROSSA where I remained until my return home. I cannot remember the day that I returned.

I cannot say anything about the German soldiers apart from saying that they were dressed similar to all Germans that I have ever seen.

I have read over this statement. It is true and correct. I herewith append my signature.

(Sgd.) MENCHETTI Alduina.

Statement written down in Italian and signature witnessed by DI DUCA Bragia, interpreter, in the presence of Sgt. OLEWLOW both of 78 Section S.I.B. on 3rd November, 1944 at CIVITELLA, AREZZO.

I certify that the above translation from Italian is correct and true and to the best of my ability.

DI DUCA Bragia.