

Anatolii Podol's'kyi

A Reluctant Look Back

Jewry and the Holocaust in Ukraine

Ukraine was once a centre of East European Jewish life. Most Ukrainian Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Jewish culture in Ukraine perished with them. In the Soviet Union, that culture slipped into oblivion. While Ukraine's official politics of remembrance omits the country's Jewish heritage, private individuals and organisations are trying to embed Jewish culture and history as a part of Ukrainian identity in the public consciousness. This is a painful process: It demands that Ukrainians recognise their share of the responsibility in the annihilation of the Jews in their country.

At the end of the 19th century, there were at least 3 million Jews living in the territory of what is today Ukraine, which was at that time divided between Austria and Russia. Ukraine represented a major religious, literary, and political centre of East European Jewry. The co-existence of Jews and Ukrainians was deeply influenced by social, cultural, and economic exchange, but also by differences and conflicts. The worst example of anti-Jewish violence in the distant past took place during a 17th-century uprising of Ukrainian Christians and Cossacks against the Polish republic. After the partition of Ukraine between Russia and Austria in the late 18th century, the Jews of eastern Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia enjoyed the same civil rights as other subjects of the Habsburg Empire. There, antisemitism was for the most part marginal. In the Russian Empire, however, antisemitism was official policy, and pogroms were carried out against Jews in 1871, 1881, 1903, and 1905. The recurring waves of pogroms prompted thousands of Jews to emigrate to the Austrian part of Ukraine, the United States, South America, and Palestine. State antisemitism in Russia reached its climax in 1913 with the infamous trial of Mendel Beilis in Kiev. Beilis was accused of ritual murder, but due to the decisive intervention of the Ukrainian and Russian intelligentsia as well as ordinary Ukrainians, he was acquitted.

Unlike Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states, Ukraine did not gain independence after the First World War. From 1917 to 1921, a fierce struggle between the imperial Russian army, the Bolsheviks, and Ukrainian national forces took place in the Ukrainian lands. The Jews fell victim to pogroms committed by all of the warring parties during these years. The Bolsheviks accused the Jews of collaborating with the Ukrainian National Republic, while Ukrainian national forces accused them of collaborating with the Bolsheviks. The tsarist loyalists continued the anti-Jewish policies of the Romanov dynasty. In 1922, the greater part of the Ukrainian territory was absorbed by the newly founded Soviet Union. Eastern Galicia and west-

Anatolii Podol's'kyi (b. 1968) is director of the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Research in Kiev.

ern Volhynia were allotted to Poland, Bukovina came under Romania rule, and Transcarpathia became a part of Czechoslovakia.

Whereas the Jews in the Ukrainian lands of Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were able to maintain their traditional way of life, Jewish life in Soviet Ukraine gradually came to an end. In the 1930s, synagogues and religious schools were closed, and Hebrew was forbidden. Jews and Ukrainians were victims of both the Great Famine (1932-1933) and the Great Terror (1936-1938). Jews and Ukrainians were also to be found among the perpetrators. The relatively high proportion of Bolshevik functionaries of Jewish origin fanned latent antisemitism in Ukrainian society.

The repression of Jewish and Ukrainian national life did not stop Jews and Ukrainians from working together. This was especially apparent in literature. During the 1930s, Yiddish literature was able to develop in Ukraine. Among the brightest talents in this period were David Gofsteyn, Perets Markish, and David Bergelson. A number of Ukrainian writers of Jewish origin – Natan Rybak, Leonid Pervomaiskii, and Abram Katsnel'son – saw themselves as the bearers of Jewish and Ukrainian culture. Moreover, there existed in Ukraine at this time Jewish agricultural settlements where only Yiddish was spoken.

By May 1941, around 2.5 million Jews lived within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Under German occupation, the Jewish community in Ukraine, like all other Jewish communities in occupied Europe, was subjected to total destruction. The only Jews to survive were those who fled to the Soviet interior (Central Asia and Siberia) or joined the Red Army and helped to defend the Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and Belarusians from the Nazi regime. Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the Holocaust were extremely complex. Many non-Jews in Ukraine collaborated with the National Socialists. A large part succumbed to the Nazis' inflammatory propaganda against "Judeo-Bolshevism", which was allegedly responsible for the Stalinist terror of the 1930s. Historians assume that in Reich Commissariat Ukraine – which encompassed Volhynia, central Ukraine, and parts of eastern Ukraine – approximately 140,000 people served in local auxiliary police formations. Not all of them were Ukrainians, however. In addition, many inhabitants of Ukraine decided to work with the Nazis, and as a consequence of this decision, some ended up as guards at the killing centres Sobibór, Treblinka, and Bełżec. In many towns in western Ukraine, the local non-Jewish population killed Jews without waiting for instructions from the occupying authorities. On the other hand, Ukraine occupies fourth place on a list of rescuers compiled by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust remembrance authority in Jerusalem. This list includes more than 2,200 people from Ukraine who risked their lives to save Jews in the Ukrainian territories under Nazi occupation.

After the Second World War, Jewish life no longer existed in Ukraine. There were no more Jewish communities, no Jewish schools, no Jewish periodicals, no Jewish agricultural settlements. At the end of the 1940s, Stalin's antisemitism moved from latent to open, resulting in the open persecution of everything Jewish. This antisemitic campaign culminated in the shooting of Soviet Jewish writers in 1952. By the 1960s, Jews in Soviet Ukraine had largely assimilated to the Soviet way of life.

According to the 1989 census, there were 486,000 Jews on Ukrainian territory. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a massive wave of emigration to Israel, the United States, and Germany, on the one hand, and the resurrection of Jewish social and community life in Ukraine, on the other. According to the 2001 census, there are now only 103,000 Jews in Ukraine, but synagogues and Jewish schools have re-

opened, Jewish newspapers are being published, Jewish social organisations have taken up their work, and there are institutes of Jewish studies.

Ukrainian Research on the Holocaust

Over the past decade and a half, the progress made in community life has been matched by great progress in Holocaust research in Ukraine. A new school of research on the Holocaust has emerged.¹ The development of Holocaust historiography in Ukraine began with regional research and published memoirs. In a second step, individual aspects were examined. This was followed by the publication of standard document collections² and dissertations, of which there are still too few.³

The works of Ukrainian historians who research the Holocaust are largely ignored by official scholarship in Ukraine. At the same time, they have been received with great interest in the West and are frequently cited.⁴ The persistent ignorance of Ukrainian academics has increased in the last few years. Recent academic publications on modern Ukrainian history and university-level historiography textbooks address the Holocaust by making brief mention of Babi Yar – the Kiev ravine where nearly 34,000

¹ See, for example, A. Podol's'kyi, "Tema Holokostu v suchasni ukrains'kii istoriohrafii: problemy naukovykh doslidzhen' ta interpretatsii", *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukrainy: Materialy Vseukrains'koi naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2005), pp. 32–34; idem, "Doslidzhennia z istorii Holokostu v suchasni ukrains'kii istoriohrafii: novi pidkhody", in Ster J. Elisavetskii, *Katastrofa i opir ukrains'koho ievreistva: Narysy z istorii Holokostu i Oporu v Ukraini* (Kiev 1999), pp. 26–38.

² See, for example, M. Popovich, *Evreiskii genotsid na Ukraine, Filosofskaia i sotsiologicheskaia mysl'*, 4 (1994); Iaroslav Hrytsak, "Ukraïntsi v anty-ievreis'kykh aktsiïakh", *i*, 8 (1996); Ia. Khonigsman, *Katastrofa evreistva Zapadnoi Ukrainy* (L'viv 1998); Faina Vinokurova, "Osobennosti genotsida evreev na territorii Transnistrii", *Biulleten' Kholokost i sovremenost'*, 4–6 (2003–2004); Maksym Hon, *Z kryvdou na samoti. Ukrains'ko-evreiskii vziatymy na Volyni v 1926–1939 rokakh* (Rivne 2005); M. Tiaglyi, "Were Chingene Victims of the Holocaust? The Nazi policy in the Crimea towards Roma and Jews: Comparative analysis", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Fall 2008); Marco Tsarynnyk, "Zolochiv movchyt'", *Krytyka*, (October 2005); Zhanna Kovba, *Liudianist' u bezodni pekla* (Kiev 1998); F. Levitas, *Ievrei Ukrainy v roky Druhoï svitovoï viiny* (Kiev 1997); A. Kruglov, ed., *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov ob unichtozhenii natsistami evreev Ukrainy v 1941–1944 gg.* (Kiev 2002); M. Tiaglyi, *Mesta massovogo unichtozheniia evreev Kryma v period natsistskoi okkupatsii poluoostrova, 1941–1944: Spravochnik* (Simferopol 2005); *Katastrofa i opir ukrains'koho Ievreistva: Narysy z istorii Holokostu i Oporu v Ukraini* (Kiev 1999); B. Zabarko, ed., *Zhizn' i smert' v epokhu Kholokosta. Svidetel'stva i dokumenty*, 1–2 (Kiev 2006); Vitalii Nakhmanovich, "Obshchestvennyi komitet po uvekovecheniiu pamiati zhertv Bab'ego Iara i dr.", in Dmytro V. Tabachnyk, Tat'iana Evstaf'eva, eds., *Babii Iar: chelovek, vlast', istoriia: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kiev 2004).

³ Between 1991 and 2008, Anatolii Podol's'kyi, Feliks Levytas, Faina Vynokurova, A. Honcharenko, O. Surovtsev and N. Suhatskaia wrote dissertations about the Holocaust in Ukraine. Maksym Gon, V. Grinevich and D. Titarenko touch on the Holocaust in their dissertations. At present, L. Solovki is working on a dissertation on the history of the Holocaust in the oblast of Stanyslaviv (today Ivano-Frankiv's'k). Iu. Radchenko is researching the genocide of the Jews in the zone under German military administration (eastern Ukraine). M. Tiaglyi is working on a history of the Holocaust in Crimea.

⁴ Here, it is necessary to name Karel C. Berkhoff, Dieter Pohl, Wilfried Jilge, Peter Potychny, Howard Aster, Marco Tsarynnyk, John Himka, Omer Bartov, Alexander Prusyn, Martin Dean, Wendy Lower. In particular, researchers abroad make use of Alexander Kruglov, ed., *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, and Tabachnyk, Evstaf'eva, eds., *Babii Iar*.

Jews were shot over two days at the end of September 1941 – or these works suggest that the victims were first and foremost Ukrainians and Russians. In introductory surveys to historiography, no reference is made to publications about the genocide of Ukrainian Jews.⁵ Especially shocking is a recent publication by the Institute of History and the Institute of Political and Ethno-National Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, a publication dedicated to the political history of Ukraine in the 20th century and the early 21st century.⁶ This enormous volume, with more than 1,000 pages compiled by a collective of well-known and respected authors, addresses the most important events of the country's history. One of the central chapters concerns the Second World War on the territory of Ukraine. There is not a single word about the fate of the Ukrainian Jews to be found there. In recent years, the road has apparently led from disconnected pieces of information to the total exclusion of the Holocaust from academic publications.

This volume and other publications like it are based on the idea of a mono-cultural or even mono-ethnic history of Ukraine, although there is widespread understanding in Ukrainian historiography that Ukraine's culture and history were also influenced by minorities, including the Jews.⁷ The published papers from the series of conferences entitled "The Second World War and the Fate of the National Minorities of Ukraine" are evidence of this approach.⁸ These volumes reconstruct the fate of numerous peoples under Nazi occupation in great detail. Such conferences and publications are as a rule initiated by non-state academic organisations, in this case by the Committee Babi Yar and the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies. The sponsors prepare the shape of events with regard to content and search for funding to pay for the conferences and resulting anthologies. Interestingly, representatives of academic institutes such as the publishers of the aforementioned work on Ukrainian political history also gladly take part in these conferences. They give informative presentations about the Crimean Tatars, Poles, Jews, Germans, or Czechs of Ukraine. But in the "official" tomes published by the Academy of Sciences and financed by the state, national minorities, such as the Jews, are not to be found.

Unlike Ukrainian historiography, European historiography follows a multicultural approach. This approach is also widespread in post-socialist countries. In Poland, for example, the most delicate subjects – such as the shooting of Polish officers by the Stalinist secret police in Katyń in 1940, the Polish-led expulsions of the Germans from western Poland in 1945, the destruction of Polish villages in Volhynia in 1943 at the hands of Ukrainians – can be discussed. Even the Jedwabne pogrom, which was carried out by

⁵ Iaroslav Kalakura, *Ukrains'ka istoriohrafiia* (Kiev 2004); "Politychna istoriia Ukraïny 20 stolittia", in Kucher et al., eds., *Ukraïna v roki Druhoï svitovoi viiny (1939–1945)*, 4 (Kiev 2003).

⁶ Volodymyr M. Lytvyn et al., eds., *Ukraïna: politychna istoriia 20 – pochatok 21 stolittia* (Kiev 2007). The principal compilers of the texts were in fact the well-known Ukrainian historians Stanyslav Kul'chyt's'kyi and Iurii Shapoval.

⁷ For example the university textbooks on the history of Ukraine by Iaroslav Hrytsak and Nataliia Iakovenko.

⁸ *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukraïny: Materialy Vseukraïns'koï naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2005); *Druha svitova viina i dolia narodiv Ukraïny: Materialy Vseukraïns'koï naukovoï konferentsii* (Kiev 2007).

Poles in 1941, and the 1946 pogrom in Kielce are topics of public discussion.⁹ This shows that Poland is assuming responsibility for historical remembrance.

The omission of everything Jewish in official Ukrainian historiography cannot be explained solely by the continued existence of the mono-cultural Soviet approach to history. Ukrainian society seems incapable or unwilling to perceive its national history as a history of various cultures. The “other” tends to be excluded and viewed as something alien. Apparently, it is more comfortable to talk about “us” and “others”, for example about “our Great Famine” and about “the others’ Holocaust”.¹⁰ A certain narrative is taking shape, in which the Holocaust does not appear. This is leading to a situation in which Ukrainian society, especially the younger generation, does not know the background to the Holocaust in Ukraine. A notion has even taken hold that the Holocaust took place exclusively in Western Europe and is not of any importance to Ukraine.¹¹ The generally acknowledged, indisputable fact, as depicted in numerous Western and Ukrainian works of historiography, that the primary victims of the German occupation in Ukraine and other European countries were the Jews is being ignored or withheld.¹² What is more, in recent times, the Great Famine in Ukraine is increasingly being called “the Ukrainian Holocaust”. The fact that the Jews were the Nazis’ chief victims is being obscured.¹³

Liberal historians in Ukraine and abroad, independent publications, non-government organisations are working to counter this simplification.¹⁴ They clearly understand the Holocaust in Ukraine as an integral part of Ukrainian history. But they are not supported by the state, or only insufficiently so, and therefore have only little influence on public opinion. With the subordination of academia to political interests, Ukrainian historiography as an institution is continuing the Soviet tradition.

⁹ See the detailed article by Anna Vylyehala, “Karusel’ iz susidamy”, *Krytyka* (April 2008). On Jedwabne and Kielce, see Jan Gross, *Neighbors* (Princeton 2001) and idem, *Fear* (New York 2008).

¹⁰ On 19 June 2008, the Ukrainian translation of Alain Besançon’s *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah* was presented. During his speech, the well-known historian Iurii Shapoval told the audience that it was important to make known in Europe “our” Ukrainian Holocaust, by which he meant the Great Famine.

¹¹ See, for example, Olena Ivanova, “Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam’iaty pro Holokost v Ukraïni”, *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2004); Wilfried Jilge, “Competing Victimhoods-Post-Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II”, in E. Barkan, Elizabeth Cole, Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History-Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig 2007).

¹² Dieter Pohl, *Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich 1997); Ray Brandon, Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington 2008); Dieter Pohl, “Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Western Ukraine – A Research Agenda”, in Barkan et al., eds., *Shared History – Divided Memory*.

¹³ On the brutality and totality of the Holocaust in Ukraine, see, for example, Omer Bartov, *Erased. Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton 2007); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005); Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews 1941–1944* (Jerusalem 1990); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

¹⁴ Barkan et al., eds., *Shared History – Divided Memory*; Brandon, Lower, eds., *Shoah in Ukraine*. Those particularly worthy of mentioning are the periodicals *Krytyka* and *Ī*, the Committee Babii Jar, die Association of National Minorities, the Ukrainian Centre of Holocaust Studies, the teachers’ association Nova Doba, and the publishing house Dukh I Litera.

The Shoah in Classroom Instruction

No less important than research into the Holocaust is discussion of the topic in school so that the memory of the fate of Ukrainian Jewry is preserved and passed on to future generations. Starting in the first half of the 1990s, the Holocaust was included in the official school curriculum, to be precise: in the basic course "History of Ukraine and World History". In 2000, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine recommended universities introduce a special course on the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine and Europe. This decision was apparently motivated by the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000, at which Ukraine gave its approval to a declaration to preserve the memory of the Holocaust through research and education.¹⁵ Since 2006, questions on the history of the Holocaust have been included in the final examinations of general-education schools.

Although all of the preconditions have been formally met, the Holocaust can hardly be taught in Ukrainian schools. First, the curriculum does not provide enough time for the topic. The Holocaust is to be handled in just one class as part of the more general topic "National-Socialist Occupation Regime". Second, official textbooks lack compelling explanations of the Holocaust as part of Ukrainian history.¹⁶ Here, too, the Soviet tradition of maintaining silence on the Holocaust is being continued. In Soviet textbooks, the Holocaust was not even mentioned. Yurii Komarov, a teacher and training specialist from Kiev, has compared the treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks from Ukraine, Germany, and Great Britain. He has noted that, under such conditions, it can hardly be expected that Ukrainian pupils see the connection between Babi Yar and the Holocaust.¹⁷ In a study of how Ukrainian pupils receive the Holocaust, Professor Elena Ivanova of Kharkiv concluded that the Holocaust was for youth an abstract event without any kind of connection to Ukrainian national memory.¹⁸

Since the mid-1990s, the non-state education sector in Ukraine has been a source of invaluable impulses. Step by step, institutions such as the Committee Babi Yar, the Association of National Minorities of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, the history teacher association Nova Doba, the centre Tkuma are working towards changing official education policy and embed within Ukrainian society an awareness of the responsibility to remember the Holocaust. With almost no state support, these organisations have developed a system for conveying the history of the Holocaust. They organise educational-methodology seminars for teachers and university instructors, work with schoolchildren and university students, hold competitions and summer schools, and facilitate internships in international Holocaust centres. In addition, they publish instruction materials that go far beyond official curricula and textbooks. Numerous teachers and instructors have since used them. The state does not place any obstacles in the way of teachers who want to learn more about the topic

¹⁵ *Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* (29 January 2000): <www.dccam.org/Projects/Affinity/SIF/DATA/2000/page1192.html>.

¹⁶ Vil'frid Il'he [Wilfried Jilge], "Zmahannia zhertv", *Krytyka* (May 2006); Ivanova, "Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam'iaty"; Fedir Turchenko, *Novitnia istoriia Ukraïny. Chastyna persha 1917–1945* (Kiev 1994); Iu. Komarov, "Formal'ni mozhlyvosti: mistse temy Holokostu v navchal'nykh kursakh MON Ukraïny", *Informatsiino-pedahohichniy Biuletën Ukraïns'koho tesntru vyvchennia istorii Holokostu Uroky Holokostu*, 2, 14 (2008).

¹⁷ Komarov, "Formal'ni mozhlyvosti".

¹⁸ Ivanova, "Konstruiuvannia kolektyvnoi pam'iaty".

of the Holocaust. Unlike in Soviet times, the Holocaust is not taboo. However, discussion of the topic in school is not given any special support.

In Western Europe, it is widespread practice to use the study of the Holocaust to instill ethnic and religious tolerance in younger generations. Ukrainian NGOs are therefore able to receive financial support from abroad. Important partners for Ukrainian NGOs are the Anne Frank Museum, the Dutch government, and the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.¹⁹ Such projects attract little attention in Ukraine. NGOs represent a significant segment of Ukrainian civil society, but, unlike those in other countries, they receive little state support. Whereas the partner institutions of the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, such as the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo and the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, receive state funding, in Ukraine, there is a complete lack of moral, institutional, or financial assistance from the state.

The Holocaust in Politics and Society

In Ukraine, there is no official remembrance of the Shoah. There is no state museum of the history of the Holocaust. The sites where the mass shootings took place are not always indicated. At Babi Yar, there is no memorial complex. January 27, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, is not officially observed in Ukraine. All of this, although Ukraine signed the Stockholm Declaration in 2000.

The numerous existing monuments and memorial plaques that indicate where there ghettos or mass shootings took place can all be traced back to Jewish communities, non-state entities, and individual persons and donors.²⁰ However, these memorials, according to Omer Bartov, are located on the periphery of public memory.²¹ To date, the state has shown no willingness at least to maintain these memorials. The overview of research and education policy has already demonstrated that the Ukrainian government has no interest in promoting a discussion of Jewish life and the Holocaust in Ukraine.

After 1991, monuments and museums were established for the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.²² It is as if national monuments were being built on top of the history of the Jews during the war, in order to make it easier to forget the “other victim–nation”. Like the Soviet government before it, the Ukrainian government is obscuring the fact that the Holocaust’s victims were Jews.

¹⁹ This working group, with government and NGO representatives from 25 European and non-European countries, was founded in 1998 as the result of an initiative by Sweden.

²⁰ To be highlighted here are Borys Hydaleyvych, with whose support 22 commemorative plaques were put up to honour the murdered Jews of Odessa and Transnistria, and Il’ia Kabanchyk, who independently installed dozens of commemorative plaques in Galicia, Volhynia, and Podolia. Andrij Portnov, “Pluralität der Erinnerung. Denkmäler und Geschichtspolitik in der Ukraine”, in *Geschichtspolitik und Gegenerinnerung. Krieg, Gewalt und Trauma im Osten Europas* [= Osteuropa 6/2008], pp. 191–204.

²¹ Bartov, *Erased*, pp. 208–209.

²² The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, a primarily Galician phenomenon before the war, and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which developed in Nazi-occupied Volhynia, were authoritarian and antisemitic right-wing movements. Their on-again, off-again collaboration with the Germans made them both highly controversial.

Most politicians do not see the Holocaust as a part of Ukrainian history, but as a tragedy of another people, which is also responsible for commemorating it.

In public, the topic of the Holocaust is hardly discussed. Instead of remembrance of the Holocaust, there is a looming “competition of victims”.²³ Some “researchers” weigh the number of dead from the Great Famine against the number of dead in the Holocaust and have coined the incorrect designation “Ukrainian Holocaust”.²⁴ It is thoroughly justifiable to analyse the mechanisms and basic features of the Great Famine and the Holocaust in comparative manner, but an equation of the two is fully inappropriate.

The omission of the Holocaust in Ukraine leads back to the fact that Ukraine does not accept any responsibility for the past, because neither the National-Socialist, nor the Stalinist crimes have been legally or historically assessed in full. Thus a usable model for remembering the history of the 20th century and the Second World War remains missing.²⁵

German historian Wilfried Jilge believes that the shortage of information on the Holocaust and on Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the German occupation prevents Ukrainians from seeing not only the “dark side” of national Ukrainian history but also the courage and selflessness of those Ukrainians who rescued Jews.²⁶ The way Ukrainian historiography concentrates on the nation-state and the mono-ethnic concept of history is preventing the rest of the world from overcoming stereotypes and prejudices concerning the “antisemitic Ukrainians”.²⁷

A Way Out of a Dead End

Remembrance culture in Ukraine has reached a dead end. The only way out is not through continued adherence to totalitarian models of remembrance that allow only black and white but no grey tones. What is needed is an open discussion led by the desire to accept the “other” as well. Perhaps Wilfried Jilge is right to assume that the sum of the different wartime experiences – those of the Ukrainians, Jews, the Crimean Tatars, Poles, and others – would serve national consolidation in Ukraine more than official declarations that allow for only one reading of history.²⁸ Unconnected, isolated histories lead to the expression of memories that are isolated from one another. Each is in and of itself biased. The risk that aggression and intolerance in Ukrainian society will increase is considerable. The only solution is to accept history responsibly and to promote the exchange and reconciliation of competing narratives. The German historian Guido Knopp has written that the Holocaust is a part of German history and a part of his personal history, and that every person bears responsibility for remembering the past.²⁹ Ukrainian historiography still faces the task of assuming this responsibility.

Translated by Stephan Lang, Toronto

²³ Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”; Johan Ditch [Johann Dietsch], “Poboriuiuchy Niurnbergz'ku istoriografiiu Holodomoru”, *Holokost i suchasnist'*: Naukovyi chasopys Ukraïns'koho centru vyvchennia istorii Holokostu, 1 (2008); Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor*.

²⁴ Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor*.

²⁵ Alain Besançon: *Lycho stolittja. Pro komunizm, nacyzm ta unikal'nist' Golokostu* (Kiev 2007); Vyljegala, *Karusel'*.

²⁶ Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁷ Komarov, “Formal'ni mozhlyvosti”; Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁸ Jilge, “Competing Victimhoods”; Il'he, “Zmahannia zhertv”.

²⁹ G. Knopp, *Kholokost* (Kharkiv 2006).