

Editorial: Towards a Historiography from the Bottom up – Studies on Genocide and Survival in Modern Ukrainian History

In his book *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past*, Serhii Plokhyi concludes that “Ukrainian historians have yet not managed to create a master narrative of Ukraine’s Second World War.”¹ A centennial after the fall of the Romanov and Habsburg Empires and the creation of the first independent Ukrainian national state, this volume assembles an only recently emerging critical body of scholarship discussing the exceptional era of violence in Ukrainian lands² from below, whether under totalitarian systems, in domestic spaces, or in commemorative discourses. In this special issue of *Euxeinos*, Ukrainian historians of the younger generation investigate the legacies of violence wrought by state and paramilitary warfare far beyond the years 1941 to 1945 and focus on the way in which the memories and experiences of violence over the 20th century are constructive elements to a common Ukrainian identity from the Carpathians to the Crimean Peninsula. The articles address the impact of genocide and survival on normal residents, and question what it takes to write an integrated narrative of modern Ukraine’s imperial and nation-state history rather than asking about how suppression was organized by ruling elites, whether they were Soviet-Russian, Soviet-Ukraine, or German. Engaging with these issues from a new perspective is fundamental to a more complete understanding of how past experiences of violence continue to shape Ukraine today.

This issue assembles selected contributions of young Ukrainian historians at a conference on “Mass Violence and Genocides in Ukrainian

Lands in the 1930s-1940s.” The event was organized in December 2016 by the Center for Interethnic Relations Research in Eastern Europe and the Historical School of Vasyl Karazin Kharkiv National University and supported by the Ukrainian-Jewish Encounter (UJE). The articles provide substantial responses to the recent social paradigm of historiography and its potential for Ukrainian Studies. The contributors especially address the importance of multiethnicity and multiconfessionality for violent experiences in Ukrainian lands: the story of violence against Ukrainian women on behalf of Soviet counterinsurgency agencies in Western Ukraine in the immediate postwar years, the role of local Ukrainian villagers engaging in the killing of Jews in the Podillya region during the Holocaust; the return of Crimean Tatars after the collapse of the Soviet Union and before the Russian invasion of the peninsula in 2014; or the commemoration of victimhood and perpetration in both the Holodomor and Holocaust as represented in Ukrainian literature. Apart from decentering towards imperial violence, transnationality is the second methodological challenge to ethnic, racial, social and class hierarchies raised in all articles. Accordingly, the contributors describe various marginalized actors to explore how past experiences are commemorated and transformed into political action in Ukraine, on the one hand, while on the other hand they disclose formerly concealed topics to the public discourse about their own country’s history.

Just like neighboring post-imperial societies similarly affected by Soviet and Nazi hegemonomies over East Central Europe, modern Ukraine is part of what historians have labeled Shatterzones of Empires formed by nationalist and socialist revolutions, civil warfare, system changes, displacement, dekulakization, col-

1 Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 296.

2 Prominently on the outstanding scale of violent agendas, however widely concealing native collaboration in Ukrainian lands: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

lectivization, forced migration, and the Holocaust.³ Against this background, authors suggest patterns in the legacies of various forms of state and non-state violence and address the impact of violent experiences in the larger socio-economic context for various marginalized Ukrainian social groups with great empathy. More importantly, the collection pays tribute to residents of Ukrainian lands taking various roles, either as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, partisans, refugees, displaced persons, or simply as Soviet citizens from diverse ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. The subjects include diverse perspectives – either of women in partisan warfare (Marta Havryshko), or minority groups (Olena Sobolieva) in remote Holocaust communities (Andriy Usach), or as reflected in commemorations of survivors and perpetrators of the Holodomor and the Holocaust (Daria Mattingly & Natalia Dovhanych). Mykola Horokh's essay discusses an institutional history scarcely reflected in historiography exemplified by the Torgsin (the State Society for Trading with Foreigners) – stores which the Soviet state spied on and stole valuables from, and which simultaneously provided chances for survival for the same citizens during the Soviet man-made famine in Ukraine. Certainly, this collection does not propose a master narrative for Ukrainian historiography, but it does reposition relevant experiences at the center of Ukraine's connectivity with internal and international debates on Modern Ukrainian Historiography.

In the process of shaping the country's historical memory in a plausible and authentic fashion, interest in the legacies has increased enormously in the past twenty years within the

3 Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

domestic and political context of the region. Yuliya Yurchuk pointed to recent discourses about the assessment of various roles that Ukrainians and institutions in Ukraine have taken in history as heavily influenced by the confrontation of the Soviet postcolonial narrative with the counter-narrative about the memory of the OUN-UPA defined by the national view of martyrdom and victimhood during the war.⁴ Primarily for the sake of delegitimizing the myth of "The Great Patriotic War" and legitimating the sovereignty of the Ukrainian Republic, this nationalist re-evaluation of watershed events in Ukrainian lands over the past hundred years stemmed predominantly from post-socialist discourses since 1991. As Wilfried Jilge pointed out when analyzing textbooks for Ukrainian schools in the wake of that history-making from above, the legacy of the nationalist military organization OUN-UPA became a core element for a post-Soviet Ukrainian state ideology. That discourse dominates not only Ukraine's foreign relations with Russia and Poland, but also Ukrainian politics until today, although it represents only one side of the story.⁵ As predominantly western historiography has testified and Andriy Usach provides evidence for in this volume: The regional struggle of Ukrainian nationalists under the leadership of Stepan Bandera, Andrii Mel'nyk or Roman Shukhevych was not

4 Yuliya Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN-UPA Memory Politics and Nation-Building in Ukraine (1991-2016)", in Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, Tatiana Zhurzhenko (eds.), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 111-112.

5 Wilfried Jilge, "Competing Victimhoods – Post-Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II", in Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth Cole, Kai Struve (eds.), *Shared History – Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet Occupied Poland, 1939-1941* (Leipzig, 2008), 104-105; Lina Klymenko, "Making Sense of World War II: How Russian and Ukrainian Textbooks Foster National Identities", *EU-Russia Papers* No. 7 (January 2013).

only directed against the Soviet occupants. For the sake of having an ethnically homogenous Ukrainian state OUN-UPA wishes to establish, nationalists and their supporters collaborated in the Holocaust⁶ and independently cleansed whole regions from Poles.⁷ Presently, scholars demonstrate great interest in the issues of engagement in anti-Jewish violence in summer 1941 on the territories that were passed over to the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940. Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg wrote a book on "Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust." The authors showed how in the areas controlled by the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1941 the local Christian population (Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians) participated in barbarian pogroms against their Jewish neighbors. The monograph by Kopstein and Wittenberg includes the analysis of 219 such pogroms in the towns and shtetls in the area of East Poland, which makes up almost 10 % of the 2,304 settlements where Jews and non-Jews used to live. According to the authors, ethnic Poles were major perpetrators in about 25 % of pogroms, while in other cases ethnic Ukrainians prevailed. In many localities, Poles and other non-Jews beat, looted and killed their Jewish neighbors. The book describes in detail the events taking place in the town of Shchuchyn. Before the war, about 5,400 people lived there, half of them Jewish. Wehrmacht soldiers ar-

6 General information on Ukrainian collaborationist practices during German occupation: Frank Grelka, "Politics and military actions of ethnic-Ukrainian collaboration for the "New European Order", in Marina Cattaruzza, Dieter Langewiesche (eds.), *Revisionist Politics in Europe, 1938 – 1945* (Berghahn, New York & Oxford 2013), 126 – 141. Most recently: Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018.

7 Jared McBride, "Peasants into Perpetrators: The OUN-UPA and the Ethnic Cleansing of Volhynia, 1943–1944", *Slavic Review*, vol. 75, No. 3, 630-654.

rived after the start of war to the town, but soon after proceeded further and left behind a small field detachment. On that night, groups of local Poles started gathering on main streets and killing the Jews in the town. Not all local Polish citizens participated in the killings but many of them did. Armed Poles roamed along the central streets of Shchuchyn, barged into houses, plundered goods, and killed women and children. One of the Polish eye-witnesses accounted that he saw someone catching a Jewish child by the leg and smashing his head against the ground. During this pogrom, Polish people killed about 300 of the 2,500 Jews of Shchuchyn.⁸ Other present research shows that ethnic Ukrainians also participated in the atrocities. After the attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR on 22 June 1941, East Galicia and Volhynia were hit hard by the wave of pogroms against the Jewish population. Acts of violence and pogroms also took place in some towns of Central and Eastern Ukraine with the arrival of Nazi troops. The pogroms engaged the local non-Jewish population (Ukrainians, Poles) and German servicemen from the Einsatzgruppen, Wehrmacht of SS troops. Such actions were usually initiated by locals, but the Germans would actively support and inspire them, too. On 29 June 1941, the head of the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) issued a directive for Einsatzgruppen "not to impede self-cleansing initiatives on the part of anti-Communist and anti-Jewish groups on the occupied territories." The Germans from the SS Division Wiking played a major role in the pogroms in Western Ukraine. According to the research of a German historian Kai Struve, the total number of pogrom victims in East Galicia was approximately between sev-

8 Jeffrey S. Kopstein, Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press, 2018), 73-78.

en and eleven thousand local Jews. About 60% of them (4,280-6,950) were killed by soldiers of the SS Division Wiking.⁹ The militia (police) units created by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, both under the guidance of Stepan Bandera and Andriy Mel'nyk, also played an active role. For OUN fighters of both wings, both in summer 1941 and later, militia (police) was an entity to symbolize the "budding" future Ukrainian army, and Ukrainian statehood in general, loyal to the Hitler's Reich. The creation of militia and self-governance in the version of OUN-ers was an attempt to get at least as much power as possible "on the grounds", or at most to create an element of a monoethnic totalitarian Ukrainian state. The OUN tried to commission to the ranks of police and self-governments, as well as to the courts, their party members but there were also many non-party "activists" and conformists. A large number of people applied to serve there. Between 1939 and 1941, they collaborated with the Bolsheviks and tried to express loyalty to the new regime by participating in anti-Jewish pogroms. It is highly probable that by engaging with the pogroms, Banderovites and Mel'nyk-followers were trying to show their dedication to Germans, and to find their self-assertion in the conditions of a "new order". One of the anti-Jewish actions of OUN(b) took place in the town of Vyshnivets (Zbarazh district, Ternopil oblast'). With arrival of the Germans, the members of the so called "marching groups" of OUN also came to the town. They were joined by local "activists." They jointly organized the militia. On the second day of Ger-

9 Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt. Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin, Boston, 2015); The lecture by Dr. Kai Struve of Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg Germany „German Rule, Ukrainian Nationalism, anti-Jewish Violence. Summer 1941 in Western Ukraine“, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij6F1guZfEM>

man occupation, the militia employed "for the works" 40 local Jews who were sent to the NKVD prison where they were most likely forced to drag outside dead bodies of victims of Soviet punitive authorities. In the prison, the Jews were shot down on the same day by the Ukrainian militia organized by OUN. On the next day, OUN members held a protest in support of the government of Yaroslav Stetsko.¹⁰ Similar patterns were also typical for the OUN(m) members in summer 1941, though on a smaller scale. For instance, in the village of Borivka (Kitsman district, Chernivtsi oblast'), in early July 1941, a group of Mel'nyk fellows armed with fire guns arrested about forty local Jews and shot them down near the Bulbon lake. Some OUN members occupied Jewish flats and lived there until the arrival of the Red Army in 1944.¹¹ Research by Andriy Usach in this issue of the journal shows how the processes took place on the micro-level.

Alternatively, the contributors of this volume suggest a redefinition of the same national narrative by proposing to the reader an integrated perception by shifting the focus from dynasties and states to peoples and political actors on the margins, from elites to masses, while not neglecting the history of ethnic minorities and groups regarded as not central to the nation-building process so far. The contributions are clearly part of a promising approach towards a "decentered" history, which Olga Andriewsky has brilliantly discussed while exploring the latest scholarship on the Holodomor from below in Ukrainian historiography. Far beyond the colonial agency of Russian, Polish, German or Soviet suppressions, studies in this volume give a voice to

10 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), RG – 31.018M, Reel 27.

11 Archives of Chernivtsi Oblast' Board of the Security Service of Ukraine, spr.10073, ark. 81-83, 193-95.

millions of ordinary residents and shed light on larger cultural consequences of collectivization, the Ukrainian Famine, mass deportations and the Holocaust for the ordinary people in Ukrainian lands.

It is still problematic to exploit the history of tragic events researched by authors of this journal. They include, among others, the issues related to Stalinist deportations of nations in the Soviet Union in 1944. It is not infrequently that the events are used to conduct political repressions in the post-Soviet area. The extreme manifestation of such phenomenon can be vividly seen in one of the republics in North Caucasus, Chechnya. As we know, the Nakh peoples – Chechens and Ingush – were deported to Kazakhstan and Central Asia during the so called operation “Lentil” (*Chechevitsa*) that took place from 23 February to 9 March 1944. The deported persons were able to return to their historical homeland only in 1957. When in 1991 Chechnya under the guidance of Dzhokhar Dudayev aimed to exit the Russian legal sphere, 23 February 1994 was proclaimed the Day of National Revival several months before the start of the First Russian-Chechen War.¹² Nevertheless, February 23 has been subsequently commemorated in Chechnya and among Chechen diaspora as a day of mourning. In 2010, during the rule of the pro-Russian politician Ramzan Kadyrov, the date first was granted an official status as the Day of Memory and Mourning. However, in 2011, the memorial date was shifted to 10 May, the date of death of a former mufti and a pro-Russian President of the Republic, Ramzan’s father Akhmad Kadyrov. The activists who tried to commemorate February 23 as a day of mourning afterwards faced repres-

sions from official Chechen authorities. Thus, in 2014, the head of Assembly of the Peoples of Caucasus, Ruslan Kutayev, was arrested and sentenced to four years of imprisonment. This occurred when he spoke at the conference “Deportation of Chechen People. What Was It and Could It Be Forgotten?” on 18 February 2014, and criticized the ban for mourning actions in Chechnya on 23 February. The international human rights organization *Human Rights Watch* pointed to the link between criminal persecution of Kutayev and his speech commemorating the victims of deportation.¹³

Stories of deportation of Crimean Tatars and the preceding events are also often a subject of exploitation from varied perspectives. Russian chauvinists would often resort to the fact that some Crimean Tatars, the same as other Soviet nations under occupation, did collaborate with the Nazis, thus justifying the 1944 deportations. However, after Russia’s illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea in March, 2014, Vladimir Putin signed the decree “On Activities to Rehabilitate Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean-Tatar, and German People and State Support for their Revival and Development.” The document stated that the objective of Russian occupation authorities was “to facilitate the creation and development of national cultural autonomies, other civic associations and organizations” of the repressed people of Crimea.¹⁴ The goal of the Putin’s decree was to attempt to legitimize occupation, on the one hand, while on the other hand it was supposed to receive favorable attitudes from Crimean Tatars. However, the

¹² Dzhokhar Dudayev, *February, 23 - the Day of National Revival of Chechen People*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wli6StjY3ps&t=502s>

¹³ *How Kadyrov made a feast out of mourning on February 23*, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/298148/>

¹⁴ *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation*, 21.04.2014, № 268, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/38356>

formalities did not impede repressions against Crimean Tatars on the peninsula, not to mention the fact that the term “rehabilitation” was not politically correct with respect to the deported nations.¹⁵ It must also be mentioned that until 2014, the repatriation of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine had yet to be duly finalized. Even after the Russian occupation of Crimea, Ukrainian officials hardly do anything (and if so often unsuccessfully and ambiguously) to support Crimean Tatars in Crimea and in continental Ukraine. Thus, on November 12, 2015, a resolution “On Acknowledging the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar Nation” was passed by the Supreme Council of Ukraine. Pursuant to the resolution, the Ukrainian parliament acknowledged the “deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea in 1944 to be the genocide of the Crimean Tatar people.” The document also instituted in Ukraine the day of “May 18 as the Day of Memory of Victims of the Genocide of Crimean Tatar People.”¹⁶

Another problem arising in this respect concerns the kind of narrative generated by Crimean Tatars about themselves. It is indicative that since the collapse of Soviet regime and creation of independent Ukraine, the representatives of intelligentsia of this nation have not made any serious efforts to critically assess the past of their people, rather have taken an idealizing and victimizing position. There is no study by Crimean Tatar historians who would be willing to write about such a sensitive issue as Crimean Tatar collaborationism. At the same time, Russian and pro-Russian historians produce biased opinions on the issue.¹⁷ In this respect, there is an illustrative

film directed by Ahtem Seitablayev “Haytarma” that came out in 2013. The film is based on a true story and recounts the Stalinist deportation of Crimean Tatars in May 1944. The author showed that tragic time in the context of life experience of a well-known pilot Amet-khan Sultan. The film shows how after expulsion of the Nazi occupants from Crimea, Amet-khan (played by Ahtem Seitablayev) and his brothers in arms received a permit from the military commanders to visit their family in Alupka. The operation of NKVD of forced deportation of Crimean Tatars coincidentally took place there during the pilot’s stay in the city. According to the plot, the Sultan failed to save his family from deportation. In *Haytarma*, Crimean Tatars are represented exclusively as exemplary “Soviet patriots,” and relations with other people living in Crimea are shown in an idealistic manner.¹⁸ Moreover, during this contemporary period of politicization of history, Crimean Tatar intelligentsia tend to generate myths more frequently. Another indicative example in this respect is the making of the film “Other People’s Prayer” by the above mentioned film director Ahtem Seitablayev. The film was presumably based on a true story. The film director briefly tells the story of the film in one of his interviews:

During the World War II, a Crimean Tatar lady Saide Arifova in Bakhchisaray saved from death about 90 children, most of them Jewish. The story is unique because she saved them twice. Saide presented the children as Crimean Tatars making up a name for each of them, and making up a story for every one of them about where their parents were

15 *Return of Crimean Tatars: Gains and Losses*, <http://www.bbc.com/russian/features-39969106>

16 *Resolution of the Supreme Council of Ukraine “On Acknowledging the Genocide of Crimean Tatar People”*, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/792-19-17>

17 Oleg Romanko, *Krym pod piatoy zahvat-*

chikov. Bor’ba protiv okupantov I kolaboracionistov, <https://www.sovrhistory.ru/events/special/599aa22640237666bc3ae172>

18 *Haytarma*. Directed by Akhtem Seitablaiev. Kyiv: ATR TV Channel, 2013 <https://www.youtube.co/watch?v=Bh8QkcOB7QE>

from, where they came from, and which school they went to. It was not very difficult to teach the boys to speak the Crimean Tatar language as they came from the Kerch orphanage, and they heard the language in the everyday life. When after a month the Gestapo found out (they had been informed about them) that they had been keeping so many Jewish children, they subjected them to a strict exam. They asked their names and made them say a prayer the woman had taught them before. At the same time, Saide was tortured but she did not confess the children were Jewish. After two weeks, a German officer released the lady as he could not believe that Saide would defend children who were absolutely not hers. When deportations of Crimean Tatars started on 18 May 1944 and the NKVD officers loaded everyone in the truck, she managed to show the documents of the children to the officers and prove they were not Crimean Tatars but Jewish, and thus not entitled for deportation. This way, Saide saved them for the second time.¹⁹

The problem is that even though Yad Vashem initiated the case to assign to Arifova the title of the Righteous of the World, they failed to obtain any testimony from the children she presumably saved. That is why the entire story looks like a falsification. It is also indicative that real Crimean Tatars who were honored with the title of the Righteous of the World remain practically unknown. Thus, for instance, there is not even an entry in Wikipedia about the Crimean Tatar family of the Kurtiyevs (Adzhykadyr Kurtiyev, Ayshe Kurtiyeva, Dzhafer Kurtiyev) who used to live in Ayman-Kuyu, not far from Kerch, who saved a Jewish woman Nina Bakshi and her two daughters Alla and Feodosiya.²⁰ All of this happened

¹⁹ Ahtem Seitablayev, *I have a dream to create the future elite of Crimea*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3A3ZnrBHFQ>

²⁰ The Kurtiyevs family (Adzhykadyr Kurtiyev, Ayshe Kurtiyeva, Dzhafer Kurtiyev),

while there was a lack of any studies of Muslim(Turkic)-Jewish relations on the territory of Ukraine, just as there were no studies on the involvement of Ukrainian Muslims in the Holocaust.²¹ It presents a rather strong contrast to the situation in the historiography of Kazan Tatars where the same topic of collaborationism with the Nazi during the World War II, for instance, of the Turkic Muslim peoples of the Urals has been researched much more thoroughly.²²

However, it will depend on political decision making in the first place, whether Ukraine establishes itself as a part of East Central Europe or stays part of an imperial Euro-Asian renaissance perspective on history, as the consequences of present military campaigns by the Kremlin in the Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine on the country's future are hard to predict. Also, it seems obvious that ongoing Russian occupation policies on these territories will develop to another element of shaping Ukraine's statehood from violent experiences in the past. In this volume, based on archival documentation and collected eye-witness accounts, a new generation of scholars assesses the impact of such experiences on our understanding of Ukrainian history.

As mentioned before, several essays of this issue of the journal are devoted to issues of the history of the Holodomor. Unfortunately, the studies of this tragedy, with victims of different nationalities on the territory of Ukrainian

<http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=ru&itemId=4035674>

²¹ Kiril Feferman, *Sovetskie musul'mane v gody voiny I Holokost v SSSR*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3A3ZnrBHFQ>

²² Iskander Giliyev, "Kolobratsionizm tirkko-musul'manskich narodov SSSR v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voyny – forma proyavleniya natsionalizma?". *Ab Imperio*, 2000, № 1: 107-129; Iskander Giliyev, *Legion "Idel'-Ural"*, (Moskva, 2009); Iskander Giliyev, "Germania I musul'mane Rossii v dvuch mirovych voinach", *Ab Imperio*, 2001, № 4: 195-208.

SSR amounting to 3 to 3.5 million people, in Ukraine and in the Ukrainian migrant community most often are based on methodology from the early 1990s. From the 1990s until today, Ukrainian politicians have been exploiting the tragic events. The events of the Great Famine became an important tool both for Ukrainian domestic policy and foreign policy. Since the 1990s, Ukrainian political figures have been trying to have parliaments of democratic states acknowledge the Holodomor as a genocide.²³ All of it is happening in a setting in which any attempts to arrange for a regular publication of the *Holodomor Studies* journal have failed.

It is still debatable whether it makes any sense to create a synthetic narrative of history of the 1930-1940s that would include an analysis of the history of crimes of Stalinism (Holodomor, repressions of 1936-1938, deportations, Sovietization of the lands connected to the USSR in 1939-1940) and the Nazi crimes (Holocaust, Porajmos, occupation policy, extermination of Soviet prisoners of war with famine and disease in 1941-1942). One of the well-known attempts to create such narrative was made by a US historian Timothy Snyder in his book "Bloodlands", first published in 2010 in English. According to Snyder's concept, Nazi and Soviet regimes killed about 14 million people in Eastern and Central Europe in the middle of the 20th century. Snyder's *Bloodlands*, the lands of death of many victims, cover the area from central Poland to western Russia: Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states. During the consolidation of national-socialism and Stalinism (1933-1938), during the joint German-Soviet occupation of Poland (1939-1941), and later during the Nazi-Soviet War (1941-1945), this

23 Georgiy Kas'ianov, *Danse macabre: golod 1932-1933 rokiv u politytsi, masoviy svidomosti ta istoriografii (1980-ti — pochatok 2000-h)* (Kyiv, 2010).

area faced organized mass violence on an unprecedented scale. Its victims were mostly Jews, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Russians, and people from the Baltic nations.²⁴ Snyder's book received a large number of reviews and was translated into many languages. The reviews were mostly positive. Criticism of Snyder's studies came mostly from leftist and extreme left-wing historians. For instance, Daniel Lazare wrote that Snyder followed the ideas of Ernst Nolte.²⁵ Dovid Katz, a historian of Lithuanian Jewry who is also research director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute and a cofounder of the Litvak Studies Institute, criticized Snyder for comparing Hitler's and Stalin's regimes, thus rejecting the unique nature of the Holocaust:

*Snyder flirts with the very wrong moral equivalence between Hitler and Stalin. None of these incidents besides the Holocaust involved the willful massacre of a whole race. There is something very different going on, beyond politics, when people try to murder all the babies of a race.*²⁶

Other reviewers, such as Per Rudling, wrote that even though "Snyder does mention the LAF's (Front of Lithuanian Activists – Yu. R.) Kazys Škirpa, and touches briefly upon the OUN, "the contextualization of nationalist involvement in the mass murder of Jewish neighbors, i.e. in the Holocaust itself is missing."²⁷ Without giving much attention to

24 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

25 Daniel Lazare, *Timothy Snyder's Lies*, <http://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/timothy-snyders-lies/>

26 Gal Beckerman, *Exploring the "Bloodlands."* *A controversial new history traces the rise of a horrible idea: the mass killing of civilians*, http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2011/03/13/exploring_the_bloodlands/?page=full

27 Per Rudling, *Can Timothy Snyder's "Bloodlands" be Appropriated by East European Nationalists?*, *DefendingHistory.com*, 24 V 2011, <http://defendinghistory.com/?p=16684>

either positive or negative aspects of the Snyder's *Bloodlands*, several things must be kept in mind. Historians, who study a certain period of time without any knowledge of the preceding epoch, find it difficult to understand what happened afterwards and why. For instance, it is not possible to study a phenomenon such as collaborationism in the Holocaust without any ideas about Soviet society in the 1930s. For example, it would be difficult to understand the motivation of local executioners (Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, local Germans) without any knowledge of repressions of the second half of the 1930s in the Soviet Union until 1939, or without studying the "accelerated" Sovietization of the occupied Baltic states or Western Ukraine.²⁸ Within one body of research, it is possible to write about several tragedies without relativization and not negate the peculiarity and uniqueness of each of them. The objective of this issue is an attempt to do so.

ABOUT THE GUEST EDITORS

Frank Grelka is a Research Fellow at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). He received his Ph.D. in history from the Ruhr-University Bochum in 2005 with his comparative dissertation on the Ukrainian National Movement during World War I and II. His main research fields are East

European and Jewish History in the 19th and 20th century. At the Viadrina Center for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies he is currently writing a monograph about the significance of public labor deployment in the Lublin district for the Holocaust. Together with Stephan Rindlisbacher, Frank Grelka also works on a edition examining the role of Polish and German Village Boards in Soviet Ukraine during the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Yuri Radchenko is the Director of the Center for Interethnic Relations Research in Eastern Europe (Kharkiv, Ukraine) and Associate Professor at the Institute of Oriental Studies and International Relations "Kharkiv Collegium". He received his Ph.D. in history from the V. Karazin Kharkiv National University with the dissertation on the Nazi Genocide of the Ukrainian Jews in the Military-Administered Area. Yuri was a fellow of a number of postdoctoral programs in the United States, Israel, and Europe. Yuri has recently finished his monograph "Hilfspolizei, Self-government and the Holocaust in Ukrainian-Russian- Belorussian Borderland: Motivation, Identity, Collective Portrait and Memory"(forthcoming). Currently, he is working on the project "Andriy Melnyk: the OUN Leader's Life History and the Memory of Him and His Movement". His academic interests include the history of the Holocaust, Ukrainian-Jewish relations in 1920-01940th, collaboration with Nazis in Eastern Europe and history of right radical movements in Europe in 1920s-1940s.

²⁸ See for instance: Yuri Radchenko, "Accomplices to Extermination: Municipal Government and the Holocaust in Kharkiv (1941-1942)", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, №3 (Winter 2013): 443-463; Yuri Radchenko, "We fired all cartridges at them": Ukrainische Hilfspolizei and the Holocaust on the territory of the Generalbezirk Kharkiv, 1941-1943", *Yad Vashem Studies*, 2013, 41(1): 63-98.; Yuri Radchenko, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust: The Case of Ivan Iuriiiv", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31, no. 2 (2017) : 215-239.