

## **Panel 2: Case Studies of ‘Ordinary’ Perpetrators**

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“Local Participation in the Crimes of the Holocaust in Ukraine: Forms and Consequences”

The term collaboration is a loaded one, largely unavoidable, but insufficient for explaining the diverse, dynamic phenomenon of genocide perpetration during the Second World War. Viewing Axis dominated Europe in the early 1940s panoramically with all the variations in occupation structure, imperial rule, administrative policies and local conditions, one can hardly speak of a typology of collaboration. If in its original French usage collaboration was a form of national treason, depicted as the detested character of the enemy within and contrasted with a heroic Maquis resister, then what forms did that treason take? The French image of the shorn-headed woman publicly condemned for her sexual deviance and betrayal comes to mind. Or the national leader who sold out his country, the Quisling, a word which by the way has entered the English language with a small “q”. The enormous crimes, suffering, partisan struggles of WWII produced a new language for describing national and gendered images of treason, polemically ignited by oversimplified black and white, male and female characterizations, and political extremes of the Cold War era. Now with the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the history of collaboration and its postwar ramifications were extremely significant, we can revisit this topic with richer comparative analysis, more archival sources allowing for a telescopic focus on the distinct variations, and a deeper

understanding of the specificity of the phenomenon. We can explore as Frank Golczewski's recent essay on collaboration in Ukraine stressed, the shades of grey.<sup>1</sup>

My focus today will be on the theme of collaboration in Ukraine, and less the political than the social and local aspects. In historiography of Ukraine during the Second World War, well before the millions of records on Ukrainian police, regional administrations and postwar trials became available to researchers in the 1990s; the theme of collaboration was also at the center of accusations, denials, and scholarly debate. But few took the lead offered by Jan Gross in his 1979 occupation study of Poland by examining more closely its sociological, complex interethnic, and class components. Instead Ukrainians were portrayed in broad brush strokes as Hitlerite fascists, guards at camps, as serving the colonial power in special units (Askaris) in the liquidation of the ghettos, and as Waffen SS men. Much of this earlier work was fueled by a combination of developments: Soviet persecution of Ukrainian nationalists who were branded collaborators; Jewish survivor testimony that described Ukrainians as the "worst"; and the fact that many Ukrainians including Trawniki men who resettled after the war in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the US were spotlighted in war crimes investigations and deportation proceedings. On the other hand, some western scholars such as John Armstrong in the U.S. explained away Ukrainian collaboration within the context of the weaknesses of the nationalist movement; he argued that collaboration of

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Golczewski, "Shades of Grey: Reflections on Jewish-Ukrainian and German-Ukrainian Relations in Galicia," The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization eds. Brandon and Lower (Bloomington, 2008), 114-155. Tatjana Tönsmeier and Christoph Dieckmann posit that the term collaboration should be avoided and substituted with „cooperation.“ See Dieckmann et al., eds., Kooperation und Verbrechen. Formen der „Kollaboration“ im östlichen Europa 1939-1945 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004). Johannes Huerter and Juergen Zarusky, eds. Besatzung, Kollaboration und Holocaust (Oldenbourg, 2008). For a European comparison of the importance of collaboration in memory of the war, see Harald Welzer, ed. Der Krieg der Erinnerung (Fischer, 2007).

Ukrainians could not be done with the same moral yardstick applied to those residing in independent nation states, the logic being that acts of treason did not apply to non-nation states.<sup>2</sup> The recent growth in Holocaust studies has changed studies of collaboration from a concentration on notions of national treason to specific acts that contributed to the mass murder, the identification of accomplices to this crime and the varied contexts in which this collective violence occurred.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the entire discussion of collaboration has been broadened by social historical research at the regional and micro level, epitomized by Jan Gross's explosive work Neighbors which reignited the debate on Jewish-Polish relations. Whereas earlier work almost exclusively characterized the perpetrators as Nazis or Germans, now one asks, in reference to Jedwabne, did the Germans need to be present, and are they entirely to blame for the Holocaust? <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Armstrong, "Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 40, No. 3 (Sep., 1968), pp. 396-410.

<sup>3</sup> Reconstructing the social history of the perpetration of the Holocaust in Ukraine is complicated, and not a very popular endeavor today in Ukraine. As in Soviet times but for different, nationalistic reasons, the history of Ukrainian anti-Semitism, is generally suppressed or considered taboo in Ukraine. Nation builders in the parliament and education ministry are more focused on identifying Ukrainian heroes such as the former UPA leader Roman Shukhevych, not villains, and the Holocaust as a textbook topic is marginalized as an event that happened somewhere else. В.О. Шайкан, Колабораціонізм на території, рейхскомісаріату "Україна" і військової зони в роки Другої світової війни (Кругууі Rih, National Academy of Science Ukraine, Institute of the History of Ukraine, 2005). Doctoral students in Ukraine are also working on the subject, Ivan Dereiko, and Alexander Gogun. Recent debates on the place of the Holocaust in Ukrainian history and lingering anti-Semitism, have been insightfully analyzed by John Paul Himka, "Public Debates in Ukraine over the Holocaust," paper presented at New York University, November 17, 2008. On textbook omissions of collaboration, and the theme of competitive victimization, see Johan Dietsch, Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture (Lund: Lund University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Kai Struve has explored (with the concepts of collective memory introduced by Reinhart Koselleck) the pogrom as a social ritual. See Kai Struve, "Ritual und Gewalt-Die Pogrome des Sommers 1941," in Synchrone Welten: Zeitenraeume juedischer Geschichte ed. Dan Diner (Goettingen, 2005), 228. William Hagen has also applied theories of social ritual to his study of the pogrom, see his "The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence: The Pogrom in Lwow, November 1918," "The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence: The Pogrom in Lwow, November 1918," in Robert Bloxbaum ed., Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland, (Cornell UP, 2005).

Of course the “Final Solution” was a Nazi imposed and sinisterly managed policy of genocide. But its most violent aspects occurred in eastern European settings, in the open, and involved the indigenous populations. Thus events that comprise “the Holocaust” represent an intersection of German history and the varied local and regional histories of Europe. Such a statement is not meant to trigger accusations, lay blame, or minimize the role of Nazi Germany rather it is intended to throw light on the fact that genocide-- the collective, sustained eradication of an entire group by another -- is very much a social phenomenon. How did Ukrainians, Poles, ethnic Germans and other non-Jewish inhabitants in Ukraine respond to the aggressively anti Semitic campaigns of the Nazi occupiers? Once the Red Army left, did local populations attack Jews before the Germans had arrived? What roles did they play in the Nazi administration of a “Final Solution”?

In exploring these questions, I will present a sketch of some of the latest research on local participation in the Holocaust as it occurred in Ukraine: 1) the role of pogroms, or “the mob” as genocidal agents; 2) “taming” the mob, or the Nazi instrumentalization and exploitation of indigenous helpers; 3) the dynamics of collaboration, or shifting roles of individuals and groups over time; and the 4) judgment of collaborators during and after the war.

## 1) The “Mob” as Holocaust Perpetrators

In the small Galician town of Peremyshliany, 40 kilometers southeast of Lviv, the Germans arrived on July 1<sup>st</sup>. During the Soviet occupation, the Jewish population had doubled, reaching 6,000, causing a strain on local resources and housing that mostly the native Jews bore. Jews were more visible than before in town, especially because the Soviets had deported a large part of the Polish population. Three days after the Germans arrived, a “Ukrainian mob” lashed out at the leadership of the Jewish community. The Belzer Rebbe (the head of a historic Hasidic dynasty) who had sought refuge in Peremyshliany from Nazi occupied Poland, barely escaped. However his son was thrown into the burning synagogue during the pogrom.<sup>5</sup> Many Jewish homes were destroyed and plundered. In households where Jewish heads did not come forward then women were seized, brought to the local prison and brutalized by Ukrainian militia. Lucy Gross, who survived the pogrom, wrote her account of it just after the war:

Our large synagogue and all of its annexes were burnt. The flames were rising up high, parched window frames and benches on which our grandfathers, fathers and brothers used to sit now crackled. Fire turned into an awesome element. A throng of peasants gathered around the fire with their sacks ready to plunder; a mass of devoted Christians, their children and the Germans who recorded this overwhelming sight on the film. The wind carried sparks from one building to another, the fire crackled and soared into the sky mercilessly, and the bones of the first victims crunched. An enthused mob of shrieking peasants, just like locusts, pounced on everything that belonged to the Jews. They plundered, stole, and in some incredible

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<sup>5</sup> Note the representation here of the emotions and violence as ecstasy, enthused, shrieking. The son’s name was Moishe. Belzer Rebbe was hidden with a Polish family, then given a disguise and taken out of town by a Hungarian counter intelligence officers. See video testimony of Basia K. 7 December 1997, Brooklyn NY, tape 1, segment 4. Israel L. video testimony, 6 November 1995, Brooklyn NY, tape 2, segment 33. Ida K. video testimony, 24 September 1996, West Orange, NJ, tape 1, segment 18-20, held at the Shoah Foundation Archives, Los Angeles, CA. Israel, Yosef *Rescuing the Rebbe of Belz*. Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2005.

ecstasy they destroyed within minutes what had sometimes survived the generations.<sup>6</sup>

This postwar testimony corroborated by a wartime diary entry of the same event: A diarist named Samek Goldfarb, also eyewitness to events in Peremyshliany wrote during the war:

The participation of Ukrainians in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews is beyond any dispute... At the German invasion they themselves initiated terrible massacres in comparison to which even the cruelty of the Germans seemed pallid. It is a fact that the Germans took pictures of Jews being hurled into the flames of burning houses. In Przemyslany the perpetrators of this were the Ukrainians. Had they been allowed, they would even today cut down the entire ghetto in their passion for plunder.<sup>7</sup>

In other parts of eastern Galicia, historian Dieter Pohl estimates that as many as 12,000 Jews died in about 100 pogroms, the largest occurring in the city of Lviv where approximately 4,000 Jews were brutally murdered between June 30- and July 5, 1941. As was the case in nearby Stanislav, Zolochiv, Drohobycz, Buczacz and Tarnopol, in Lviv the Jews were blamed for the mass murder of political prisoners and others whose mutilated remains were found in NKVD jails. The pattern is clear and suggests that the Soviets issued a policy of mass murder during the retreat and the Germans were the primary organizers of these anti-Semitic “retaliation” campaigns. Typically Jewish men

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<sup>6</sup> Lucy Gross (b April 18, 1926). Typed manuscript with corrections and notations, written by Lucy Gross just after liberation in Germany and then in Israel (approx. 1946-1950). Polish Original translated into English by Magdalena Norton. The author is grateful to Gisela Gross Gelin (Lucy’s sister) for allowing me to copy the manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> Samek’s Testimony, 1943, entry of March 6, 1943. Samek Goldfarb was shot in June-July 1943. Unpublished diary manuscript being edited by the author and published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am grateful to the Litman family for sharing this valuable source and artifact with me.

were forced to exhume bodies of dead prisoners, in some cases they had to wash the corpses and dig the graves to prepare for a religious burial. While the Jews carried out these gruesome tasks, the local population was allowed to vent their rage against them, beating the Jews at random with clubs, rods, and other blunt instruments.<sup>8</sup>

According to survivor, historian Philip Friedman's pioneering research, the involvement of Ukrainians cut across class, educational, generational, and political lines. Individuals acted upon different motives and with varying aims, which converged spontaneously or was cleverly harnessed by German and Ukrainian leaders. News that actions against Jews would occur in the towns was enough to cue peasants to arrive in town with carts, ready to load up the plunder. Memory of, or rumors about pogroms in the wake of the First World War and earlier times provided on-lookers and participants in 1941 with a precedent to follow, a pattern of response. But the stereotype of the rapacious Ukrainian peasant distorts the reality. In Delatyn, the pogrom was organized by the local music teacher, Slawko Washchuk, "and in Stanislav, that of Professor Lysiak, of the local teachers seminary." In Dubno, Ukrainian administrators in the municipal government, who had worked closely with Jewish colleagues in the government, suddenly revealed their prejudice by organizing the pogrom there. In Tarnopol the leaders of the violence were a Ukrainian pharmacist, a teacher, and other local elites. The organization and implementation of the violence was not strictly "men's business." Women were among the attackers, and the organizers, such as the "daughter of a prominent attorney in Zlocow." Ukrainian priests, judges, school inspectors petitioned to German authorities to

<sup>8</sup> Shimon Redlich, Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews and Ukrainians, 1919-1945 (Bloomington, 2002), 101-102. Omer Bartov's "White Spaces and Black Holes: Eastern Galicia's Past and Present," in Shoah in Ukraine eds. Brandon and Lower, (Bloomington: 2007).

start anti-Jewish measures. Anti-Semitic propaganda entered into the school curricula. In Zbaraz “secondary school students marched with song through the streets... and to the Jewish cemetery, where they destroyed the tombstones.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to nationalistic claims for the purging of the new Ukrainian state of Jewish-Muscovite elements, one finds the traditional canards in the propaganda: Jews are portrayed as Christ killers, foreign or Soviet agents, the source of epidemics, and swindlers. All of these accusations were meant to elicit responses, a call for action, usually that of revenge, expiation, or expected martyrdom. The Jews collectively were supposed to pay the costs for the suffering of Ukrainians, supposed to be sacrificed for the “greater” “legitimate” good of the majority. This sort of redemptive anti-Semitism (in Saul Friedlander’s words) was operative in Ukraine as well as elsewhere in Europe, such as Lithuania where a non-Jew who was arrested as a Soviet criminal could be set free if he could present evidence that he had killed a Jew, deemed a laudable act that demonstrated one’s loyalty to the Lithuanian nation.<sup>10</sup>

Thus one finds among the participants in the violence and destruction fanatical nationalists, devout Christians, secular professionals, youth, elderly, civic leaders and rural farmers. This cross cut of society contained “fringe” criminal elements, thugs and rabble rousers, but these sadistic types were not the dominant force in summer 1941, which is one of the more troubling and puzzling aspects that has not been fully explored by scholars of Ukraine.

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Friedman, „Ukrainian-Jewish Relations,“ in Road to Extinction, 275-276.

<sup>10</sup> Kai Struve, “Ritual und Gewalt-Die Pogrome des Sommers 1941,“ ed. Dan Diner, Synchrone Welten: Zeiträume juedischer Geschichte, Goettingen, 2005, 225-250.

## 2) “Taming” the Mob: Local Participation in the Nazi Administration of the “Final Solution”

As the Nazi administration came into existence between June and October 1941, anti Jewish measures started, first the registration and marking of Jews, extortion ruses, mass shootings of men escalated to entire communities of women, children the elderly; the “Aktionen” were often followed by property confiscation, ghettoization, and forced labor assignments; in 1943 the total liquidation of remaining camps, and ghettos in western Ukraine occurred. More than 1.5 million Jews were killed, a figure that has gone up in recent years by about 100,000 persons with the increase in documentation and research. In the German reports, one often reads that “the more gruesome tasks were given to the local population.” But what exactly were these “tasks”? Since 2004, Father Patrick Des Bois and his research team (supported by Yahad-In Unum) have begun to define them. They have identified 700 mass graves in Ukraine and have collected interviews with Ukrainian eyewitnesses including some who participated in the genocide. This new data is adding specificity to the definition of collaboration, not a blanket condemnation, but rather a detailed picture is emerging of the division-of-labor that was necessary for the perpetrators and their helpers to commit mass murder. Des Bois’s work is filling in the spectrum of willing and forced participation. At recently uncovered mass murder sites, local eyewitnesses have explained how regional German officials requisitioned local women, youth and any available men to assist them in a

variety of roles: as pit diggers; as “Jew carriers” to bring the elderly to the killing site; as “corpse carriers” picking up the dead off the street; as “packers” young peasant girls assigned to walking over the bodies in the pit; as collectors of hemp, placing it in the pits to burn human remains; as clothing sorters; as menders (women who sewed tattered clothing that was distributed to ethnic Germans); and as cooks to feed “the shooters” during long shifts.<sup>11</sup> Aside from the indigenous policemen, most local helpers did not volunteer for this work, though to be sure there were certainly participants who showed up because of greed, anti-Semitism and other motives.

#### Secretaries, Mayors, Auxiliary Police

Ukrainians who were employed in administrative positions in towns where Jews resided could hardly avoid participating in some way in the Final Solution, bearing in mind that in many towns the Jewish population was between 30 and 50 %. The Ukrainian appointed mayor of Rovno regularly corresponded with the German civilian commissar there about Jewish apartments and personal property as it passed hands between local Ukrainians and German officials.<sup>12</sup> Female typists in Chudniv who were local ethnic Germans fluent in German and Ukrainian, processed reports on anti Jewish measures transmitted between Ukrainian police, village elders, civil leaders and their German

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For Father Des Bois’ work, see *The Mass Shooting of Jews in Ukraine 1941-1944: The Holocaust by Bullets* (Exhibit Catalog) Mémorial de la Shoah, May 20-Nov 30, 2007. Also see *New York Times*, “A Priest Methodically Reveals Ukrainian Jews’ Fate,” October 6, 2007 and his recent book, *The Holocaust by Bullets* (Palgrave, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Burgermeister Bulba to the Gebietskommissar, September October 1941, Records of Rovno Gebietskommariat, USHMM RG 31.017m, reel 1.

bosses.<sup>13</sup> Mykhail Tyagly and Kiril Feferman's work on anti-Semitic propaganda shows that Ukrainians journalists, newspaper editors and artists created and disseminated outrageous stories and grotesque caricature of Jews in Ukraine, depicting all of the typical canards meant to legitimize the mass murder, curry favor with the occupier, and incite the local population to remain vigilant in hunting down Jews.<sup>14</sup>

Among the thousands of Ukrainians who did work in the German administration, that is the mayors, the collective farm supervisors, postal workers, drivers, messengers, etc. – a minority albeit an influential one did systematically hunt and brutalize Jews: the auxiliary police forces. In John Paul Himka's words: "during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, criminality moved from the margins of society to its center, and individuals with an inclination to rob, extort, and kill were not lost in the larger crowd of humanity, but rather stepped to the fore."<sup>15</sup> As the largest population under Nazi rule, Ukrainians outnumbered other non-Germans in the auxiliary police forces that brutalized Jews. They also appear more frequently in survivor testimony as "the sadists." Several thousand Ukrainians were drafted (many from the horrible conditions of the POW camps) or recruited from the local population of Volksdeutschen and trained as guards in the SS Trawniki camp near Lublin.<sup>16</sup> Martin Dean and Dieter Pohl's work on the police

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<sup>13</sup> Testimony of Florentina Bedner, 29 Nov 1976. Bayer. Landeskriminalamt 76- K 41676. Koe; Elisabeth Held, born Frank, Neustadt. 11 August 1977, 76-K 41676-Koe; Testimony of Elsa Marx, (date?)and Vorermittlungsverfahren der Zentralen Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen wegen NS-Verbrechen im Bereich des ehemaligen Generallandbezirks Shitomir/Ukraine, II 204a AR-Z 131/67, Abschlussbericht, Das Gebietskommissariat Tschudnow.

<sup>14</sup> Mykhail Tyagly, "The Role of Antisemitic Doctrine in German Propaganda in the Crimea, 1941-1944," Holocaust and Genocide Studies (2004). Feferman paper presented at conference, Shoah in Ukraine: New Research, New Perspectives, University of Paris, Sorbonne, October 2007.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul Himka, "Ukrainian Collaboration in the Extermination of the Jews during the Second World War: Sorting out the Long-Term and Conjunctural Factors," in The Fate of European Jews, 1939-1945: Continuity or Contingency?, ed. Frankel (Oxford, 1997), 172.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Black, "Police Auxiliaries for Operation Reinhard Shedding Light on the Trawniki Training Camp through Documents from Behind the Iron Curtain," paper presented, Conference on the Holocaust and Intelligence, City

estimates that 100,000 Ukrainian men (ages 17-60 years) served in the local police forces and as firemen in Ukraine, in both stationary and mobile units, in the city and the countryside. Thousands more were placed into ad hoc formations in the military and SS.<sup>17</sup> They were most visible in the rural gendarme units where they had considerable leeway and power. Since Germans did not have the manpower, language and local knowledge of the terrain and population, and their occupation depended on large security forces, they relied heavily on the use of local able bodied men who were initially sympathetic to German rule.

The near annihilation of all Jews in Ukraine, on average about 2% survived, could not have been completed without the assistance of the auxiliary police. They manned at least 2000 single killing actions during the height of the mass shootings in western Ukraine during 1942. They combed the forests and conducted the ghetto liquidations. As was common in 1943, German gendarmes and their Ukrainian Schutzmaenner carried out searches for Jews during their routine patrols. Near Koziatyn, for example, they found on 7 May 1943 a Jewish family of 3 men, 2 women and 3 children, hiding in a hole in a field. The police had been tipped off by a local (indicative of the “culture of denunciation” that had developed in 1930s Stalinist Ukraine).<sup>18</sup> According to the German police report, the Jews “were flushed out of the well camouflaged hole,” they

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University of New York, June 2-4 2003. I am grateful to Peter Black for sharing this paper, and documents on the Becker Brothers, ethnic Germans from the Zhytomyr region who were trained at Trawniki as of January 1942, and served in the SSPF Lublin. A prominent example of a Ukrainian “volunteer” sent to Trawniki is Ivan Demjanuk.

<sup>17</sup> In the militia, the *Hilfspolizei*, and *Schutzmannschaften* (mobile and stationary). See Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-1944*, (Macmillan, 2000) and Dieter Pohl, “Ukrainische Hilfskräfte beim Mord an den Juden,” in *Die Täter der Shoah: Fanatische Nationalisten der ganz normale Deutsche?* ed. Gerhard Paul, 205-207.

<sup>18</sup> The culture of denunciation, bridging the prewar and wartime, has been stressed by Karel Berkhoff’s study of Ukrainian society in the Reichskommissariat, and comparatively in the work of Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,” *Journal of Modern History* 68 (Dec 1996).

were “shot while trying to escape” and their tattered clothes given to the local villagers. The German gendarme surmised that they had been living in this hole for a year.<sup>19</sup>

But were these Ukrainian policemen, ethnically Ukrainian? This is a driving question behind the doctoral research of Iwan Dereiko, a candidate at Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. In other words, how *Ukrainian* were the Ukrainian collaborators? Actually the German occupiers favored the Volksdeutschen, and placed them in command positions over the Ukrainian police. German methods of racial classification, though by all appearances official, were extremely subjective and arbitrary. Securing a place in the Nazi imperial structure was a survival strategy for most, not an ideological decision. Many Volksdeutschen, such as the Becker brothers from the colony of Neustadt were recruited and sent to Trawniki for training, others stayed in their villages and served in the gendarme. According to the research of Martin Dean, ethnic Germans in Nikoleav staffed the police, and shot Jews in their hometowns in the Ustynivka district. They dominated the Selbstschutz in Transnistria. Like the Ukrainian auxiliaries, ethnic German police could be relied upon to do the dirty work for the regime, including killing Jewish children.<sup>20</sup> The Nazi system aimed to establish clear racial categories but in reality these were elastic, and could be manipulated to one’s advantage, as Ukrainians and ethnic Germans did during and after the war.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lower, [Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine](#), 133-34.

<sup>20</sup> Dean, “Soviet Ethnic Germans and the Holocaust in the Reich Commissariat Ukraine, 1941—1944” in [Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization](#).

<sup>21</sup> On the Volksdeutschen role in the Holocaust in Ukraine see Eric Steinhart’s research on the Selbstschutz, including his paper “The Chameleon of Trawniki: Jack Reimer, Soviet Volksdeutsche and the Holocaust,” paper presented at USHMM/CAHS fellows meeting October 29, 2008. The essay will be published in the journal, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

### 3) The Dynamics of Collaboration

Depending on where one lived and the stage of the war, the local wartime population of Jews, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Ethnic Germans, and Roma, found themselves trapped in or took on different roles associated with the machinery of destruction. For example a Ukrainian peasant who participated in the pogroms in Galicia in July 1941, might have then stood by a year later as the remaining Jewish population was marched to the edge of town to be shot or deported to Belzec. That peasant might have been requisitioned, forced to supply the spades used to dig the mass graves; that same peasant might have allowed a Jewish refugee to sleep one night in a barn on the farm. The Jewish refugee made it to the woods and survived the war, grateful for the peasant's help. When the Red Army and SMERSH intelligence units arrived in that Galician village, the peasant was finger-pointed by a neighbor, documents showed that the peasant had complied with German orders for securing Ostarbeiter. Was that peasant a pogromist, bystander, collaborator, or rescuer, or all of the above? Ukrainian militia also changed sides during the war, at first assisting in the mass shootings of Jews, and then later joining Jewish survivors in the forests. Individuals made choices with extreme consequences, and under shifting circumstances.

Or what about the several Jewish council leaders who were tried by the Soviets after the war, like Dr. Adolf Herschmann from the Zhmerinka ghetto who sabotaged an underground railroad for Jews fleeing from German to Romanian held territory. He also implemented German orders against the Jews in 'his' ghetto in an excessive manner.

When the Soviets liberated Zhmerinka the fact that he collaborated with the Romanians, was Jewish and had survived raised suspicions of interrogators, the underlying assumption was that Jews who did survive “openly” (not in the forest or in hiding) must have collaborated, his position in the Judenrat was enough to convict him as a national traitor.<sup>22</sup>

Another gray area in the history of collaboration concerns the history of Ukrainian nationalists during the war. Were these “bourgeois nationalists” (in Soviet terms) as a group more likely to collaborate in the Holocaust? Did the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists organize the persecution and even murder of Jews? The involvement of self-identifying Ukrainian patriots, those seeking Ukrainian autonomy, must be understood within the framework of Nazi Realpolitik whereby Ukrainian nationalists were potential allies in the war against “Judeo-Bolshevism” and Poland, but Slavs in general were an “inferior” race to be fully exploited. Indeed, German attitudes and policies toward Ukrainians were often ambivalent. Ukrainians’ future as Slavic “Untermenschen” was certainly not bright; during the war over 4 million Ukrainians died, and more than 2 million were enslaved by their Nazi overseers.<sup>23</sup> The lack of Ukrainian statehood meant that there was no official leadership, no government in exile, no Quisling or Vichy government that represented a “national” or collective policy of Ukrainians. Advocates of a Ukrainian state who coalesced around the OUN were themselves divided into two factions, though both were anti-communist and had formal dealings with the Third

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<sup>22</sup> Thanks to Vadim Altskan for providing information on Herschmann. Altskan’s article on Herschmann is forthcoming. Also see a recent article on the Zhmerinka ghetto in the journal of the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kiev, see “Holocaust and Modernity” vol 2 (2008); **Jewish resistance to the policy of genocide: Naum Monastyrskii - prisoner in Zhmerinka ghetto and underground fighter** published by Faina Vinokurova.

<sup>23</sup> Magocsi, A History of Ukraine, 638.

Reich. In fact, armed units of Ukrainians, which had been trained by the German military and worked with Nazi intelligence services prior to 1941 participated in Operation Barbarossa.<sup>24</sup>

During the height of anti Jewish violence in Ukraine, radical Ukrainian nationalists promoted a fascist, völkisch, territorial concept of statehood, a Ukraine for Ukrainians only. Leaders in one faction of the OUN declared Ukraine's independence in Lviv on June 30, 1941, which the Nazis quickly suppressed. The Germans welcomed Ukrainian help in the fight against "Judeo-Bolshevism" but Hitler would not tolerate a sharing of political power with Slavic "Untermenschen." Meanwhile OUN task forces fanned out across the region, infiltrated local militias and initiated pogroms as a form of revenge politics against "Jewish Moscow" and to cleanse "their" territory of Jews. During the so called Petliura Days in summer 1941, thousands of Jews in Lviv were massacred in an orgy of violence that was organized and promoted by the German occupiers, local thugs and nationalist radicals.<sup>25</sup> When the nationalist expeditionary force pushed eastward in summer 1941, they discovered a less receptive local population. Sovietization had stifled, discredited the nationalist movement and the local population was more suspicious of the Nazi occupiers. Fewer pogroms could be ignited though there were

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<sup>24</sup> Franziska Bruder, "Den ukrainischen Staat erkämpfen oder sterben!", 113-175.

<sup>25</sup> The term "Petliura Days" was rumored during the war to denote these pogroms in Lviv; more research is needed to establish precisely who perpetrated the violence, but it is clear that as part of the preparations for the Nazi occupation, the OUN trained Ukrainians for police duties, and during the invasion the OUN was instrumental in the formation of the militia in Galicia and other parts of western Ukraine. After the war the term continued to be a lightning rod in the often polemical exchanges among Soviets, Ukrainians, and Jewish concerning culpability for the massacres. The wartime writings of "prime minister" Stetsko (OUN-B) have revealed that the anti-Semitism of the OUN in summer 1941, a crucial period of the Holocaust, supported Nazi aims. See Karel Berkhoff and Marco Carynnyk's "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude toward Germans and Jews: Iaroslav Stetsko's 1941 Zhyttiepys," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 23 (1999): 149-84. On the Sich, see Berkhoff's Harvest of Despair (Cambridge, 2005), 64-65. Also see, **John-Paul Himka** "The Veracity of Testimony: Roza Wagner's Story of the Lviv Pogrom of the Summer of 1941," *Holocaust and Modernity*, vol 2 (2008) journal of the Center for Holocaust Studies, Kiev.

important regional exceptions requiring additional research. For example, Ukrainian patriots who aligned themselves with Taras Bulba-Borovets north of Zhytomyr along the Belorussian border formed military self defense units, known as the Sich. The anti-Semitic writings of this group and their actions show a clear link between an organized political group and collaboration in the mass murder of Jews, according to the preliminary research of Jared McBride. Later in 1943-1944 (in Volhynia and Galicia) the OUN's armed wing, the Ukrainian Liberation Army fought against Germans, Soviets and Poles; its partisan camps in the forests were by no means a haven for refugee Jews, in fact just the opposite; ethnic cleansing against Poles was also widespread. OUN attempts to soften its approach with a August 1943 declaration of a multiethnic Ukrainian State was too little, too late, and by recent accounts may have been purely opportunistic, done to improve relations with the Allies who now seemed the likely victors.

#### 4) Judging Ukrainian Collaboration

Given these complex circumstances and dynamic history, how were Ukrainian collaborators judged and treated during and after the war? The wartime diarist Samek Goldfarb in Peremyshliany condemned Ukrainian involvement in the mass murder of Jews as a national trait of "hypocrisy and cruelty" and explained that it developed "as a result of their political situation, always uncertain" and as a response to centuries of hardship as "the tenant peasant to whom the Pole was, first of all, an instrument of

economic and political oppression.” Still Goldfarb believed that national differences were really a smokescreen for the base problem of “class discrimination.” In trying to make sense of the cruelty of Ukrainians he could not avoid being judgmental but was careful to interpret such sadistic and collaborative behavior as a function of external factors such as political weakness and economic oppression. The returning Soviets were less nuanced in their judgment.

In the first decade following the war in Soviet Ukraine more than 80,000 persons were tried as “homeland traitors and accomplices” (*izmenniki rodiny* and *posobniki*), according to Tanja Penter’s research. This was a third of those arrested across the Soviet Union, and when compared to Germans who were tried in the two Germanys and Austria in the entire postwar period, the fact is that the overwhelming number of persons convicted for committing crimes related to the Holocaust were not Germans, and were not tried in German courts. In the immediate aftermath, Soviet kangaroo courts judged entire villages, condemned as collaboration nests; inhabitants were rounded up en masse, some killed, others deported; this brutal chaos of revenge justice gave way to later trials that were less frequent but more formalized and drawn out. But the trials did not open up research there on the different forms of collaboration, political, economic, administrative, and genocidal. Many trials concerned the pogroms of 1941, including a recent trial in the 1980s in Chernovtsy. Jews were also among the defendants, primarily members of the Jewish councils, such as the head of the Judenrat in Zhmerinka. Soviet

military courts sentenced Judenrat members to 25 years of forced labor or to death.<sup>26</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

We cannot dispense with the loaded term collaboration, and given its importance as a Second World War concept, we should not. But we could refocus our attention on the socio-cultural aspects of this notion, refine its use, and introduce more precise terms to describe and analyze how indigenous populations supported the criminal policies of Nazi (indeed Axis) occupiers. For example, one could analyze the killing and collaboration as part of a horrific German system of labor requisition, explore the Ukrainian creation and dissemination of anti-Semitic images, denunciation practices as rooted in the prewar history of Stalinism, or the trajectory of property confiscation into the postwar period e.g. Jewish personal valuables such as armoires, dishes, etc. in Ukrainian homes today. We can understand it hierarchically as the power relations between the occupier and occupied, the imperial governor and the colonial subject, on one hand, and laterally as co-participation, as the collective agency of individuals that shared in the persecution and annihilation of the Jews. The division of labor that made the Holocaust possible, especially outside of the camps system in killing fields such as Ukraine, meant that individuals played various roles as collaborators over time, and usually part time as needed; distinct tasks were developed and assigned, down to the killing fields. The Ukrainian history of the fine tuning of this local machinery, with the Germans at the helm, is in many ways more vexing than what we have read in Hilberg's detailed reconstruction of the deportations of Jews to the gassing centers. The Berlin-

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<sup>26</sup> Tanja Penter, "Collaboration on Trial: War Crimes Trials in Ukraine under Stalin," unpublished manuscript, workshop on Soviet trials, summer 2005, USHMM.

centered view of bureaucratic, conspiratorial mitmacher, formalistic, “banal,” and intentionally distanced from the victims contrasts with the ad hoc, “intimate” agents of human butchery in Ukraine. The resonance of this history of perpetration also differs. For Holocaust historians, the landscape of Ukraine is essentially a large crime scene. The bones of the victims are littered on the hills and buried in the ravines. As researchers we can knock on doors, approach eyewitnesses, elderly peasants leaving church, and ask questions. The fear and shame is still palpable; those who were requisitioned are known among the locals. These elderly are fading from the scene, but are talking. As they reflect on their horrible wartime experiences, the traumas and bitter disappointments of having survived Ukraine’s worst century, they are realizing the gravity of having participated in some measure, great or small, willingly or unwillingly in the mass murder of “their” Jews.