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Civitella,
Arezzo.

15 November 44.

STATEMENT OF:-

BIANCHI Giovanni, Male.
Civitella, Aged 49 years.
Arezzo.

Who saith,

I am an evacuee from FLORENCE and came here five months ago with my wife BIANCHI Geltrude, forty-two years and son BIANCHI Roberto, aged seven years.

On Sunday, 18th. June 1944, I and my family went to bed early as is our practice. For me the night passed without any unusual occurrence.

On Monday, 19th. June, 1944, about 0630 hours, I was going for water when I noticed a number of civilians, complete with bundles, leaving the village. I enquired into the reason for this and was told that three German soldiers had been killed in the DOPO LAVORO Club, CIVITELLA, the previous evening. A civilian, TIEZZI Bruno had also been wounded. The people told me that they were leaving because they feared the Germans would take reprisals on the village.

I returned home and told my wife of this and with our child we left at once for the farm of BARTOLO, which is about two kilometres south of CIVITELLA. We remained here until 1830 hours on Tuesday, 20th. June 1944. On our return to CIVITELLA we were told that German soldiers were in the village. We went to our home, however, and had been there about twenty minutes when we hear a commotion outside. On enquiring we found that the Germans had MAGINI Rinaldo and were taking him for interrogation. With my wife and child I again left the village for the farm of BARTOLO where we remained until Saturday, 24th. June 1944, when we returned to CIVITELLA ABOUT 0800 hours.

The next time I saw the German soldiers in the village was Thursday, 29th. June 1944. It was the day of St. Peter and St. Paul, my wife had gone to church (St. MARIA ASSUNTA) leaving me at home with the boy.

About 0700 hours, I heard machine-gun fire and it appeared to come from the south of the village. A short while after this there was a lot of banging on the door of my home. I got hold of my son and opened the door.

Outside, there were a lot of Germans who were all armed and dressed as though for battle. They wore steel helmets and a kind of camouflaged jacket.

I saw a civilian talking to some soldiers so I went over to him with my identification papers, thinking that he was the German interpreter. This civilian, however, was in the same position as myself, pleading for his life. I afterwards knew this man as Lieutenant CESARENI Rino of AREZZO.

The Germans examined my papers and Rino's, then

took us to/....

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/and Rino's, then

took us to the south-east entrance to the village and kept us there for a few minutes. They then appeared to change their minds as they marched us back into the village and up beside the school. As we were marched through the village I saw a lot of bodies, but did not recognise anyone. Beside the school there was a great pile of men's bodies, as it was here the majority of people had been killed. A number of German soldiers were engaged in carrying these bodies from beside the school into houses which were blazing furiously.

During this time the conversation was carried on by Rino and in German so I could not understand what was said.

The Germans only kept us at the school a few minutes then took us back to the south-east entrance to the village. From there we were taken to a bridge about one kilometre south of the village.

At this bridge we had to wait about an hour for transport and in this time I saw a German army lorry come from the direction of CIVITELLA laden with sheep. The next lorry that came only had a few ducks on it and we were made to get on this.

We were taken to SPOIANO which is a village about five kilometres south of CIVITELLA. We arrived here about 1200 hours. We were taken to the villa of BONECHI Ballo where there were a lot of German soldiers. Here my identification documents were taken from me, then my son and I were sent behind the villa where I was told to wait.

Some of the soldiers at the villa were dressed in grey-green uniforms and others in a kind of khaki. A lot of these soldiers had a band around the lower part of their coat sleeves. This band was about three centimetres in width and inscribed on it were the words 'HERMANN GOERING.' On their collars they had two (maybe more) silver bars. These bars were vertical on the collar and shaped like a bird in flight.

After we had been here an hour or so about a platoon of German soldiers came to a camp just opposite the villa. They were in Army lorries which were similar to those which I had seen outside CIVITELLA. They were dressed in camouflage jackets, wearing steel helmets and all had arms. They were identical to the soldiers I had seen in CIVITELLA that morning. A short while after this Rino came to me and said that he had been told that the action in the village was finished, so I think that these soldiers were the ones who had killed the people in CIVITELLA.

We were kept at the villa until about 2200 hours that evening then we were taken to the convent at MONTE SAN SAVINO. This place appeared to be the headquarters of the Germans as there were a lot of soldiers and vehicles about the place. We were taken to the ground floor of the convent.

Here a German/....

/of the convent.

Here a German soldier took our documents and went upstairs. We were made to remain downstairs. This soldier was only away a few minutes when He returned, handed me back my documents and through Rino, told me I was free to go.

It was dark whilst I was at the convent but as far as I could see the soldiers were dressed the same as those at SPOIANO.

That night we slept with the Monks in a building adjoining the convent.

The following morning I went to the orphanage at POGGIALI where I found my wife.

I was still afraid the Germans would return so I left my son with my wife and went and lived in the woods.

I did not return to CIVITELLA until after it was occupied by the British.

This statement has been read over to me. It is true and correct. I herewith append my signature.

(Sg1) BIANCHI GIOVANNI.

Statement written down in Italian, signature witnessed and read over by Pte. DI DUCA, B., interpreter, in the presence of Sgt Clewlow, both of 78 Section, SIB, on Wednesday, 15th. November 1944, at CIVITELLA, AREZZO.

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

B. DI DUCA.