

On the 7 June myself and my team travelled to the village of Pryhir'ya in the Kherson Oblast, Ukraine. It's tiny village around 150 km north of Kherson city. The area was part of a swath of southern Ukraine taken by the Russians at the start of the war but was retaken by Ukrainian forces during the last days of March.

You'll have heard of Bucha. You'll have heard of Mariupol. You probably won't have heard of Pryhirya.

We were escorted to the village by the local military administration but upon arrival were given free reign to go anywhere and talk to anyone we wanted. As we entered the village, the ferocity of the fighting back in March was evident in places. Some farmhouses destroyed, a World War II statue of a soldier had been decapitated by shelling but by in large the rural idyll looked intact. It was a beautiful day. A few people in the distance tended their fields. The birds were singing. We didn't know it at the time but we were, in fact, travelling into a community upon which hell had been visited.

We met Tetiana Tarasiuk a pensioner. On the 13th March herself and her husband Ihor had been hiding in the cellar behind their farmhouse. Above ground fighting was raging as the Russians tried to hold this position. During a brief lull in the battle Ihor peeked out the door of the cellar and was spotted by Russian soldiers. His wife Tetiana was at the bottom of the cellar steps so saw everything.

"He just opened the door a little. Then he was shot in the stomach and leg. He fell back down inside the cellar. They ran to the cellar and opened the door. They threw one grenade in, on the steps of the cellar. It exploded. Then they threw a second grenade on top of him."

Then Tetiana heard the footsteps of the soldier coming down into the cellar. He came down with a flashlight. Tetiana pretended to be dead, she was covered in her husband's blood. The soldier shone the flashlight on her and her husband's body. Then he walked out and radio'ed in to his superior. "Everyone is dead here," he said.

At the other end of the village, we met Natalia Yenatska. 10 Russian soldiers commandeered her house during the occupation. Natalia and 16 other villagers spent 3 weeks in a neighbour's cellar during the fighting.

One night a Russian soldier came down the ladder. He robbed them all of the few valuables they had with them. We told them that he had been in prison for 8 years in the so called 'Donetsk People Republic' and had been released to come fight. Natalia clearly remembers what he said to them as he robbed them.

"He pointed the machine gun at us and said 'I don't care if I go to prison again, I have already served time, and I can serve another 15 years.' We didn't know if he was going to shoot us or not. We were in shock. There were children in the cellar with us."

Natalia also told us about the story of a 16 yr old girl in the village who had been raped by a Russian soldier. We reached out to her and her mother at the time but they were not, understandably, at a place to talk to us. Subsequently though, Dasha, the 16 yr old and her mother Oksana agreed to be interviewed.

As part of that trip we also visited the town of Zelenodolsk. It never fell to the Russians but it is the first place people come to after escaping from the occupied town of Vysokopiliya in the Kherson region, 12 miles away. People arrive at Zelenodolsk all day by bicycle. On the day we were there everyone was talking about what had just happened to one couple in particular.

A few days earlier Serhiy & Svitlana Lanavich had cycled into Zelenodolsk to collect medicine for elderly neighbours on their street in Vysokopiliya. The couple collected the medicine from a community centre but then cycled back into occupied Vysokopiliya. They had done this before. Russian soldiers at checkpoints were open to bribes, we were told.

It was just after midday on the 1st June when soldiers arrived at the couple's house in the village. They murdered them both in the yard outside their home. We have spoken to several people with intimate

knowledge of the killing including their family. They wanted us to report what happened that day. But asked us not to broadcast all the details. Suffice to say - there were layers to the horror.