

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

Vinnyts'ki visti (Vinnytsia), 1 July 1943, 3

The Holocaust in Ukraine –Christian Leaders

Translation: D07 At a Burial of Victims of NKVD Shootings, Bishop Hryhorii (Ohiichuk) of Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia denounces Stalin and “his” Jews, 12 June 1943

Thus Millions of People Died in the Country “Where a man Can Breathe So Freely”

BURIAL OF THE SECOND GROUP OF VICTIMS TORTURED TO DEATH BY THE VINNYTSIA NKVD

On June 24 of this year, at 6 pm, the second solemn burial ceremony of the second ground of victims tortured to death by the Vinnytsia NKVD took place in Vinnytsia.

600 bodies of innocently butchered martyrs, which were removed from the dreadful pits dug by the devilish man-slayers, were handed over to the earth according to Christian custom, for eternal peace and the never-dying memory of the living.

An incessant stream of Vinnytsians came to say goodbye to the remains of the unfortunate ones. They brought wreaths, flowers. Near the park's entrance, a couple of cars stopped. These were mayors and priests who came from a great number of the oblast's rayons to pay the dead their last respects. They examined this dreadful place, where the murderers attempted to hide their crimes from the people.

A large fraternal grave. In there, the remains of human bodies lie stacked in two rows. They are covered with branches and flowers. A table stands in the park, amid the lush June trees; it is laid with koliva, bread, religious items.

Hundreds and hundreds of people surrounded the enormous grave in a tight circle. It was 6 o'clock in the afternoon. In the presence of the visiting representatives of the German authorities and the Ukrainian institutions of the town and rayons, the Gebietskommissar solemnly laid a wreath on the grave of the perished and expressed to everyone present his deep condolences for the many innocent people who died at the hands of those criminals. “May this place become a sacred place for Ukrainians,” the Gebietskommissar said, “may it forever remind us of the dreadful days of the Bolshevik regime.”

The memorial service began. The Eminent Hryhorii, Bishop of Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia, together with the clerics, conducted a prayer for the souls of the perished.

In the service participated the priests of the Vinnytsia Holy Intercession Cathedral, Father Slovachevs'kyi and Father Martseniuk, Protodeacon V. Bohuts'kyi, the priests Dlozhevs'kyi, Slotkin and Marunchak (Vinnytsia rayon), Stasinevych, Diachyk, Lysiuk, Umanets', and the charitable archpriest Father Iaroslavs'kyi (Monastyryshche rayon), Syrotenko, Budnyi (Makhnivka rayon), Bondar, Plakhotniuk (Lityn rayon), Davydiuk (Turbiv rayon), Moroz (Kalynivka rayon), Husakivs'kyi, Klymenko (Dashiv rayon), and father Kishin'ov (Liubar rayon).

The holy service was interrupted by the weeping of those present. While wiping the tears from their eyes, Bishop Hryhorii and the priests proclaimed the victims' eternal memory. Men cried, women cried...

With great spiritual exaltation, Bishop Hryhorii addressed those gathered.

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

<https://training.ehri-project.eu/d07-burial-victims-nkvd-shootings-bishop-hryhorii-ohiichuk-zhytomyr-and-vinnytsia-denounces-stalin>

THE BISHOP'S ADDRESS

Today, all of us, Mr. Gebietskommissar, the representatives of the German government and people, the mayor [of Vinnytsia], the honorable clergy, and all our dear brothers and sisters, are gathered here in immense grief. Today, we are witnesses of the horrible terror that the Judeo-Bolsheviks have inflicted on our people's best sons.

They met their end without prayer, without the Christian rites, not as people, but as a lamb in the claws of a voracious beast.

They fell into the hands of a bloodthirsty butcher, the so-called "father of all workers" – Stalin, who tortured millions of people to death with his nightmarish constitution.

Dear ones! Put yourself in their position for a second. Between the four stone walls of the NKVD these poor, helpless people found themselves in a horrible, hopeless situation. Then came the Jews, who tied their hands and twisted them backward, and if they cried for help, there would be no one to hear them. And if someone dared to resist, they would hit him with a rifle butt and crack open his head. And when they were done bullying, they would at last fire a lead bullet through his head.

The butcher sang: "The youth are always dear to us, the old are always honored by us.", "I know of no other such country, where a man can breathe so freely."¹

Here, in this place, we see for ourselves what road was laid out for the young and the old in that "unfettered country", where the people breathed so freely. Here, in this pit, lay their road, this was their honor.

Who lies buried here? Who suffered such a terrible punishment? For the greater part, here lie forced laborers from the collective farm fields, here lie the workers of enterprises, here lies the intelligentsia. As "laureates of Stalin", they were not rewarded with a hundred thousand rubles but with a rope around their hands, not with a decoration but instead – with a lead bullet. When I look at the tormented remains lying in these graves, the figure of the martyr Christ passes before my eyes, who died for preaching this same truth, at the hands of the same Judeans.

Once, these same Judeans wanted to stone the Christ for telling them the truth. But Jesus said to them:

"I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" (John 10:32) Because I made water spring from stone and gave you to drink, or because I fed you with manna and quails, or because I cured the ill and resurrected the dead."²

My dear sons, now rise and, like Christ, ask the bloodthirsty butcher, "the father of all workers" – Stalin, for which of the good things we did for you and your Jews during our life did you torture us so cruelly? Because we labored in the farm fields without straightening our backs, growing abundant wheat, so that your Jews could have a tasty bun for their Sabbath and Pesach, or because we cultivated sugar beets with our eyes drowning in sweat, so that your Judeans could have their sweets, or because we tenderly raised the best cattle for the tasty soup and meatballs of the "Soviet nobility", or because we produced millions of birds and eggs in incubators, again, for you, or because we took the milk from our own children's mouths to turn it into butter for "Israel's offspring"?

¹ From the Soviet song "Wide is My Motherland" – translator's note.

² These last words are not in the Bible, they were invented by the author – translator's note.

Tell us, butcher, tell us, why don't you speak? The butcher is silent, because he knows they died for exactly the same cause as Christ: for the Truth, for being able to tell apart the dark from the light and the light from the dark, good from evil. Of course there was no place for such people in the USSR; in accordance with the "fatherly constitution", their place was in those dreadful graves.

Neither force nor reason suffices to defame these butchers. Dear ones! On July 20, two years will have passed since the day the town of Vinnytsia was liberated by the German army from the Bolsheviks, from the bloodshed and tears, from the forced labor. On that day, we must be particularly grateful for our liberation. If he, the butcher, would have stayed in Ukraine during those two years, this large park would undoubtedly be littered with your corpses, and millions of new corpses of our people would be buried in the other towns of Ukraine.

But our merciful Lord heard our supplications, our weeping and our children's tears, and sent his messenger to liberate us, in the person of the Führer of Greater Germany Adolf Hitler, who saved our lives, wiped away the tears of us and our children, halted the shedding of our innocent blood.

We must always be grateful to the great German people and its warriors for our liberation. We must march together with them in total unity, we must execute the Führer's will honestly, standing together as one, offering our labor or even, when necessary, our lives for the sake of all humankind and our people.

This is the only way for us to achieve a swift and definite victory over the atheism and anti-Christianity of Judeo-communism.

They lie here, dead and lifeless. But their souls are here, among us. They sense our weeping, they sense their dear ones moaning and crying for them. They would like to rise and say, if only for one last time – goodbye! But they can't. Therefore, my dear sons and daughter, allow me, our spiritual father, to say goodbye to you, present here today, on behalf of them, the dead.

Goodbye, mum and dad! Forgive me for forsaking you, for missing your death, for not folding your hands, for not closing your eyes, like you so hoped I would. Goodbye, my wife and aunts! Forgive me for exposing you to cruelty and arbitrariness! But it is not my fault, I was wrested from your hands, like a kite snatches the hatchlings from the nest of an innocent little bird. Goodbye, friends! Goodbye, colleagues from work! Goodbye, my community, make a prayer for my soul to our Lord Almighty.

And we, dear ones, will plant the best trees over these graves, so that birds will visit this grove, sing songs as they land on these trees, and bring them word of our lives, our successes and our victories over enemies.

Praise our God! Forever amen!

After the bishop's word, the town's mayor prof. Savostiianov³ addressed those present. He reiterated the unanimous intent of the Vinnytsians to build on this spot a monumental memorial for the victims. A considerable amount of money has already been collected for this purpose.

The fresh grave is covered with earth. The burial mound that was erected over two adjacent graves twelve days earlier is decorated with foliage and wreaths: candles burn on

³ Should be: Sevostiianov – translator's note.

top of it. The Vinnytsians have not forgotten about those who they accompanied on their final journey on June 12.

THE LAST GOODBYE

Near the large brotherly grave we see a separate, solitary grave.

Nay, the grave is not solitary, the victim lying in this grave is being accompanied on his last journey by all the Vinnytsians and visitors attending the burial ceremony, who accompany his wife, daughter and relative. A tight circle of people surrounds the grave the whole time.

On June 23 of this year, citizen Horpyna Ivanivna Kvast travelled to the town of Vinnytsia from the village of Komarivka in the Teplyk rayon. She came to see the countless items that were retrieved from the graves of the poor martyrs, shot by the Vinnytsia NKVD.

She spent a long time going around the rows of corpses, lying next to the graves. She studied every body at length. Finally, her eyes rested on a corpse, dressed in a costume similar to that of her husband. Upon taking a closer look at the remains, the poor woman very quickly recognized the body of her husband, Endryk Kvast.

It is impossible to describe exactly what we saw in that moment. No words can express the tragedy of the soul of a woman so aggrieved by the cruel Bolshevik regime.

Citizen Endryk Rudol'fovych Kvast, a German by nationality, worked as a driver at the Komarivka collective farm. He was a good and honest worker. Back in 1911, the landowner Chornav's'kyi had brought him over from Berlin to work as a driver on his estate.

Citizen Kvast married a local peasant girl and settled down in the village. Little did the poor man know what fate would befall him. If his soul would have warned him, he would have left this terrible land, soaked with human blood.

Born in Berlin and having lived in Königsberg for a long time, he always longed for his native land, for his motherland. There was a time when he could correspond with his brothers and sisters, who are currently living in Germany. They provided him with precious news from his motherland and sent him money in the difficult years of 1932-34.

As we know, in 1937-1938, all citizens of the Soviet Union who maintained correspondence across the border were arrested without exception. Through torture and abuse, they were forced to "confess" to espionage for foreign states. In short, on December 14, 1937, citizen Kvast was arrested and also "deported to a remote camp", which in fact was one of the many pits in the hellish park of the Vinnytsia NKVD.

Archpriest Slovachev's'kyi held a memorial service near this small grave. A prayer was conducted for the peace of this martyr's soul. His wife, daughter Liza and relative Iuliia Brode, their faces covered in tears, said their last goodbye to the beloved body.

Thus a man perished, he perished merely for being a German and having Germany as his motherland.

Ap. Trembovets'kyi⁴

Translated by Tobias Wals

⁴ Apollon Pavlovych Trembovets'kyi