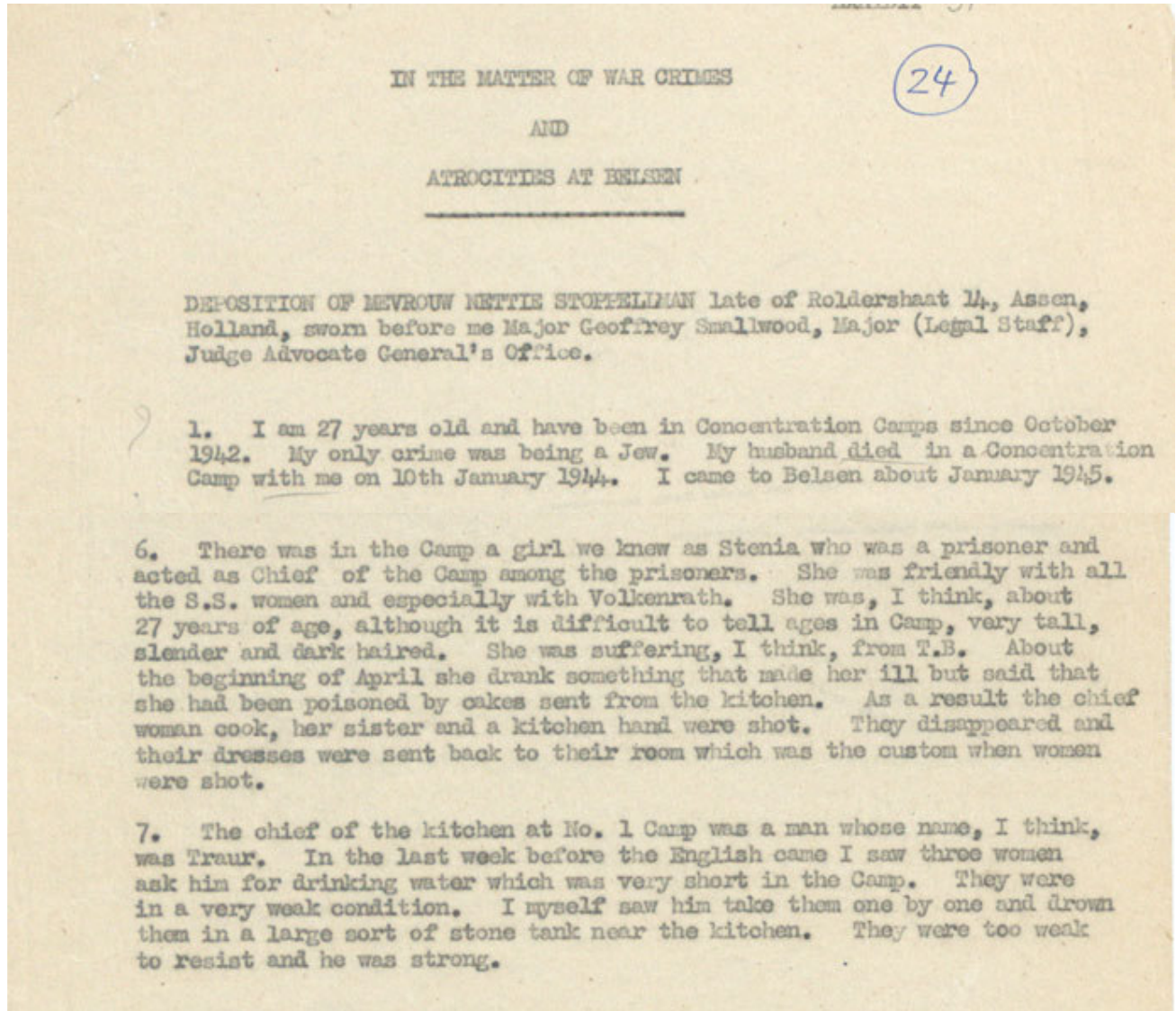


EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: CAMPS

Statement by a survivor of Belsen concentration camp May 1945

Catalogue ref: WO 235/23



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What is this source?

This source is the testimony of a prisoner at the Belsen concentration camp in 1945. She was giving evidence to British officials so that they could prepare cases to prosecute war criminals.

There were literally thousands of statements taken like this from camps all over Germany and Poland.

What's the background to this source?

During the war the Nazis conquered large areas of Eastern Europe and millions of Jews became their prisoners. By 1942 the Nazis had begun a programme of mass murder to execute Jews and other groups such as gypsies.

As the war began to go badly the Nazis emptied their camps in Eastern Europe and brought their prisoners back to camps in Germany, like Belsen. As well as the normal brutal treatment the prisoners also had to face up to starvation and overcrowding.

It's worth knowing that...

Belsen was one of the first camps to be found by Allied troops from Western Europe. It was captured by British troops in April 1945. The guards were taken prisoner in these camps and the prisoners were interviewed as witnesses in war crimes trials. These trials took place in Nuremberg from November 1945 to October 1946.

Today some people deny that there was mass murder in Nazi Germany but the sheer amount of evidence like this discredits such views.

How will you use this source?

1. What happened to the two women cooks?
2. Why do you think the dresses were sent back?
3. Why did Traur kill the two women by drowning rather than any other method?
4. Why would you be likely to believe that this testimony was genuine?
5. Can you use this source to support any part of your presentation?