Introduction

Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower

Before the Second World War, the Jews of Ukraine constituted one of the largest Jewish populations in Europe.¹ They were without a doubt the largest Jewish population within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.² And between July 1940 and June 1941—after Stalin occupied the interwar Polish territories of eastern Galicia and western Volhynia as well as the interwar Romanian territories of northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia—the number of Jews in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR) rose to at least 2.45 million persons, thus making it for a brief period home to the largest Jewish population in Europe.³ Despite the size of Ukraine's Jewish population, academics and laypersons alike have for over two generations tended to talk about the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, or Hungary, but not about the Holocaust in Ukraine, which is the subject of this book.

The reason for this traditional approach is evident. Unlike any of the aforementioned countries, Ukraine from the mid-thirteenth until the mid-twentieth century was but an ensemble of disparate territories partitioned among several neighboring powers. Ukrainian efforts to establish a state in these lands in the aftermath of the First World War were thwarted by internecine factionalism as well as Polish national aspirations and Soviet revolutionary ambitions. Between the Polish-Soviet peace of 1920 and the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, the lands of modern Ukraine were split among Poland (eastern Galicia and western Volhynia), Czechoslovakia (Transcarpathia), Romania (northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia), and the Soviet Union. Inside the Soviet Union, the Crimea remained in Russia, while the rest of Ukraine lay within the UkrSSR. The calamities that swept the Soviet Ukrainian lands between the world wars tore apart Ukrainian and Jewish society alike. The Ukrainian lands of Poland were subjected to similar brutality in the 22 months between Soviet occupation in September 1939 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Although so many Jews lived throughout the Ukrainian lands, the Jewish inhabitants of Ukraine did not form a cohesive Jewish community. Nor did the Jews of Ukraine form a culturally Ukrainian Jewry. The Jews of Ukraine were greatly influenced by whichever occupying country they found themselves a part of—this applies in particular to the legacies of Austrian and then Polish rule in western Ukraine in the first four decades of the twentieth century. When the Jews of these lands identified with a culture outside their community or assimilated, they most often chose the dominant culture in the towns where they resided, whereas Ukrainians overwhelmingly lived in the countryside. Those urban cultures therefore tended to be Austro-German, Polish, or Russian. Nonetheless, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, almost all the Jews of Ukraine found themselves in the recently aggrandized UkrSSR.

Stalin—in a spectacle of revolution played out against a backdrop of *Realpolitik*—had by July 1940 nearly unified Ukraine for the first time in history. Hitler would dismantle Ukraine again. This re-partitioning of Ukraine was not intended by Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazis' chief ideologue and later Germany's minister for the occupied eastern territories. He had hoped to create an enormous unified Ukrainian state under German suzerainty stretching from Lviv to Stalingrad (today Volgograd).⁴ Hitler equivocated for several months, but ultimately dispensed with Rosenberg's proposals shortly before a key meeting of Germany's highest leadership on July 16, 1941.⁵ Parts of Ukraine fell to the General Government (those parts of the occupied interwar Polish state not incorporated into Germany) and Romania instead of Rosenberg's Reich Commissariat Ukraine (*Reichskommissariat Ukraine*, RKU). (See map 1.2 in chapter 1.)

As a consequence of this impromptu partitioning of Ukraine in July 1941, the term Holocaust in Ukraine has come to refer first and foremost to the Wehrmacht-administrated territories and the RKU. The Holocaust in Galicia is technically a part of the Holocaust in Poland, while the Holocaust in Transnistria is a part of the Holocaust in Romania and the Holocaust in Transcarpathia is a part of the Holocaust in Hungary. These distinctions in Holocaust history reflect the role of the various occupying powers and their administrations in shaping and implementing policies of mass murder in their respective parts of Ukraine. However, in all of these various regions, the majority of the population was Ukrainian, and regardless of the nature of the regime in place, large numbers of the co-perpetrators, the rescuers, the bystanders, and of course the fellow victims were Ukrainian. And no matter who held these territories in early 1939, 1940, or late 1941, these lands now make up one country: Ukraine.

A comprehensive history of the Holocaust in Ukraine as a whole has not been written. This may surprise general readers, but they must bear in mind that Holocaust Studies as an academic field began to develop only in the late 1970s. Until the mid-1990s, Holocaust survivor and historian Philip Friedman and historian Shmuel Spector of Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial authority, were among the few scholars to focus specifically on Ukraine.

Before the Second World War, Friedman, a native of what is today the Ukrainian city of Lviv, was already an established historian of Polish Jewry and, like Emmanuel Ringelblum in Warsaw, collected materials during the war to ensure that the history of the Holocaust could be written. After the war, Friedman served as the first director of the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, and he is considered by many the "father of Holocaust history" due to his early postwar writings. However, Friedman's scholarly career was cut short when he died in 1960 at age 59. Friedman's work was of course well known to the few specialists studying the Holocaust at the time, but not until 1980 were Friedman's numerous essays and lectures collected and published in English under the title Roads to Extinction. One chapter of the Friedman collection was an 80-page essay on the Holocaust in Lviv. This essay, as historian Lucy Dawidowicz wrote in her review in The New York Times, 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."

Aside from Friedman, the only major work to address the Ho-locaust in Ukraine in detail was Shmuel Spector's *The Holocaust of* Volhynian Jews, 1941-1944, which appeared in Hebrew in Israel in 1986, followed by an English edition in 1990.7 This book was the first systematic regional history of the Holocaust in Ukraine and in many ways a model in terms of its scope and its range of sources (in all the major languages). Drawing from contemporary German documents and survivor testimony housed in archives in the United States, Poland, and Israel as well as from the memorial books (yizkor bikher) compiled by survivors from various prewar Jewish communities, Spector shed new light on the history of the ghettos, Jewish councils, massacres, rescuers, and resistance movements in this rural western region. The works of Friedman and Spector remained exceptions, however. Ukraine was of course mentioned in general Holocaust histories,8 works dedicated to certain aspects of the Holocaust,⁹ studies of key German institutions involved in the Holocaust,¹⁰ examinations of Nazi occupation policy in the Soviet Union,¹¹ Ukrainian history,¹² and surveys about Soviet Jewry,¹³ to name the most obvious fields. But references to the Holocaust in Ukraine usually drew from many of the same sources and focused

on many of the same episodes. Not only could these materials become redundant in this respect, but an effort to synthesize them would not on its own yield a comprehensive overview. Save for a few exceptional works such as Raul Hilberg's three-volume study *The Destruction of the European Jews*,¹⁴ many of these studies were limited to the mass shootings of Jews carried out by the mobile SSpolice task forces, the Einsatzgruppen, in 1941 and early 1942.

This small body of literature, together with the *Encyclopedia* Judaica¹⁵ and Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman's *The Black* Book: The Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders throughout the Temporarily-Occupied Regions of the Soviet Union,¹⁶ constituted most of what was available in English. There also existed a few published memoirs by survivors, but these too were scarce before the early 1980s and dedicated primarily to the unrepresentative region of Galicia, with particular attention given the region's principal city, Lviv.¹⁷ Even after the appearance of dozens of memoirs in the mid-1980s and 1990s, the bulk of the material available still addressed primarily eastern Galicia. This focus on Lviv in particular was probably reinforced in part by a set of photographs taken during the pogrom there immediately after the Germans arrived.

The other significant work concerning the fate of Ukraine's Jews that bears mentioning here is Anatolii Kuznetsov's 1967 book *Babi Yar: A Documentary Novel*, which told the story of Dina Pronicheva, one of few survivors of the massacre of Kievan Jewry carried out by Special Commando 4a and several Order Police battalions at the ravine Babi Yar.¹⁸ Due to the size of this massacre—33,771 Jews were shot in two days—it was inevitable that this particular Nazi killing operation came to stand out. Thus, to the extent that the general public in the West gave any thought to the murder of Ukraine's Jews prior to the 1990s, attention was given by and large to Lviv, July 1941, and the Kiev massacre, September 1941.

Lviv and Kiev were no doubt significant episodes, but they provide limited insight into the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine as a whole. With regard to pogroms in general, the available evidence shows that these took place primarily in Galicia and Volhynia, the interwar Polish territories seized by the Soviet Union in September 1939.¹⁹ Where the Lviv pogrom is concerned, the mixture of German incitement and participation, spontaneous Ukrainian action, and advance planning by Ukrainian nationalist extremists—all of which were involved—is still being debated. The Lviv pogrom was partly fueled by the murder of some 2,500 Soviet political prisoners *before* the Red Army's retreat.²⁰ The subsequent anti-Jewish violence, however, revealed that a large number of local Gentiles believed strongly enough in "Judeo-Bolshevism" to vent their fury on thousands of innocents. In the light of what followed, the Lviv pogrom was also a brief episode in the destruction of that city's Jewish population. Most of Lviv's Jews were shot, gassed at Bełżec, or worked to death over a period of three years.

Outside Galicia, neither "resettlement" to death camps, nor pogroms, nor forced labor was typical for the fate of Ukraine's Jews. Far more frequent in these lands was the kind of slaughter that took place at Babi Yar. However, the Kiev massacre was itself a unique episode in that the major Aktion here took place within days of the city's occupation as opposed to weeks in other large cities.²¹ The immediate pretext here was a series of massive explosions in Kiev caused by Soviet mines timed to explode after the Germans arrived. Instead of being registered, isolated, forced to clear rubble, tank obstacles, and mines, and perhaps exploited for other kinds of labor-a period of time that usually lasted six to eight weeks-Kiev's Jews were shot almost within two weeks of German occupation. Here the Wehrmacht worked particularly closely with the SS and police forces in Kiev, from making the decision, to printing the posters telling the Jews where to gather, to blasting the walls of the ravine to cover the dead. The decision may even have involved coordination with the authorities in charge of housing seeking to shelter those made homeless by the Soviet mines and the subsequent fires. Rather than being quintessential examples of how the murder of Ukraine's Jews unfolded, Lviv and Kiev were singular episodes, the most extreme examples of the 1941 pogroms on one hand and the first wave of mass shootings on the other.

The relatively slow development of research on the Holocaust in Ukraine stemmed from a combination of at least four major factors. First, as Holocaust Studies established itself as a field, it addressed other key issues first. The records of the German military, the various German ministries and occupation authorities, the catalogued records of the Nuremberg Trials, the Einsatzgruppen reports, survivor testimonies and the yizkor books as well as some records of postwar German criminal investigations were all available to scholars in the West before the 1980s. Instructive, useful preliminary studies at the regional level could have been written. Shmuel Spector did so. In the beginning, however, Holocaust Studies had other problems to tackle, the main ones being the highest decision-making levels of the Third Reich and the debate that erupted early on between "the intentionalists" and "the functionalists," the argument between those who believed that the extreme antisemitism of Hitler and his top leaders drove the policy of the "Final Solution" deliberately toward mass murder versus those who believed that conflicts among competing bureaucracies and ambitious lower-level functionaries had the cumulative effect of pushing anti-Jewish policy toward a program of systematic, mass murder.

Second, and in some ways an extension of the above, was what might be called an "Auschwitz syndrome." For understandable reasons, many historians, philosophers, and political scientists as well as the general public focused on the killing centers and the use of railroads to deport Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as to Sobibór, Chełmno, Bełżec, Majdanek, and Treblinka, where altogether as many as 3 million men, women, and children were gassed and cremated in the way a factory receives and processes raw materials and disposes of the remnants. A uniquely horrific and criminal invention on the part of Nazi Germany, Auschwitz became the central symbol of modernity derailed, the nadir of Western civilization. Almost inevitably, academic and public interest in one aspect was bound to lead to neglect elsewhere. Country and regional studies had to wait. Ukraine was hardly alone in this respect.

Third, until 1991, scholars lacked access to the regional archives of the former Soviet Union. It was not until the successor states opened these repositories that the study of the Holocaust (and other previously taboo topics) could incorporate materials that had been located behind the Iron Curtain. Throughout the Cold War, Soviet officialdom—with few exceptions—sought to repress any discussion of the unique fate of Jews under Nazi rule, i.e., the fact that the Germans aimed for "100-percent solutions" where the Jews were concerned. Instead of being acknowledged as Jews, the Jewish victims of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union were often relegated to the category of "peaceful citizens." This manifestation of Soviet antisemitism guaranteed that the archives in Ukraine remained closed until the Soviet Union collapsed.

Fourth, Ukraine's prewar and wartime history of partition at the hands of Poland, Russia, Romania, Hungary, and Germany placed considerable linguistic demands on any scholar trying to gain an overview of how the Holocaust unfolded in Ukraine. In addition to the German, Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish secondary literature and primary sources to be considered, any study would naturally benefit from the use of Yiddish and Hebrew materials and literature. These are but the most obvious languages. Romania contributed two armies to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, while Hungarian and Slovak troops not only marched through central Ukraine in 1941, they also provided security forces for civil and military administered Ukraine in 1942 and 1943.²² Overall, the study of most aspects of Ukrainian history and Holocaust history is linguistically demanding, the combination of the Holocaust in Ukraine all the more so. Consequently, more than 30 years after Friedman's death, and 15 years after Dawidowicz's review of *Roads to Extinction*, in which she hinted that the field was wide open, scholars had yet to pick up where Friedman left off and address the Holocaust in Ukraine as a specific topic within the emerging field of Holocaust Studies.²³ It was only in 1996, when two major works on Galicia, by Dieter Pohl and Thomas Sandkühler, appeared in Germany, that the study of the Holocaust in Ukraine was given new impetus.²⁴

This volume aims to build on what is generally known about the Holocaust in Ukraine outside the city limits of Kiev and Lviv and to take the study of these events beyond 1941 and 1942. Geographically, these chapters cover almost all of present-day Ukraine. Chronologically, they span the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods. This collection provides a greater context for understanding the causes, forms, and consequences of the Holocaust in Ukraine. It sets familiar issues such as the Einsatzgruppen, ghettos and camps, and local collaborators against the backdrop of Jewish-Ukrainian relations, Ukrainian history, German-Ukrainian ties, Soviet crimes, the German home-front, Polish-Ukrainian intercommunal violence, and the German-Romanian alliance.

For sources, the chapters here draw not only from the records long available in the United States, Germany, Poland, and Israel, but also from archives in the former Soviet Union and the extensive holdings of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The archival material also includes postwar criminal investigations of alleged perpetrators in West Germany as well as the court records of cases that went to trial and the verdicts that followed. Several of the scholars in this volume were among the first Holocaust historians to explore the contents of the former Soviet archives-whether in Ukraine or at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The USHMM, through its program of microfilming material from across Europe, has guaranteed that the vast holdings of the many regional and national repositories in Ukraine are now accessible in a central archive in Washington, D.C. The existence of a U.S.-based repository and an institution such as the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, where scholars can meet and exchange ideas, was central to the completion of this book, as was the funding provided by the museum through the Summer Research Workshop Program and other fellowships.

The first chapter—by Dieter Pohl, senior researcher at Munich's Institute of Contemporary History—is essentially two chapters in one: an overview of the Holocaust in Ukraine during military administration, and a survey of the Holocaust in the civil administered RKU. He places the first mass killings by the Ein-



year's end there were almost no Jews left in the RKU; as one report put it, "Jewry. The cleansing of the territory is in its final stages."¹⁸¹ Only several thousand specialists considered essential to the war effort were left. In early April 1943, BdS Ukraine surveyed the KdS offices to learn how many Jews remained in the RKU. In the rear areas of the Wehrmacht forces in Ukraine, the surviving Jews numbered only in the hundreds. These Jews were soon murdered as well.¹⁸²

The last large groups of Jewish victims in the RKU were not indigenous to Ukraine but had been deported there from Hungary and Romania. The great majority were Romanian Jews, mostly Jews who had made their way to the RKU from Bukovina or Transnistria and had been put to work on DG IV. These Jews were almost swept up in the ghetto liquidations in the summer of 1942, when police shot the inmates of a DG IV camp in Nemyriv on September 14, 1942. Most of these forced laborers, however, fell victim to the construction project's own contingent of Order Police between February 2 and 5, 1943. A key factor in determining which DG IV Jews to eliminate was the stage of completion of each construction zone.¹⁸³ As late as October 1943, some construction zones were still exploiting Jewish forced laborers. A member of Organization Todt near Vinnytsia noted: "Even if poorly clothed, Jews are still very useful as workers."¹⁸⁴ Only a few DG IV camps, among them Bratslav (in Transnistria), were liberated by the Red Army.

Jews held in a ravine at Zdolbuniv, General Commissariat Volhynia-Podolia, shortly before their murder on October 14, 1942. USHMM, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw.



Jews wearing circular badges (in contrast to the Star of David common in Western and Central Europe) walk through Kremenets, Volhynia. The coats and scarves suggest that the picture may have been taken during the ghettoization of the town's Jews, which took place on March 1, 1942. The ghetto was liquidated on August 18, 1942, in a shooting operation typical for this region of Ukraine. USHMM, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw.

ees with false Aryan papers (German identity documents, like Soviet but unlike Polish, specified nationality) and sent them to a fictitious branch of his company in Poltava, where they survived.¹⁰⁹ A few Jews succeeded in impersonating Poles or Ukrainians from the beginning of the war and thereby avoided the ghetto. A few individuals were outside the open ghettos of the countryside during the liquidations and escaped after their families had been killed. Many Jews slipped away from the ghettos before liquidation, only to be betrayed by those they had paid to protect them.¹¹⁰ The sense of vulnerability outside the ghetto meant that few Jews tried to escape before the liquidations began. Those who did escape the larger closed ghettoes such as Lutsk or Rivne were often children who hid themselves in attics during the liquidations, slipped out of the ghetto thereafter, and found shelter with Polish, Ukrainian, or Czech peasant families. Children could do useful work around the farm, aroused pity as orphans, were easier to hide, and were less unwilling than adults to convert to Christianity.¹¹¹

A Jew who survived a ghetto's liquidation had to find shelter, food, and water, a task impossible without help. The law of the land was German and prescribed death not only to Jews but to those who hid them. Even without this draconian threat, most gentiles were cowed by Ger-



This poster, an issue of the bulletin board newspaper Novi Visti from late 1943, bears the headline "to arms." It demonstrates how ideas shared by the Nazis and Galician Ukrainians converged during recruitment for the SS Volunteer Rifles Division Galicia. The poster combines written and graphic appeals to "annihilate the Iudeo-Bolshevik monster," references to the 1932–1933 artificial famine in Soviet Ukraine and the Gulag system, and patriotic appeals drawn from the poets Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko. A prose translation of the lines in capital letters reads: ... and with the enemy's evil blood consecrate your freedom" and "... to attain for you, our native land, glory and freedom and honor!" Bundesarchiv.

gan trying to rid Galicia of its Poles as well, killing at least 10,000 in the process.⁹³

Jews trying to flee German persecution in Galicia were very much on their own during the first two years of the German occupation. After the Kovpak raid, they could hope to find shelter with Kovpak's raiders or with the revitalized local Polish or Ukrainian Communists. They did so not because they were Communists, but because a chance existed that the Communist partisans would accept them. Joining the nationalist Ukrainian partisans was not entirely out of the question, but very difficult. Many of UPA members and leaders, for example, were still convinced that "the Jews" supported the Bolsheviks. After all, Jews appeared to be joining only the Soviet partisans groups. Furthermore, nationalist Ukrainian partisans (like their Polish counterparts) were fighting for a nation-state, and one basic tenant common to both groups was the belief that it was optimal to have as few members of different nationalities as possible. Thus, very few Jews were able to join nationalist partisans-primarily those who could offer some needed form of skilled labor, i.e., doctors, tailors, shoemakers and the like. This issue also requires more research.

The OUN-B officially moderated its position toward Jews at its August 1943 conference and dispensed with other trappings of far-right

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"The Shoah in Ukraine presents cutting-edge research from a stellar group of international experts. Neglected by scholars for too long, the Holocaust in Ukraine took particular—and bitterly painful—forms. This remarkable book illuminates the intertwined lives and deaths of Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, Russians, Romanians, Germans, and Gypsies, past and present, in this contested part of Europe."

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