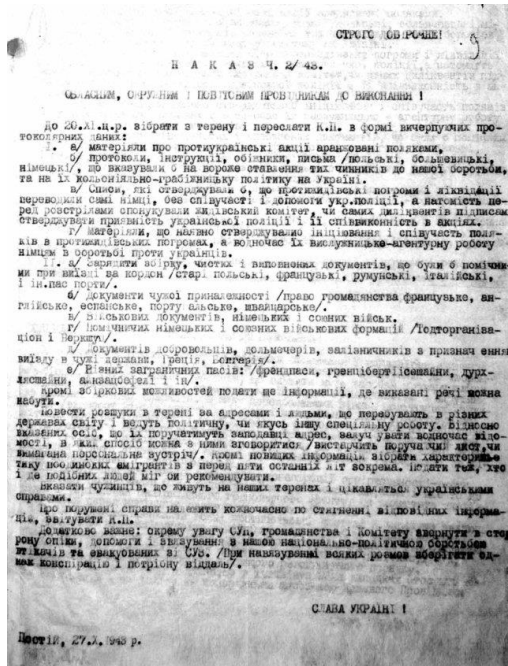


Scholarship in the Face of Distortion: The Holocaust in Ukraine

Prof. Nickerson

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OUN(B) Order October 27 1943, demanding preparation of materials to hide the Ukrainian role in the murder of Jews and Poles.



“c. Lists that would confirm that the Germans carried out anti-Jewish pogroms and liquidations by themselves, without the participation or help of the Ukrainian police, and instead, before carrying out the executions, urged the Jewish committee or the rogues themselves to confirm with their signatures the presence of the Ukrainian police and its involvement in the actions.

d. Material that would clearly confirm that Poles had initiated and taken part in anti-Jewish pogroms and at the same time that they had served as the hirelings and agents of the Germans in their struggle with Ukrainians.”¹

¹ Carynnyk, Marco. 2011. “Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929-1947.” *Nationalities Papers* 39 (3): 315–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>. For photos of these documents please see https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233467822_Foes_of_our_rebirth_Ukrainian_nationalist_discussions_about_Jews_1929-1947

Study of the Holocaust in Ukraine increasingly places historians in conflict with Ukrainian political memory of the Second World War. The scope of this study is a summary of the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine. It will be assumed that Holocaust Studies as a discipline did not begin until the late 1970s. A lack of access to Soviet records, Cold War politics and errors in methodology regarding Jewish testimony contributed to a lack of adequate scholarship in the field. I will argue that the use of witness testimony in reconstructing events, microhistory, access to Soviet archives, new methodologies and international cooperation has created a field of Ukrainian Holocaust Studies that has been on the forefront of genocide studies. Study of the Holocaust in Ukraine has contributed significantly to the global understanding of documenting genocide and countering politically motivated historical myths. It has also set a precedent for historical study to attempt to right the wrongs of its past methodology, and brought to light issues such as sexual violence, colonialism and the Holocaust, the treatment of witness testimony, the creation of killers, and proper forensic study of sites of murder.

Historic context for study of the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine

Stepan Bandera and Yaroslav Stetsko were the two most powerful leaders the Ukrainian nationalist movement in 1941. They had consolidated power over the more radical and younger members of Ukrainian Nationalist Movement, forming the Order of Ukrainian Nationalists Bandera-(OUN B). Bandera accepted his role as leader of the nationalist movement after his assassination of the Polish Interior Minister in 1936. His public trial and speeches on the stand propelled him as a hero of the Ukrainian struggle, the spiritual and political representation of the Ukrainian people. In preparation for the invasion of the Soviet Union, Stephan Bandera, Stepan Lenkavs'kyi, Roman Shukhevych, and Yaroslav Stesko produced a document intended to be used by revolutionaries. Titled "The Struggles and Activities of the OUN in wartime", the

document includes the organization's plans for the population during their revolutionary struggle.

“The national minorities are divided into a) those that are friendly to us, that is, members of previously subjugated peoples b) those that are hostile to us, Russians, Poles, Jews.

Re a. Have equal rights with Ukrainians; we help them return to their homelands.

Re b. Destruction in battle particularly those who defend the regime...”

In the portion of document concerning the Security Service, it is left unambiguous,

“We have to remember that these existing elements have to be, as the main pillar of the NKVD and the Soviet authority in Ukraine, exterminated while we are establishing the new revolutionary order in Ukraine. These elements are:

1. Russians who have been sent... to strengthen Moscow's power in Ukraine.
2. Jews, both individually and as a national group.
3. Aliens, for the most part various Asians, whom Moscow is using to colonize Ukraine with the aim of creating a national checkerboard in Ukraine.
4. Poles in the western Ukrainian regions who have not renounced their dream of rebuilding a Greater Poland at the expense of Ukrainian lands, even if that Poland has to be red.²

The nationalist ideology of the Order of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) combined elements of European fascist ideas such as anti-Semitism³ and eugenics in its goal of obtaining an ethnically pure Ukrainian state under the Fuhrerprinzip, the belief in one leader, Bandera, consolidating power. Ukrainian nationalists gathered in the General Gouvernment in and around Krakow in alliance with Nazi Germany between 1939 and Operation Barbarossa. The OUN B followed the Nazi invasion into the Soviet Union, initiating their Ukrainian national revolution.

² Ibid

³ Carynnyk, Marco. 2011. “Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929-1947.” *Nationalities Papers* 39 (3): 315–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>

On June 30, 1941, as Nazi forces entered the city, Yaroslav Stetsko proclaimed a Ukrainian state in Lviv, as Bandera remained in the General Gouvernment. On July 1-2, 1941 a public pogrom took place in Lviv. The OUN printed leaflets urging Ukrainians to murder the Jewish population⁴, Ukrainian militias along with the crowd in Lviv humiliated, raped, and murdered Jews. The pogrom was photographed, and involved ritualistic humiliation, along with sexual violence against girls and women⁵. Jews were grabbed from their homes by Ukrainians, thrown to the street, humiliated, subject to sexual violence, and beaten on their way to the prisons where they were murdered by Nazis and Ukrainian militias. Ukrainian police would participate extensively in the murder of Jews in Ukraine.⁶

Hitler did not respect the OUN government or a Ukrainian state, but its leaders survived the war and continued their lives and struggle as Ukrainian nationalists. The OUN B and its armed wing the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) began to falsify its immediate past during the war, issuing statements to blame anti-Jewish violence solely on the Germans and to hide the role the Ukrainian police. Thousands of Ukrainians retreated with the German army westwardly, ended up in DP camps, immigrated to Britain in the early 1950s, and later Canada and the United States⁷. The UPA murdered Jews who had survived the Nazi Holocaust in 1943-44 and

⁴ For further study, please see 2012. "Ukrainian Memories of the Holocaust: The Destruction of Jews as Reflected in Memoirs Collected in 1947." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54 (3-4): 427–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2012.11092716>. And 2011. "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4): 209–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2011.11092673>.

⁵ 2011. "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4): 209–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2011.11092673>.

⁶ Dean, Martin, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2000. *Collaboration in the Holocaust : Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

⁷ Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, and Ibidem Verlag. 2014. *Stepan Bandera : The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist : Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag.

committed ethnic cleansing of Poles in Galicia and Volhania, murdering between 40,000-60,000⁸. The UPA and the OUN continued to fight the Soviet Union, and Ukrainian nationalists allied with the Western powers after the war. The Cold War provided the context for Ukrainian diaspora groups to weaponize and glorify the OUN and UPA and to be seen by Western governments as freedom fighters. Banderite groups gained power in Ukrainian diaspora political organizations in Canada, Australia and the United States. Journalist Moss Robeson has written on the infiltration of OUN members and Banderites in Ukrainian diaspora political organizations.⁹ There have been predictable clashes between more moderate and left-wing Ukrainians in these communities.¹⁰ In 1983 Ronald Reagan and George Bush received Yaroslav Stetsko at the White House. In 1982, as a part of “Captive Nations Week”, the red and black flag of the UPA flew over the White House.¹¹ The same flag flew over Lviv city hall while thousands of Jews were brutalized and murdered in July of 1941.

Ukrainian nationalist diaspora memory is defined in this study as a form of historical memorialization, involving historical scholarship, that publicly proclaims that Stephan Bandera, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists-Bandera (OUN B) and its armed wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) are Ukrainian national heroes, this involves denial of acts of genocide or active attempts by scholarship and memory carriers to distort events. Memory carriers is a term used by historian Henry Rousso in his pioneering 1991 work on memory, *The Vichy Syndrome*. Rousso identifies three types of carriers of memory: organizational carrier, cultural carrier, and

⁸ This number is based on the range given by Timothy Snyder In *Past and Present* (p. 202)

⁹ Robeson, Moss 2021 <https://banderalobby.substack.com/> . Robeson is an investigative journalist and author of a blog tracing the OUN B’s influence on world politics.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Robeson, Moss. 2020. “The Center for U.S. Banderite Relations.” Bandalobby.substack.com. March 20, 2020. <https://banderalobby.substack.com/p/exposing-the-bandera-lobby-in-the>.

scholarly carriers.¹² These “vectors of the past” shape historical memory of an event. Rousso set out to study what he saw as the systematic difficulty of France reconciling themselves to their history. I believe further scholarship is needed on Ukrainian memory of the Second World War and how the contradiction between what occurred and what is remembered manifests itself in Ukrainian politics and society.

The apologetic discourse on Bandera, the OUN and the UPA, along with the anticommunist environment in the West, corroded historical scholarship until the 1990s. Ukrainian nationalist diaspora established two major academic institutions, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta in 1976. These institutions produced scholarship which sought to minimize the crimes of the OUN B and solidify Ukraine as a victim of history. An example of this type of literature is Yuriy Boshyk’s *Ukraine during World War II: History and Its Aftermath: A Symposium.* , published by the Canadian Institute Of Ukrainian Studies, University Of Alberta in 1986. The book defines the OUN’s ideology as “a brand of revolutionary integral nationalism, emphasizing volunteerism, self-sacrifice, discipline, and obedience to the leadership. When Hitler took power, a member of the OUN leadership condemned Nazi ideology as imperialist, racist, and anti-Christian.”¹³ The last sentence is footnoted to a 7-page 1934 article published in Prague by a minor OUN writer. The book could certainly fool the average reader, as the footnotes show the extent to which it is a piece of Holocaust distortion, including anti-Semitic statements in the footnotes. The photos included in the book only include NKVD and Nazi crimes. The Holocaust is mentioned in one photo, which is of all German Einsatzgruppe members, with the caption,

¹² Rousso, Henry, Arthur Goldhammer, and Stanley Hoffmann. 1991. *The Vichy Syndrome : History and Memory in France since 1944*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

¹³ (Boshyk 1986, 18)

“mobile killing units such as this one were responsible for the murder of the local population.” It is a very cynical, and well-done piece of propaganda, and speaks to the power of Ukrainian nationalist diaspora.

The anticommunist discourse propagated by OUN myths severely affected Holocaust scholarship. John Paul Himka, now an authority on Ukrainian collaboration during the Holocaust, produced an article in 1982 on the UPA which did not mention any atrocities by the UPA or OUN. Historical scholarship on the Holocaust in Ukraine since the 1990s has taken place in an environment where diaspora groups such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Committee and the Ukrainian American Congress Committee, along with elements of Ukrainian civil society, continue to glorify Bandera, the OUN and the UPA. Former President Yushchynko in 2010 awarded Bandera the title of “Hero of Ukraine.” The myths have survived, the lack of critical historical scholarship prior to the 1990s was not the primary reason for this. However, along with Jewish witness testimony not being respected by German historians, created a serious misunderstanding and gap in knowledge of a perpetrator of the Holocaust, Ukrainian nationalists.

Jewish Witness Testimony, Jewish Voices

Jewish witness testimony was not seriously considered by historians of the Holocaust, this along with the fact of a lack of survivors of the killings, had an effect of silencing victim perspectives, and provided a shelter for Ukrainian diaspora myths. Jewish historians, and Jewish survivors made considerable attempts to document the Holocaust in its aftermath. Until the mid 1990s, Holocaust survivor and historian Philip Friedman and historian Shmuel Spector of Yad Vashem, were the two historians who focused specially on Ukraine. Historians still cite these works today, as well as utilize the sources they helped create. In August 1944, Jewish survivors founded in Lublin the Central Jewish Historical Commission (Centralna Żydowska Komisja

Historyczna, CŻKH) which collected almost eight thousand reports from Holocaust survivors. Friedman was the head of the Commission. Like Emmanuel Ringelbaum in the Warsaw Ghetto who gathered vital documentation of the destruction of Polish Jewry, Friedman, a trained historian before the Shoah, collected materials to ensure the history of the Holocaust could be written. Friedman published a short analytical study of the Lviv Pogrom in 1945 and expanded it to 80 pages in its publication in the United States in 1959, titled “Ukrainian Jewish relations during Occupation”¹⁴. Friedman’s description of the perpetrators and the violence corresponds with the current knowledge of the event. Friedman passed away suddenly in 1960, his wife would collect and publish much of his scholarship posthumously. Prominent historian of modern Jewish history, Lucy Dawidowicz, stated in a review of a collection of Friedman’s work published 20 years after his death in 1980, that the piece “was the definitive work on the subject and an unfulfilled promise of what could have been a book-length history of the major community of Galician Jews.”¹⁵

Concurrent in only time, not substance, to the scholarship of Friedman, John Armstrong published *Ukrainian Nationalism, 1939-1945* in 1963 which would sadly become the standard work on the subject. While investigating the subject, Armstrong did not take interest in the experiences recorded by the Jewish survivors. In addition to not consulting Friedman’s publication, he did not work with the testimonies collected by the CŻKH, stored in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, or other collections of testimonies or published and unpublished diaries. Instead, he used and relied on German archival documents, Ukrainian nationalist

¹⁴ I unfortunately was not able to access this text through Loyola library, but Rossolinski-Liebe’s work tracing the Bandera Cult includes extensive discussion on the Friedman’s scholarship.

¹⁵ Discussion of Friedman is included in Brandon, Ray, Wendy Lower, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2010. *The Shoah in Ukraine : History, Testimony, Memorialization*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press ; Chesham.

publications, and interviews of veterans of the OUN and UPA. It became the standard monograph on Ukrainian nationalism during the Second World War until the 1990s, providing an academic shelter for Ukrainian diaspora Holocaust distortion.

A major historical work done by Jewish survivors and historians was *The Black Book: The Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders Throughout the Temporarily Occupied Regions of the Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland during the War 1941-1945*, by Visilji Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg published in 1946 in Russian and Yiddish. On October 7th, 1947, the decision was made by Department for Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist party that since the book “contains grave political errors”, it “may not be published.”¹⁶ The Black Book is testimony to Jewish suffering during the war, including considerable information on the killing process and crucially, testimony of survivors of mass killings. Grossman and Ehrenburg’s were combat journalists, following the Red Army and documenting the Nazi Holocaust by interviewing victims and visiting the sites of murder. Yad Vashem eventually published The Black Book in 1980, translated into English in 1981. It remains, in my opinion, one of the most important historical works of the 20th century.

Survivors were not silent, their voices were simply not respected by German historians and as Ukrainian diaspora myths intensified in the 1980s¹⁷, survivors responded to the Holocaust distortion. In B.F Sabrin’s 1991. *Alliance for Murder : The Nazi-Ukrainian Nationalist Partnership in Genocide.*, Holocaust survivors from Western Ukraine gathered their testimonies,

¹⁶ Baranova, Olga. 2015. “Politics of Memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.” *Dimensions of Modernity. The Enlightenment and Its Contested Legacies*, 34. <https://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxxiv/politics-of-memory-of-the-holocaust-in-the-soviet-union/>.

¹⁷ This was due to the very public pursuit of Ukrainian war criminals in Canada and the United States. The tv series *Holocaust* also introduced popular audiences to Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust.

and consulted Soviet archives and sources between the years of 1982-1991. The book's tone reads as a cry to attention, for readers to understand that the OUN B participated in genocide and committed these acts in partnership with the Nazis. The book's primary sources present evidence obtained from the Soviet archives and photographic evidence of Nazi and Ukrainian nationalist crimes. Predicting the surge in scholarship that took place after the 1990s, the book's introduction ends with a call to historians to examine Soviet archives.

A more complete picture of events in Nazi-occupied Ukraine during World War II will be a job for future historians. Microfilmed archival documentary evidence is already available in the United States. Let's hope it will see daylight in the early 1990s. The time is long overdue. (B.F. Sabrin 1991, 4)

The birth of Ukrainian Holocaust Studies

Access to Soviet archives after the fall of the Soviet Union is the most obvious reason study of the Holocaust in Ukraine only seriously began in the 1990s. With new opportunities came the growth of Holocaust and genocide studies as a discipline. Wendy Lower, currently one most prominent and prolific scholars of the Holocaust in Ukraine, identifies three other factors which influenced the slow development of the field. These are the significant language skills required for a non-regional study; a focus on death camps in the field; and Holocaust Studies addressing other key debates at the time. The opening of Soviet archives along with a second generation of historians provided the opportunity for the flaws in previous historiography and source material to be corrected. Lower summarizes the effect that prioritizing German documents had on the field, "Viewing the Holocaust from the German view alone, as many scholars did prior to the 1990s led to erroneous assumptions: that the Jews rarely resisted going to their deaths; that the Final Solution was imposed by top Nazi officials in Berlin upon lower

echelons and executed in strict obedience almost exclusively by the SS; that sexual violence was incidental and not an integral aspect of the Holocaust; and that killings were “industrial” implying they lacked the brutality of other genocides.”¹⁸ In 1996, German historian Dieter Pohl produced a work on the Holocaust in Galicia¹⁹, and with the growth of Holocaust studies as a field, along with the use of Soviet archives, the Holocaust in Ukraine was given new impetus.

Holocaust Studies as a field could not have developed without Raul Hillberg. Raul Hillberg researched and authored the seminal text for Holocaust Studies, *The Destruction of the European Jews* in 1961. In it, he identified the importance of the summer months of 1941, “For every echelon of the Nazi regime mark a transition from uncertainty to certainty.” Particularly since the 2003 publication of Jan Gross’ *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* describing the murder of Jedwabne’s Jewish inhabitants by their gentile neighbors, the investigation into the violence of the summer of 1941 has moved to foreground of Holocaust Studies. *Neighbors* was a widely read and paradigm shifting work which prompted scholarship on the nature and extent of collaboration during the Shoah. Study of collaboration, and of the summer months of 1941 provide much of the basis for Holocaust Studies in Ukraine. Collaboration, the improvisation of the Holocaust in Ukraine, obtaining the last witness testimonies of the Shoah we will ever have, and forensic documentation have made study of the Holocaust in Ukraine at the forefront of Holocaust studies.

John Paul Himka’s scholarship since the 1990s has focused on the role of Ukrainian nationalists in the genocide of Jews, producing numerous journal articles on the subject. In

¹⁸ (Lower, 2021)

¹⁹ This work has unfortunately not been translated into English. Allen, Michael Thad, and Dieter Pohl. 1996. “Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944. Organisation Und Durchföhrung Eines Staatlichen Massenverbrechens.” *German Studies Review* 22 (1): <https://doi.org/10.2307/1431615>.

September of 2021, Himka's "*Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941-1944*", totaling 540 pages, will be published, adding a much-needed comprehensive study on the subject. Himka is a prolific scholar and has made it his goal to publicly challenge nationalist historical myths, authoring opinion pieces on Ukrainian politics and the memory of the Shoah. In the introduction to his article, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd," Himka states that "Determining the responsibility of various actors in the events of the summer of 1941 has been very difficult, however, and therefore it has become necessary to study them on a microlevel, with the hope that eventually clear patterns will emerge." This can help explain much of the scholarship on the Shoah in Ukraine being produced in journal length articles, as determining what occurred and why during the Shoah in Ukraine requires considerable research into a variety of different actors. "The Lviv Pogrom" is an example of the strengths of this methodology, as Himka breaks down a chaotic situation of violence, identifying the motivating factors for each group involved.

A comprehensive summary of the leading historians in the field is included in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, produced by the United States Holocaust Museum in 2010 and edited by Wendy Lower. Lower is currently the John K. Roth Professor of History and George R. Roberts Fellow at Claremont McKenna College. As a young historian, Lower made her first trip to Ukraine in 1992 and according to a recent interview has returned every year since. "The Shoah in Ukraine" is a study of the latest scholarship, including contributions by Dieter Pohl, Omer Bartov, and Karel Berkhoff. What follows is a discussion of the contribution made by these specific historians. German historian Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe and the work of Father Patrick Desbois will conclude this study.

Lower and Berkhoff

Wendy Lower's 2007 work, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University Of North Carolina Press, is an excellent analysis of the Nazi drive for Lebensraum and its application in the Zhytomyr region. Her discussion of both extermination and settlement policies changed the way I viewed the Holocaust. Lower convincingly argues that the experiences in eastern Ukraine provide further evidence of how the experiences on the ground radicalized policies emanating from Nazi leaders. Lower refers to this as the study of the center and the periphery, how the periphery influences the center and vice versa, the interplay of these resulted in the decision to murder all the Jews of Europe. Lower places the burden of guilt for the switch to genocide on the shoulders of Friedrich Jeckeln, who personally supervised the mass shooting of over 23,500 Jewish women and children in the first week of September 1941. In Zhytomyr, the Holocaust was not merely the result of a technocratic bureaucracy, individuals set the pace. The final distinguishing characteristic of the Holocaust in the Zhytomyr region was the importance of the top Nazi leadership in accelerating the killing process. Both Hitler and Himmler had headquarters installations built in the surrounding area and it became a matter of pride to the local commanders to present their superiors with a *judenfreie Lokale*. For Himmler, the destruction of Zhytomyr's Jews was a prerequisite for the construction of his planned model colony. Finally, by linking Nazi imperialism to European colonialism, the history of the Holocaust can be thematically linked with other settler colonial genocides. According to Lower, Nazi imperialism cannot be understood without examining the broader context of European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the phenomena of German migration to Eastern Europe during the same time, and the development of scientific racism.

In her work, Lower counters a thesis put forward by Omer Baratov concerning the creation of killers. Baratov is another leader in producing scholarship on the Holocaust in Ukraine. His most recent book, “Anatomy of a Genocide” is a microhistory of the town of Buczacz and the link between ethnic strife and extreme violence. Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews lived together for years, by the end of the war, the Jewish and Polish populations would be eradicated. Building off Jan Gross’s *Neighbors*, the work is emblematic of the new scholarship, involving the study of a specific act of genocide, and focusing on the power and social dynamics of the actors involved. Baratov’s scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s had focused on countering the “clean Wehrmacht” myth, producing scholarship such as the pioneering work, *Eastern Front 1941-1945: German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare* (London: Macmillan Press, 1985). Baratov’s advanced a thesis on the “brutality of war” explaining Wehrmacht involvement in the genocide. Lower’s study effectively counters this with a wealth of evidence on the overlapping units that participated in genocide, and the radicalization of the occupation by specific German infantry commanders.

“In Zhytomyr, Wehrmacht soldiers participated in atrocities during the first months of Barbarossa when a German victory seemed certain. The army’s involvement in massacres “behind the lines” was not caused by the mental and physical attrition of warfare in the East; rather, it was an assertion of Nazi power in its heyday.” (Lower, 2007, 68)

Lower built on her scholarship and emphasized the multi-disciplinary field that Ukrainian Holocaust Studies has become with the 2021 work, *The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Another microhistory, and another study of the 1941 period, one photograph of the murder of a Jewish family in Mirapol leads to insight on the role of photographs and how to appropriately use them in Holocaust Studies; the importance of gathering and using all witness testimony; and how to properly memorialize Jewish victims. Lower’s microhistory reconstructs the events and actions that led to that

photograph being taken. In doing so, she illuminates the complex power dynamic involved in the process of exterminating Jews in Ukraine. The first action taken by the SS officers was to kidnap the Ukrainian teenage girls in Mirapol. German soldiers forced the girls into the forest where they dug a pit while German officers oversaw the process. A public pogrom involving sexual violence occurred as the Jewish population was gathered and executed. In reconstructing the pogrom, sexual violence by perpetrators and the primitive violence of the extermination process is laid bare. Almost none of the sources Lower used were available to western historians before the end of the Cold War.

In urging further study of atrocity images, Lower states in her conclusion, “Atrocity images, especially the rare ones that attest to acts of genocide, the crime of all crimes, offend and shame us. When we turn away from them, we promote ignorance. When we display them in museums without captions and download them from the internet with no historical context, we denigrate the victims. And when we stop researching them, we cease to care about historical justice, the threat of genocide, and the murdered missing.”²⁰ Lower was not able to identify the family in the photo, as was her goal, but her methodology of gathering all witness testimony available, followed by on the ground forensic research, is emblematic of the future of the field. Wendy Lower also published one of the most widely acclaimed and circulated books on the Holocaust, *Hitler’s Furies*, which studied Nazi women in the killing fields in Ukraine and Poland. Her research and scholarship of the Holocaust in Ukraine provided the evidence of crimes that lead to her greater study of the role of women in genocidal societies. Considering

²⁰ Lower, 2021, 178)

most of the women studied went on to live normal lives after the Holocaust, its implications hold weight not just for genocidal societies, but for humanity.

Lower's *Nazi Empire Building in Ukraine* pairs extremely well with Karel Berkhoff's 2004 study, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*. *Harvest of Despair* is a dense and thoroughly researched study of day-to-day life in the Nazi colony that was Ukraine. Berkhoff reconstructs the German plans for Ukraine through Nazi records. Acts of genocide were planned under a regime of colonization and cleansing. Her analysis of the day-to-day abuse and humiliation faced by people in Ukraine under Nazi rule is effective in placing Nazi abuse in Ukraine in the state's larger policies of terror, comparing the effects of Nazi rule with the intentions and effects of Nazi concentration camps, specifically Dachau. This is another important contribution. The study of social cohesion in the Reichskommissariat and the "psychic numbing" or brutalization of a people is another topic that sheds light on how Nazi terror functioned and its impact on the political attitudes of Ukrainians. Berkhoff states "this study does not support the notion of important changes in mental attitudes among Ukrainians and other natives under the Nazis. In these turbulent years, prewar mental attitudes exerted a tremendous hold. Those who fell under Nazi rule hoped for a better life, became disappointed, and then started to hate the Germans and wanted them out. They also became used to living without Jews and Roma. Apart from these changes, however, their mental and political orientation remained profoundly stagnant"²¹ In reaching this conclusion, Berkhoff adds a valuable piece to the social history of Ukrainians who survived the Reichkommissariat. Her findings counters both claims of the war unifying citizens of the Soviet Union around Stalin and claims that the Nazi occupation made Ukrainians more nationally conscious. *Nazi Empire Building in Ukraine* and *Harvest of*

²¹ (Berkhoff 2004, 313).

Despair are the two of the best comprehensive works on the Holocaust in Ukraine and provide seeds for future research.

Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe

Born in 1979, Rossolinski-Liebe has produced incredibly well written, timely, much needed, and thorough work on Ukrainian nationalism and Stepan Bandera. At the same university that printed Ukrainian diaspora nationalist myths in the 1980s, the University of Alberta, Rossolinski-Liebe worked on his doctoral thesis on Bandera from 2007-2012.

Rossolinski-Liebe's *Stepan Bandera : The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist : Fascism, Genocide, and Cult.* , published in 2014 is a much needed summarization of the OUN, its ideology, the life of Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian nationalist involvement in the Holocaust, the Bandera cult and Ukrainian diaspora memory. Rossolinski-Liebe scientifically answers any major questions on the role of Ukrainian nationalists in genocide. An example, concerning the OUN and UPA's actions in 1943-44.

“The ethnic and political mass violence conducted by the UPA in 1943 and 1944 cannot be explained solely by the nationalist and racist ideology of the OUN-B. As a set of rules that approved of killing the “enemies of the Ukrainian nation,” this ideology was certainly sufficient to turn ordinary men and women into murderers, but the question is how and why this ideology came into being and in what political and military context it was put into practice. This leads us to four factors: first, to the social and political situation of Ukrainians in the interwar period or even before; second, to the military aims and strategies of the UPA; third, the tone that the Nazi occupation and Nazi ideology had set; and fourth, the fact that there was no strong administration in these territories at a time when the front was changing”. (Rossolinski-Liebe 2014, 279)

In addition to explaining and addressing all key issues in relation to Bandera and memory, Rossolinski-Liebe also has a strong moral lens in which he views the historiography of his subject matter. In response to the field prioritizing “objective” perpetrator sources in the first decades after the war, “ this approach to history fulfilled the role of a shelter. It enables the post-war generations not to perceive many brutal and horrible features of the Holocaust, the feelings

and experiences of survivors and also sometimes to preserve the good name of the nation.”

Rossolinski-Liebe, as a young German Holocaust historian, is clearly angered by the treatment of survivors and the effect it had on scholarship, “this attitude to the survivors and their memory re-humiliated the victims of the Holocaust and other atrocities. Also, from a methodological point of view, the negation of the testimonies was incorrect and led to serious misrepresentations of history.”²² The Holocaust in Ukraine involved millions of crimes, and study of genocide must use all sources available to reconstruct what occurred, this is clear progress from the post war decades.

His findings carry great weight. I came away from the book realizing that Ukrainian nationalists have won, their version of history, their view of Bandera, has solidified itself in Ukrainian society and government. Reading a summary of Bandera and OUN ideology, their alliance with Nazi Germany, the formation of infamous Nachtigall battalion, their plans for cleansing of Ukraine of minorities, the photos of the Lviv Pogrom, the campaigns of ethnic cleansing, it is truly shocking that Bandera and the OUN are memorialized and celebrated. I suspect that this was the emotion Rossolinski-Liebe sought to evoke in the reader, a shock at the separation between what happened in Ukraine, and what is remembered, what is celebrated, what is glorified. Holocaust amnesia, its causes, the effects on Ukrainian society are all displayed in the 600-page work. In indicating my interest in this subject to a faculty member, I was told it “was a minefield”, but Rossolinski-Liebe does not shy away from the implications of his work. In 2012 the far-right Svoboda party²³ harassed and effectively stopped a speaking engagement on Bandera by Rossolinski-Liebe in Lviv. Rossolinski-Liebe’s blend of Holocaust history with

²² (Rossolinski-Liebe 2014, 540)

²³

memory, with Bandera at its center, is a must read for anyone seriously interested in studying the gap between what happened and what is remembered in Ukraine. Rossolinski-Liebe has continued studying Ukrainian memory of the Holocaust, and in a world where this history is weaponized and distorted, his scholarship and future scholarship will continue to attempt to right the wrongs of a previous generation of historians. Rossolinski-Liebe's conclusion exemplifies how a scholar can blend moral outrage with historical scholarship.

“One important reason why Ukrainians cannot rethink the uncomfortable elements of Ukrainian history is that one needs to feel empathy for the victims of Ukrainian nationalism in order to sympathize with them, and to be able to comprehend all aspects of Ukrainian national history, including the mass violence of the Ukrainian nationalists. Such empathy, however, cannot be established because the Bandera cult and the glorification and sacralization of the perpetrators declare the genocidal policies of the murders to be correct, and the victims of the OUN and UPA to be guilty of being killed. This kind of thinking simultaneously belittles, denies, and glorifies the crimes committed by the OUN and UPA and invites Ukrainians to identify themselves with the perpetrators, known in the post-Soviet discourse as “national heroes” “eternal heroes” or “heroes of Ukraine.” This state of affairs can be also described as a coalition of silence, or collective or organized denial. It comes about to large extent unconsciously, and it may be compared to the situation in Germany in the first decades after the Second World War. The few individuals who do not admire the perpetrators and who develop empathy for the victims of Ukrainian nationalism are condemned and discredited by other members of the community.” (Rossolinski-Liebe 2014, 557)

Desbois

Father Patrick Desbois was the grandson of a French soldier deported to the Nazi prison camp Rava-Ruska, where 12,000 Jews were murdered over the course of the war. Due to his grandfather's experiences and silence about the Holocaust, Debois developed an intense interest in the Holocaust, starting from childhood. In 2002 he travelled to Ukraine to visit where his father was imprisoned and to pay his respects to the Jewish victims. Upon arrival he did not see a marking or commemoration to the victims of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Following years of frustration, the election of a new mayor signaled a new opportunity. Desbois accompanied the

mayor to the site of mass killing, where dozens of witnesses had gathered to give detailed testimony to the murder of the Jewish community in their city. Desbois saw an opportunity for a larger scale project. Desbois realized what a wealth of information on the Holocaust was available on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe if you interviewed the last witnesses and marked sites of killing. In order to right the historical wrong of neglecting areas of mass killing, Desbois helped found Yahad-In Unum, combining the Hebrew word-Yahad, meaning “together,” with the Latin phrase In Unum, meaning “in one.”

The global organization collects eyewitness testimony and forensic evidence about the mass killing of Jews and Roma in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova and Romania between 1941 and 1944. Local contemporary witnesses are interviewed about the mass shootings that occurred near their homes, and the killing sites are located and documented. Information such as the type of rifle used, which can help identify the identities of the perpetrators, can be literally unearthed by Yahad’s ballistic and forensic experts.

Desbois estimates that there are no less than 1 million victims buried in 1,200 graves in Ukraine. Yahad-In Unum has received widespread praise among Holocaust institutions and their work has documented at this moment 1,843 execution sites. Using a team consisting of a researcher, photographer, interpreter, and ballistics expert, Yahad has done the long-awaited work of properly documenting and memorializing the Jewish dead, still residing in Ukraine. Yahad-In Unum hopes that by exposing evidence of these lesser-known crimes against humanity, they are bringing closure to the memory of the victims. A forward-thinking organization, they hope to spread awareness of the need to recognize and denounce the ongoing epidemic of global genocide. Yahad-In Unum and Patrick Desbois have also worked to document the Yazidi genocide in Iraq committed by the Islamic State. Wendy Lower worked

closely with Yahad during research conducted for *The Ravine*, and this partnership of historians with on the ground researchers offers incredible opportunities for a new generation of historians. Desbois published a summary of his methodology and of the Holocaust in Ukraine, Desbois, Patrick, and Paul A Shapiro. 2010. *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*. In village after village, the complex manipulation of the local population by the Nazis is laid bare by the current inhabitants, the last witnesses to the Shoah. Desbois' work more than any other historian has brought the Holocaust in Ukraine into the public eye. I work with Holocaust survivors from the former Soviet Union, and I can attest that Desbois' work has been instrumental for breaking the silence and gathering witness testimony. I believe the future of Holocaust studies in Ukraine will rely on a combination of close reading of Nazi and Soviet materials, use of all available witness testimony, and on the ground research and forensic reconstruction of the crimes. Yahad In Unum is traveling to Chicago in August to interview Holocaust survivors from the former Soviet Union in preparation for their next investigations.

Conclusion

Reconstructing and studying acts of genocide are crucial for understanding how humanity responds to violence, coercion, and power. Fundamental questions on what happened where in Ukraine, on whose authority, and with how much planning, are beginning to be answered through microhistories of regions and specific pogroms or acts of mass killing. Future historical work on the Shoah in Ukraine will take place while the Ukrainian far right only continues to grow²⁴. In my opinion, this is only more reason for documentation of the crimes in Ukraine and

²⁴ Colborne, Michael. 2019. "U.S. Congress Accidentally Boosted Ukraine's Far-Right." Foreign Policy. 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/01/congress-max-rose-ukraine-azov-terrorism/>.

for documenting the genocidal aspects of Ukrainian nationalism. Furthermore, the Bandera cult must be more widely known by popular audiences, as the story of Ukrainian diaspora memory is also a story of political influence during the Cold War, one of the many unsavory allies the United States supported during this time. Unfortunately, this continues to this day. A monument to “The Heroes of Ukraine” was unveiled at St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Bloomingdale, IL in 2015. The opening was attended by Governor of Illinois Bruce Rauner and various Ukrainian and American government representatives.²⁵ On Sunday, August 2nd, 2020 members of Ukrainian-American organizations gathered in front of a monument to pay respect to the fallen heroes of Ukraine. The event was held in memorial of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS, better known as the “Galicia Division”, Ukrainians who fought with the Nazis against the Soviets, most of whom perished during the Battle of Brody in 1944²⁶. Approximately 50 meters away from the monument is a cemetery where UPA and OUN B veterans graves are widely ordained with UPA and OUN symbols²⁷. One wonders how much scholarship will need to be produced for the United States government to stop its support of Ukrainian nationalism. Historians have and can be public voices of discontent. If Yahad In Unum is honoring the victims of the Holocaust by documenting their resting places, and interviewing witnesses to their murder, American and Canadian historians can actively call

²⁵ Julian Hayda, “A Monument To The Ages: A Landmark To Remember,” *Ukrainian Magazine Chicago*, September 06, 2015,

<http://ukrainianchi.com/monument-ages-landmark-remember/>

²⁶ Maria Korkatsch-Groszko, “Illinois Ukrainians gather in remembrance of the Battle of Brody of 1944,” *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 11, 2020,

<http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/illinois-ukrainians-gather-in-remembrance-of-the-battle-of-brody-of-1944/>

²⁷ Author visit to location.

attention to government support of groups that memorialize participants in the genocide. We owe it to the victims to continue to produce work accurately documenting how the murder of 1.5 million Jews in Ukraine took place, along with explanations on how memory of this event has been warped. It is a difficult history, but the suffering of the Jewish people in Ukraine requires it, as extreme nationalism is far from history.

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