4 March 2022

'THEY'RE TRYING TO WIPE THIS CITY OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH'

- Financial Times

PUTIN'S CHILLING WARNING: WORST IS YET TO COME

- Daily Telegraph

RUSSIAN ATTACK ON UKRAINIAN NUCLEAR POWER FACILITY ALARMS EXPERTS

- The Irish Times

UKRAINE APPEALS TO RED CROSS TO ESTABLISH HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS FOR BESIEGED CIVILIANS

- Kyiv Post

YOUNG UKRAINIANS PUT LIFE PLANS ON HOLD TO HELP NATION AT WAR

- The Irish Times

Day 9

Where to Go? • It's Settled • What's in Store for Us? • A Very Important Meeting

I woke up at six in the morning. We found out that the train is now terminating at Uzhhorod. I looked at the map and saw that Uzhhorod is in the far western end of Ukraine. At first, we thought we'd go there. But then we discovered that we could go to Romania or Germany from Lviv with my new friend Lera, and we thought, Why not go with them? But then we decided it would be more sensible to stay on the train, because if we changed at Lviv, we'd have to wait for three hours to get on a bus to the Romanian border and it was unclear what would happen once we got there. So, we settled on staying onboard until the end after all.

Lera and her mother got off the train in Lviv. We said goodbye, hoping we'd one day meet in Kharkiv. We're heading towards Uzhhorod, where there's a border with Slovakia and Hungary. We'll figure out the rest when we get there.



Passing a familiar site on the train – Mukachevo Castle.



On the train to Uzhhorod with my diary close to me.

8 a.m. A lot of people got off at Lviv, so our carriage is now half-empty. We move to a different compartment, where there is an empty bottom bunk.

A train conductor comes up to us. She's from Zaporizhzhia,[30] and she tells us that earlier the Russian occupiers seized the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.[31] Its nuclear reactor is ten times more powerful than the one at Chernobyl. If it explodes, it will destroy everything in its path … and beyond.

1 p.m. It's been five hours – the trip is long and boring – and now we're in Mukachevo, in the west of the country. I can see Mukachevo Castle. I took a picture of it. I remember coming here last summer, but this time I'm trying to escape a war.

3 p.m. We eventually arrived in Uzhhorod, and the first thing we did was have something to eat at the station. Then, we went to the office that assigns accommodation. We were taken on to a bus. We didn't know where we were going. No one seems to know what's in store for us.

I'm realising that we've become refugees. Perhaps we will have the chance to go to the UK or Europe[32] and live there.

We arrived at the office for registration and placement. We were given a document with an address on it, and some volunteers drove us there in their car.

6 p.m. We've arrived at the address. It's a school. As we walked

inside there was a man walking just behind us. He said hello in what I first thought was German, but then I realised he was actually speaking English. He wanted to ask me something, but I apologised and said I couldn't talk right now. I didn't know what was going on.

We were greeted by Myna. She's in charge here and she told us what's what. As she was showing us around the school, the man from before started filming us.

I don't know what to do with myself. I can feel the tension inside me; the stress of the situation is overwhelming. I have to find something to do. I need to figure out where I am, what I am, what is going on in the world. How am I supposed to sleep on a mattress in a school gym instead of my warm cosy bed? Where am I going to wash? There's no hot bath here.

I want to go back to school, my school, to my friends.

I feel numb.

8 p.m. While I was walking around, trying to occupy myself, Granny told the man who was filming us before that I was writing a book. How she managed that when he doesn't speak any Russian is a mystery to me … Still, that caught his attention. I went over and said hello. His name is Flavian. He works for Channel 4, a British TV channel.

I told him about everything that has happened to me. He asked if he could interview me about it on camera.

While they were looking for a room to film the interview

in, me and Flavian got talking and I learned that he's French. They couldn't find a room, so in the end we decided to do the interview right there in the middle of the school hall. During the interview, Flavian operated the camera, and I read him my book. After that, Paraic, an Irish reporter working for Channel 4 News, asked me some questions.

We asked them if they could help us leave the country or find somewhere to live. They said they'd see if there was anything they could do. I'm hoping there is.

There are about fifty other people staying at this school gym.

10 p.m. I've been directed to my bed. I guess I'll try to sleep.