

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies
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The Holocaust in Ukraine – The Pogroms of 1941
Translation: *A08 Report by group 711 (7th July 1941) about the mass murder in Lemberg*

The Chief of the Army Field Police
in the Supreme Command of the Army
Gen. Staff of the Army / Gen. Qu. / Section War Admin.

H.Qu.OKH., 28 July 1941

I. C o p y i n e x c e r p t s
from the report of the Group GFP 711 – date 7 July 1941
on the Bolshevik bloodbath in Lemberg

On Monday, 30 June 1941, but a few hours after the street battles in Lemberg had come to an end and the conquest of the city by the German troops, Group 711 entered the city, in part still aflame. Lively expressions of joy resounded from all segments of the population. The Ukrainians in the population, comprising in Lemberg approximately 30 per cent of the inhabitants, appeared to be especially well-organised. Their demeanour was such that an impartial observer might have thought it was the Ukrainians who had been the victorious liberators of the city. This fanatic mood also spread to the Ukrainian interpreters in the Group, who were quick to express their deepest disgust toward anyone of Polish extraction. In addition, they believed that every Jew had to be killed immediately. When it became known shortly after the entry into the city that corpses had been discovered, the Ukrainians claimed these dead for themselves, lauding them as martyrs and fighters against Bolshevism. Requests for an objective clarification of the state of affairs or even expressions of doubt regarding this interpretation were already perceived as an insult.

The investigation into the bloodbath in Lemberg has determined that:

In three Lemberg prisons, mountains of horribly mutilated corpses, male and female, were discovered. Bodies of quite young individuals were also found among these victims, inter alia including a number of children. The following prisons are involved:

Kazimierswska 24 b (GPU political prison)

Leons Sapiehy 1 (chief GPU prison, public prosecutor)

Zamaratynowska 7 (prison for criminal offenders, GPU barracks)

It was impossible to establish the number who had been killed, because given the sweltering heat, the stench of the corpses had spread throughout entire quarters of the city and reservations were expressed regarding further retrieval of bodies, due to fears about possible epidemics. A layer of bodies was immediately discovered stacked in the cellars; it consisted of nothing but a pulpy mass. In the cellar of the first-mentioned prison, the corpses were piled in four to five layers one above the other. The Russians had already bricked up some of the cellar rooms. A large proportion of these dead must have been “laid to rest” in this way already some time before the beginning of the war, since as mentioned the decomposition process was at a very advanced stage. On the whole, there may have been 3,500 dead in Lemberg. In the second-mentioned prison, the day after the troops marched in, the following picture emerged: body after body was being carried out from side rooms of the prison, located at ground level after traversing a courtyard surrounded by a wooden fence. Here there could be no doubt that their murder had taken place but a few days before the conquest of Lemberg. The ceilings of these cellar rooms were even spattered with blood, and in a room used as an “interrogation chamber,” a crust of blood 20 cm thick was discovered caking the floor. The Bolshevik executioners had thus literally waded in blood.

At two spots in the courtyard, mass graves were uncovered and the corpses were exhumed. They were laid down on the ground in rows in order for the relatives to identify their kin. But the Surgeon General who was present had certain misgivings about the procedure being conducted. He stated that at that point, the identity of most of the victims could after all no longer be recognised and that consideration ought to be shown for the relatives. Anyone who had seen these horribly mutilated corpses and witnessed the shattering scenes that occurred in the few cases when a person was identified, necessarily had but to concur with the Surgeon General. The fact that only in very isolated cases was identification possible and the body released to the family for private burial, allows one to conclude that numerous victims stem from the countryside around Lemberg. That is reinforced by an additional circumstance: people from the countryside are still standing today out in front of the prisons, expressing the wish to see their relatives who were arrested months ago. In addition, the suspicion may be correct that many Lemberg families

today still do not know that their arrested family members are no longer among the living. This can be concluded because the rush to identify the dead was relatively small and disproportionate to the number of victims.

The military doctors established that there were few deaths due to gunshot wounds. Ten bodies were transferred from the prison Leona Sapiehy to the Forensic Medical Academy for a detailed investigation into the cause of death. In general, all the victims had serious multiple injuries inflicted by blunt instruments. Many of the women had been violated, their breasts slashed off. Male sexual organs had also been the target of Bolshevik perversity. It is evident from the desperately contorted faces of the dead, their clothing torn off, and other traces of an ordeal, that the prisoners had suffered a ghastly fate. They were all literally beaten to death. According to the doctors, there were other signs indicating that some of the victims had suffocated to death under the piles of corpses. Rooms were discovered in the other prisons where the arms of the victims remained shackled backward to their ankles, strengthening the conclusion that horrible methods of torture were employed. There were profuse traces of blood everywhere on the door posts of the guard rooms at the entrances of the prison.

Less than one per cent of the dead are Jews, it is believed these persons were Zionists. The victims of this Lemberg bloodbath can be divided into 'capitalist' suspects and common criminals as well as inmates of the prisons already convicted and serving a sentence. To this one can add the Ukrainian and Polish intelligentsia as well as those who were taken prisoner by the GPU only after the war's outbreak. In the final days before the entry of the German forces, some 60 Polish and Ukrainian students were also arrested; they were alleged to have fired at Russian troops.

Regarding the point in time of the murders, it must be noted that the Bolsheviks massacred a large proportion of the prison inmates one day before the entry of the German troops. In addition, it would appear that already before 22 June, Lemberg and its environs had experienced one of the customary waves of terror. As almost everywhere in Russia, likewise in Lemberg, individuals who emerged still living, released from a GPU prison, are very rare. In

other words: murders here were on the daily agenda. The Group has found that those persons detained by the GPU and later released scarcely wish to talk what they experienced.

As the Group was able to establish specifically in Lemberg, already long before the outbreak of the war, the Asiatic hangman's methods against defenceless prisoners were also employed even in dealing with detainees who had been taken into custody by the GPU for extremely minor offenses. In connection with arrests, if one wishes to discern any sense whatsoever in the madding actions of the Bolsheviks, denunciations generally played a great role. Here the Jews, who by dint of their well-known intuitive gift for empathy, were quickly able to realign and adapt to the Soviet rulers, proved to be an especially compliant tool in the hands of the GPU. But other traitors as well must take a substantial share of the blame. The Group established that many denunciations stemmed from the circles of the janitors, in a lightning flash they were able to cause one person or another to disappear. Whether the Russians were guided in this by the ethnic-cultural background of those concerned could not be determined. What is certain is that likewise in Lemberg, the Jews had entered into a close and intimate pact with the Bolsheviks, and thus, at least indirectly, sent many a victim to his doom at the hands of the executioners.

Certified:

(signed) Secretary (stamped)

translated by William Templer