

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

RG-31.056.0001

The Holocaust in Ukraine – German Mass Shootings

Translation: *B03 Diary of Iryna Khoroshunova (30 September, 2 and 6 October 1941)*

September 30, 1941

We still don't know what they did with the Jews. Dreadful rumours are coming from the Lukianiv cemetery. But it's still impossible to believe them. People say that Jews are being shot. Those who accompanied them to the place where they were ordered to report saw that all the Jews were passing through a formation of German soldiers and throwing down their belongings, and then the Germans were driving them further.

Old Skrinskaia died yesterday. People ran around to get a coffin and permission for burial. They got a coffin with great difficulty only today because yesterday and today there were mass cases of suicide by Jews, and there is supposedly an order from the city commandant to bury them first.

Yesterday the Skrinskiis went to the Lukianiv cemetery (the Germans have banned funerals at the Baikove cemetery). It is impossible to get to the cemetery by the usual route. The whole way is blocked by Jews who are surrounded by German soldiers. The road to the cemetery goes past the prison. People made a hole in the fence and are bringing the dead from the other side. On the other side of the Russian cemetery things are quiet. When they were there, they heard continuous machine-gun fire at the Jewish cemetery.

Some people are saying that the Jews are being shot with machine-guns, being shot one and all. Others are saying that sixteen special trains have been prepared for them and they will be sent off. Whither? No one can answer. Only one thing is known for certain: all their papers, belongings and food are being taken away from them. Then they're driven to Babyn Yar and there... I don't know what happens there. The one thing I know is that something monstrous, something terrible, something unimaginable is happening, something that cannot be understood, realized or explained.

October 2, 1941

Now everyone is saying that the Jews are being killed. No, not being killed. They've already been killed. All of them, without distinction, old men, women, children. Those who were sent home on Monday have also been shot. This is what is being said, but there can be no doubt. No trains have left from Lukianivka. People saw lorries loaded with warm shawls and other items being driven away from the cemetery. German "accuracy." They've already sorted out their booty.

One Russian girl accompanied her girlfriend to the cemetery and got through the fence from the other side. She saw undressed people being led towards Babyn Yar and heard sub-machine-gun fire.

These rumours and reports are increasing. We cannot comprehend their monstrosity. But

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

<http://training.ehri-project.eu/b03-diary-iryna-khoroshunova-30-september-2-and-6-october-1941>

we are forced to believe them because the execution of the Jews is a fact. A fact that is making all of us lose our minds. Living with awareness of this fact is impossible.

The women around us are weeping. And we? We also wept on September 29, when we thought that they were being taken to a concentration camp. And now? Is it possible to weep?

I am writing, and the hair on my head is standing on end. I am writing, but these words mean nothing. I am writing because it is imperative that the people of the world know about this monstrous crime and take vengeance for it.

I am writing, but the mass killing of defenceless innocent children, women and old men goes on at Babyn Yar. People say that many of them are being buried half dead because the Germans are thrifty and don't like to waste bullets.

That cursed scrap of blue paper presses down on the mind like a white-hot stove. And we are absolutely, absolutely powerless!

And at Babyn Yar the execution, the murder of innocent people, is continuing.

Has there ever been anything like this in human history? No one could even imagine something like this. I cannot write anymore. It's impossible to write, impossible to try to understand because the awareness of what is happening is driving us mad. And it's of no benefit to anyone, no benefit... Prisoners are endlessly being driven through the city. The Jews are driven naked. They are killed if they ask for water or bread.

There it is. And we're still alive. And we do not understand why we suddenly have more right to live because we are not Jews.

Accursed age, accursed monstrous time!

October 6, 1941

Yesterday morning for the first time since the 18th a factory whistle sounded somewhere. Today it can be heard clearly and protractedly. The Germans are apparently beginning to rouse the population to some sort of life.

Yesterday evening water started running.

Yes, evidently that's how life in an occupied city is arranged. The war has moved away several steps, and life is starting up again. And everything is taking its turn. And some people will go on living even though Jews continue to be led to the Lukianivka cemetery. Life still goes on even though yesterday prisoners were led along our street and six corpses were left lying in the roadway.

Have all the Jews been killed? The faces of two of them are visible. It's difficult to say who they were. Half naked, barefoot, with transparent unshaven faces and terribly thin hands. None of their relatives will know how they died.

Prisoners were escorted for an hour. The same scene as the one we saw at Darnytsia. Thin, black, overgrown, dirty, with hungry vacant eyes.

Women brought out water and rusks. The prisoners fell on them, knocking down one another and the women, tore the rusks from their hands and fought over them.

Everyone around them was crying. The German escorts with beastly faces beat the prisoners with sticks and rubber truncheons. The prisoners walked along endlessly. There were several thousand of them that day. Women kept bringing water and rusks, even though it

wasn't nearly enough to feed these hungry men even a little bit.

Then the prisoners stopped coming along our street. We were left, and six corpses were left. That was just in our street. Yet they had already walked many versts. We managed to ask them. These were the prisoners who were going from Brovari to Darnytsia.

Yesterday there was terrible news about the prisoners. People say that they remain out in the open even on these ice-cold nights. They stand pressed one against the other, rocking back and forth in order to stay warm, and howl. The howling makes people who live near the camp go mad. In the morning hundreds of dead men are carried away from the camp.

Well, life still goes on.

Kyiv is as beautiful as ever, especially because a golden autumn has arrived. Where the city is intact, it seems that there has been no war.

These autumn days are clear, and the silvery threads of Indian summer stretch across the sky.

The city is as quiet as a village. Only German vehicles rattle along some streets. There's neither radio, nor trams, nor trains, nor factories. No urban noises. Occasionally a German aeroplane flies by. They fly very low now.

The Germans are repairing the Solom"ianka bridge. People say that two bath-houses are open. It's impossible to buy anything. Peasants are charging three times the price for their produce and are exchanging them for fabric or boots. Yesterday some shops were supposedly selling bluing and matches.

The former markets reek of eau-de-Cologne. Drunkards are paying fifty roubles for a flask of eau-de-Cologne and are drinking it instead of vodka.

There is no bread. The rusks are running out. We are going on hunger rations. This question disturbs us. But then how indifferent to it to are those who are at the Lukianiv cemetery!