

Ursula Woolley,

Ukrainian Institute London

ursulawoolley@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4509-378X>

WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN UKRAINE BEFORE AND AFTER 24 FEBRUARY 2022: AN OUTSIDE VIEW

The article aims to discern whether and how the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine has shown, from an external perspective, signs of change since 24 February 2022.

It looks at approaches taken in research published on the topic in Ukraine before and since 24 Feb 22. The historical context includes a glance at the longer-term historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine, from abroad as well as domestically. The importance of the wider context requires a look at some issues and debates in memory politics and public history. The article considers all this material in the context of recent historiography from outside Ukraine.

There have been frequent surveys of the academic literature on the Holocaust in Ukraine, including some published since 24 February 2022. The novelty of this article consists in taking an early look at the apparent effects of the full-scale invasion on the scholarship in this field, with an external perspective which inevitably perceives context differently.

The article argues that the experience of the invasion and occupation, direct and indirect, may for a cross-section of scholars inspire new understanding and scholarship, however much unlooked for. It argues that scholarship in the field continues to come closer to considering and understanding trauma inflicted and undergone; that Russian propaganda is well-resourced and impactful; and that the new trauma of the new war helps and hinders equally public discussion and wider public understanding, domestically and internationally.

Keywords: Holocaust, Historiography, Trauma, Memory politics, Epistemic imperialism.

Introduction

This article looks from an external perspective at the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine before and after 24 February 2022. It asks whether and how history-writing about the Holocaust in Ukraine has

changed as a result of what has been widely, though not universally, identified as a political and cognitive inflection point.¹

It argues that real-time information about and sometimes direct experience of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine changes perception and perspective for historians and their readers, though in a number of different ways. Some scholarly approaches now build directly on this first hand, phenomenological information and some approaches seek more distance.

This article considers history-writing on the Holocaust in Ukraine in the context of public history and commemoration, memory politics and information politics. Ignoring the relationship between these areas might achieve more research focus, but at the cost of distorting the accuracy of the picture we see.

Alongside the discipline of history sit the field of public history (the analysis of materials directed at a non-specialist audience, including here the teaching of history in schools) and the field of memory politics.² Memory politics has traditionally been denigrated by scholars of history and of politics, but, because of the long history of expansionist “smyslokratiya” from imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, it remains central to our understanding of history, politics, thought and society in Ukraine.³ Historiography in Ukraine and on Ukraine appears, from a differently located external standpoint, almost inconceivably vulnerable to cross-border and international memory politics.

It is possible to make the case that the history of historiography in Ukraine, its favoured approaches and emphases, is the history of the response to Russian information autocracy. This article draws attention to the ways in which certain historical approaches, for example an emphasis on the analysis of diaries, or on intellectual history, address, whether consciously or unintentionally, different forms of external epistemic imposition.⁴

¹ Stuart Coles et al., “Seven Ways Russia’s War on Ukraine Has Changed the World,” Chatham House, February 20, 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/02/seven-ways-russias-war-ukraine-has-changed-world>, para. 1.

² Андреа Льов, “Освіта про Голокост в часи війни Росії проти України,” *Україна Модерна*, Січень 8, 2024, дата звернення Липень 1, 2024, <https://uamoderna.com/backward/transkrypt-dyskusiyi-yakavidbulasya-pid-chas-kruglogo-stolu-osvita-pro-golokost-v-chasy-vijny-rosiyyi-proty-ukrayiny/>.

³ The coinage “smyslokratiya” means a polity of “rule by meaning” or “rule by thought”. Ероп Холмогоров, “Происхождение смыслократии,” Viperson, дата звернення Червень 22, 2024, <http://viperson.ru/articles/egor-holmogorov-proishozhdenie-smyslokratii>.

⁴ Scholars in the field have called for more use of methods from social and behavioural sciences as a way of analysing and conceptualising the processes referred to both in testimonials and in official documents. For example, Maksym Hon in discussion in “Форум: Голокост в Україні: як (не)пишуть історію злочину,” *Україна Модерна* 34 (2023): 38–39.

During the Holocaust in Ukraine (1941–1944), between 1.4–1.6 million Jews were murdered. John-Paul Himka describes three phases to this mass killing: first, anti-Jewish violence in the summer of 1941, immediately after the Nazi invasion; second, between early 1942 and the summer of 1943, the rounding up of Jews for execution in mass shootings or for deportation to the death camp at Bełżec; third, in the winter of 1943–1944, the killing by UPA of surviving Jews, placed by UPA in labour camps.⁵

Trauma, “information autocracy” and “epistemic imperialism”

Three interconnected factors condition writing and reading in this field. I will take first the nature and extent of information influence exercised from Russia, on Ukraine and internationally in respect of Ukraine. Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman have described Russia (and the Soviet Union) as an “information autocracy” or “spin dictatorship.”⁶ The long-time Kremlin strategist Vladislav Surkov has written similarly of “Russia as an *organism of meaning-formation and ideational influence*, saying what it does and not doing what others say.”⁷ So control of information and of systems of meaning is central to politics as conducted within Russia, and from Russia internationally.

The second and related factor is “epistemic imperialism.” David G. Lewis, examining the influence on political thought in Moscow in recent years of the ideas of the Nazi German jurist Carl Schmitt, underscored the importance to this worldview of “discursive sovereignty.”⁸ According to this worldview, for a hegemonic state (Russia, in this example), discursive sovereignty is exercised not only internally but also over the neighbouring states over which regional sovereignty is assumed. Additionally, “discursive sovereignty” includes as a corollary the exclusion from these neighbouring states of external normative epistemic influence as well. The anthropologist Maria Sonevsky draws our attention to the long history of “knowledge production between centres (often correlating to the hubs of former or present

⁵ John-Paul Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2021), 13–14.

⁶ Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022); Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, “A Theory of Informational Autocracy,” *Journal of Public Economics* 186 (2020): 104–158.

⁷ Владислав Сурков, “Национализация будущего,” Surkov.info, Грудень 6, 2006, <https://surkov.info/nacionalizaciya-budushhego-polnaya-versiya/>, para. 59.

⁸ David G. Lewis, *Russia's New Authoritarianism: Putin and the Politics of Order* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 58–59, 185–186; Carl Schmitt, “Ethic of State and Pluralistic State,” in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1999), 206.

empires).”⁹ That is, other imperial or former imperial centres have tended surprisingly often to take Russia’s long history of regional discursive imposition at face value. Vitalii Chernetsky writes about “an entrenched pattern of epistemic injustice towards Ukraine.”¹⁰ He also cites Nora Berenstain’s concept, pertinent to our topic in this article, of the “double-bind” of “epistemic exploitation.” Epistemic exploitation is defined as:

having to choose between allowing ignorance and false claims about marginalized people to go unchallenged, or providing epistemic labour in the knowledge that it is improbable that the dominantly situated knowers will change their understanding (and may well refuse to treat their knowledge claims and ways of knowing as legitimate).¹¹

The third factor conditioning the development of this field is the personal and societal, direct and inherited effect of trauma. Gilad Hirschberger writing in *Frontiers of Psychology* in 2018 about “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning” notes that:

For victims, the memory of trauma may be adaptive for group survival, but also elevates existential threat, which prompts a search for meaning, and the construction of a trans-generational collective self. For perpetrators, the memory of trauma poses a threat to collective identity that may be addressed by denying history, minimizing culpability for wrongdoing, transforming the memory of the event, closing the door on history, or accepting responsibility.¹²

Inviting more confrontation with these issues and these histories which are characterised by tending to resist confrontation, the Tkuma Institute, the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien and Prisma Ukraina assembled a workshop in Dnipro in 2019 entitled: *After Violence: the (Im)Possibility of Understanding and Remembering*.¹³

⁹ Maria Sonevytsky, “What is Ukraine? Notes on Epistemic Imperialism,” *Topos* 2 (2022): 22.

¹⁰ Vitaly Chernetsky, “Confronting Epistemic Injustice: Centering Ukraine in the Paradigm Shift in East European Studies,” in *A World Order in Transformation? A Comparative Study of Consequences of the War and Reactions to These Changes in the Region*, ed. Ninna Mörner (Stockholm, 2024), 23.

¹¹ Chernetsky, “Confronting Epistemic Injustice,” 26; Nora Berenstain, “Epistemic Exploitation,” *Ergo* 3 (2016): 570.

¹² Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1.

¹³ “After Violence: the (Im-)Possibility of Understanding and Remembering,” Forum Transregionale Studien, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de/veranstaltungen/kalender/details/after-violence-the-im-possibility-of-understanding-and-remembering>.

Structure of Article

Bearing in mind the foundational points above about information autocracy, epistemic imperialism and trauma, the rest of this article is set out as follows. First it looks at “the state of the field” preceding 24 February 2022, in the context of characteristic instances of local historical politics and relevant emphases in political narrative from Moscow pertaining at the time. Then it turns back and looks at the journey in history-writing and historical politics to get to this point, from Stalin-era manipulation of the official narrative and suppression of public discussion to post-Maidan motivation for harder conversations and a gradually but inconsistently widening awareness of the ubiquity of Moscow propaganda. The next section turns now to the present and to the evolution of the field since 24 February 2022. It looks at the writing and reading of Holocaust history and Holocaust testimony in the circumstances of the new war, at new and re-emerging instances of tropes connected with the Holocaust in propaganda, at the historical approaches which now innovate, and at recent Ukraine-based critiques of the state of the field. The conclusion notes shifts in perceptions of the topic and signs of shifts in historical approaches.

As always, and still especially on the subject of Ukraine, positionality makes a difference. This article expresses an external view. It asserts the importance of geography (I write about debate in Ukraine, from abroad) and of discursive context as limiting, though sometimes also differently enlightening, factors. I write in the English-language discursive context of the UK, about debate in and about Ukraine of which I am an external observer, with the impact on perspective which that implies.¹⁴

2021: the state of the field “On the Eve”

This section takes a snapshot of the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine in the year or so before 24 February 2022. It surveys examples, and critiques, of approaches current at the time. It looks at the public history/historical politics context and the broader international and information war context. Having created this picture of a point in time, in the next section we turn back and see the paths taken to reach this point. Then we turn the clock forwards again and look at changing debate and perceptions since 24 February 2022. Looking at a point in time draws our attention to the material differences in understanding and in depth of knowledge between different perspectives on the same subject.

¹⁴ Maria Sonevtsky writes: “Epistemic imperialism is the hubris of believing that what one knows or studies from a privileged perspective, as within the Anglophone academy, can be exported wholesale to contexts about which one knows little or nothing”. Sonevtsky, “What is Ukraine?,” 22.

New history-writing: bringing the past into focus

In our field by this stage, studies now concentrate on perpetration: detailing the roles played by non-Jewish local inhabitants in organising and helping to carry out the mass killing of Jews in Ukraine. Roman Shliakhtych uses sources from Yad Vashem and from Yahad-In Unum to consider the involvement of locally-recruited auxiliary police in the mass killing of Jews in Reichskommissariat Ukraine.¹⁵ Aleksandr Kruglov examines the roles taken by local policemen and “headmen” in organising the mass killing of the Jews of Lenindorf in what at the time of writing this article is the left-bank, Russian-occupied part of Kherson Oblast.¹⁶ John-Paul Himka’s English-language *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA’s Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944* is also published at this point.¹⁷ Where Kruglov’s study considers only those in positions of (modest) authority in one small settlement and Shliakhtych’s study considers only the auxiliary police, recruited by the occupiers to help them, Himka limits himself similarly, though on a larger scale, by only considering members (narrowly or more loosely defined) of the OUN and UPA. Progress in sharing (and accepting) a clearer understanding of who-did-what-to-whom is achieved by circumscribing any implicit invitation to the reader to attribute blame more widely.

Researching personal identity, whether felt or ascribed, and its consequences in wartime, complements the study of actions undertaken and professional roles fulfilled. Arguably it aids our understanding that studies of perpetration and studies of the experience of identity and allegiance are taken separately. In practice the two are closely connected. But while our topic remains highly “triggering” and so frequently instrumentalised, temporarily separating identity and perpetration may help us better understand the totality in the long run. Iurii Kaparulin and Mykhailo Domaskin write about the life of Arkadii Weispapir, a native of southern Ukraine fighting in the Red Army, who was one of those prisoners who survived the famous camp uprising and escape from Sobibór on 14 October 1943 and died in Kyiv in 2019.¹⁸ Jared McBride’s *The Many Lives and Afterlives of Khaim Sygal*:

¹⁵ Роман Шляхтич, “Залучення членів української допоміжної поліції до масових убивств євреїв на території Райхскомісаріату «Україна»,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 13 (2021): 86–115.

¹⁶ Александр Круглов, “«Судный День» евреев Лениндорфа: архивные документы,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 13 (2021): 116–129.

¹⁷ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*.

¹⁸ Юрій Капарулін та Михайло Домаскін, “Між Радянським терором та Голокостом: досвід Аркадія Вайспіра (1921–2018),” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 13 (2021): 10–37.

Borderland Identities and Violence in Wartime Ukraine, which challenges and subverts a whole range of identity assumptions, points out through the life of one person all the different violent processes impacting on chosen or imposed identity at the time.¹⁹ Do we mentally extrapolate his experience across the different categories of actors discussed in other texts or do we compartmentalise him as an extraordinary one-off?

Another approach current in the field by 2021 is to look at economic or material motivations for acts of enmity and violence. Roman Mykhal'chuk studies the appropriation of Jewish property by non-Jews during the Nazi occupation and suggests that, for some, acquisitiveness was a motivating factor in assisting with or participating in the violent killing of the Holocaust.²⁰ Depending on the moral framework in operation at the time and the precise state of the relationship between in-group and out-group, rationalising one's own participation in violence on the basis of economic need may be both psychologically easier personally, more acceptable as a rationalisation to the in-group and a measure of the extent to which the other has already been distanced. Inter-group hatred (in this case, antisemitism) in this rationalisation is simultaneously present in practice and absent in discourse. Recall the shocking impact of the conversation between German daughter and mother in the 2023 film about Auschwitz, *The Zone of Interest*, about the opportunity to acquire the admired belongings of a neighbour whom they recall by name and who has now been taken away to be killed.²¹

So although it was by this pre-2022 stage possible to write with clarity and some precision about how non-Jewish Ukrainians played their part in the mass killing of Jews in Ukraine, there was still often more hesitancy, or less candour, or more over-simplification, in addressing the question of "why." Ilya Gerasimov advanced the argument in 2021, though directing it at Omer Bartov, that his detailed 2018 English-language study of the Holocaust in Buczacz had failed to answer that question.²² It is possible to take this also as a measure of the extent to which the politicisation of public discourse at this stage is still constraining debate. Once the topic ceases to be

¹⁹ Jared McBride, "The Many Lives and Afterlives of Khaim Sygal: Borderland Identities and Violence in Wartime Ukraine," *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 4 (2021): 547–567.

²⁰ Роман Михальчук, "Роль єврейської власності в динаміці Голокосту в генеральній окрузі «Волинь-Поділля»: фокус місцевого неєврейського населення," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 13 (2021): 38–85.

²¹ See: Jonathan Glazer, *The Zone of Interest*, Poland, US, UK: Film4, access, Polish Film Institute, 2023.

²² Ілля Герасимов, "Переосмислюючи геноцид: коли сусіди починають ненавидіти," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 13 (2021): 166–205; Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

a theme for the “discursive securitisation of historical identity,” it will be easier to assess and reassess causality, as research and social change invite that revision. Because the topic in 2021 remains politicised, the question of “why” can equally be interpreted as the question of “whose side you are on.”

Shamil Ramazanov and Feliks Levitas at this juncture explore that subject of taboo historically: the taboos of the mass shootings at Babyn Yar in particular and of the Holocaust in general during the Soviet period.²³ In that they attribute the reasons for these taboos to the nature of information control under Stalin, they are not breaking new ground: they note how people were silenced on the subject; how the expression of individual memories of events was suppressed; how these were replaced with selected tropes and approaches which fitted with the highly-controlled public narrative at the time.²⁴ They argue that it was this situation of totalitarian information control which prevented the writing in Ukraine of high-quality research on the Holocaust until after independence in 1991.²⁵ It seems that the combination of ready availability of sources alongside, primarily, personal motivation is a more likely reason, as argued by Himka considering earlier writing from outside Ukraine.²⁶ In their article, unlike the historians discussed above, already using analyses of political institutions and using approaches from political sociology and psychology, Levitas and Ramazanov adhere to the position which ascribes overall responsibility for the violence of the Holocaust in Ukraine to Hitler and his closest associates. They note, accurately in terms of our understanding of WWII but less constructively in terms of deepening understanding of the Holocaust in Ukraine, that “only” 30% of the victims of the lands occupied under the Nazi “New Order” were Jewish.²⁷

Volume 34 of the journal *Ukraina Moderna*, published by the University of Toronto Press in 2023, is referred to at various points in this article and can be considered a key collective assessment of the “state of the field” at this point shortly before Russia’s full-scale invasion.²⁸ The editors explain in the Foreword that much of the research it includes was written before

²³ Шаміль Рамазанов та Фелікс Левітас, “Бабин Яр. Голокост – табуовані теми радянської історіографії,” *Сторінки історії: зб. наук. пр.* 53 (2022): 113–130.

²⁴ Рамазанов та Левітас, “Бабин Яр. Голокост,” 115–116.

²⁵ Рамазанов та Левітас, “Бабин Яр. Голокост,” 125–126.

²⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 28.

²⁷ Рамазанов та Левітас, “Бабин Яр. Голокост,” 115.

²⁸ Омер Бартов та ін., “Форум: Голокост в Україні: як (не)пишуть історію злочину,” *Україна Модерна* 34 (2023): 17–75.

24 February 2022.²⁹ See the final section of this article, “The evolution of the field since 24 February 2022,” for a note on Iuri Radchenko’s reading of the volume.³⁰

Politics of public history and commemoration

Accusations of a “narrative of victimhood” were sometimes directed at Ukraine after 1991, in particular during the Iushchenko presidency from 2005–2010 in connection with initiatives making known the history of the Holodomor. In his article published in 2022, Heorhiy Kas’ianov continues to take a dim view of the public history approach to the Holocaust in Ukraine since 2014.³¹ Comparing treatments in Ukraine of the Holocaust with the Holodomor, he puts these two cataclysmic historical events explicitly in competition and therefore implicitly in opposition. Just as Levitas and Ramazanov employed an approach which ignored the possibility of non-elite agency, Kas’ianov employs an approach which, staying close to the confines of Soviet epistemic frameworks, reinforces identity binaries.

On the eve of the full-scale invasion, activity continues in the adjacent non-academic area of public commemoration. In Odesa, further development of memorials in the main public park commemorating local victims of the Holocaust is stalling.³² There is more open discussion of the history of antisemitism in the city, but the literal “setting in stone” of improvements to earlier monuments which were seen as overemphasising the local “Righteous Among the Nations” and underemphasising the actual Jewish victims is proving too difficult for progress to be fast.³³ Meanwhile in Kyiv, the internationally high-profile non-state “Babyn Iar Holocaust Memorial Centre,” mostly funded by oligarchs aligned and/or associated with Moscow, is under the political microscope.³⁴ At the beginning of January 2022, Vitalii Nakhmanovych notes in *Istorychna Pravda* Andrii Yermak’s formal authorisation of the rental of the building at Babyn Iar to the private

²⁹ Бартов та ін., “Форум: Голокост в Україні,” 10.

³⁰ Юрій (Амір) Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” *Україна модерна*, Січень 27, 2024, дата звернення Липень 1, 2024, <https://uamoderna.com/backward/vazhlyva-dyskusiya-u-vazhki-chasy/>.

³¹ Georgiy Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Holocaust in Ukraine as Cultural Memory: Comparison, Competition, Interaction,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 24, no. 2 (2022): 216–227.

³² Алена Балаба, “Прохоровский сквер в Одессе: разбитые таблички и сломанные деревья Праведников мира,” *Думська*, Август 17, 2021, дата обращения Август 1, 2024, <https://dumskaya.net/news/prohorovskiy-skver-v-odesse-razbitye-tablichki-i-149505/>, para. 5; “В Одесі біля ОДА побудують сквер з трьома меморіалами пам’яті,” *Українська правда*, Березень 10, 2021, дата звернення Серпень 1, 2024, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2021/03/10/7286193/>.

³³ Балаба, “Прохоровский сквер в Одессе;” “В Одесі біля ОДА побудують сквер.”

³⁴ Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, accessed August 27, 2024, <https://babynyar.org/en/about>.

foundation, keeping our attention on the support forthcoming for the project from the president's office.³⁵ Perceptions of the project have been a litmus test of perceptions of risk to Ukraine from Moscow's hybrid information war over the preceding years, and Nakhmanovych, who studied in Moscow, has been one of the clearest advocates for understanding the risks it poses.³⁶

The Holocaust in Ukraine in revanchist Russian discourse

Viewed close-up on the eve of the full-scale invasion, the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine is becoming more clearly understood, through the work at least of some specialists. Problems with earlier attempts at commemoration are addressed in public discourse, if far from resolved. There coexists with this the impression that some remain content with traditional frameworks of knowledge and causality, and some appear oblivious to the intentions and impact of Moscow's information war.³⁷

But maybe Moscow does now feel itself on weaker ground on this topic. In Timofei Sergeitsev's demagogic article for RIA-Novosti of April 2021 "trailing" and rationalising a violently repressive political approach to Ukraine to follow Moscow's invasion, the subject of antisemitism is mentioned explicitly only once, half way through – though certainly for many readers the "Nazi" and "fascist" epithets sprinkled liberally throughout will tend to imply it.³⁸ On the subject of antisemitism "practiced in Ukraine," Sergeitsev refers to the torchlight processions for Bandera's New Year's Day birthday and to the official national commemoration of those who had taken part in the Holocaust and also in the Ukrainian national underground.³⁹ Three months later, in the infamous "history lesson" speech delivered in July 2021 from a Covid-era Kremlin, the mass killing of Jews in Ukraine during WWII also receives only a passing mention ("later, during WWII, groupings of radical Ukrainian nationalists used Polonisation [*in western Ukraine – U. W.*] as a justification for acts of terror against the Polish, Jewish

³⁵ "Питанням Бабиного Яру опікується особисто голова ОП Єрмак, – історик Нахманович," *Історична правда*, Січень 5, 2022, дата звернення Липень 1, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2022/01/5/160747/>.

³⁶ See: Лана Самохвалова, "Віталій Нахманович, історик: Західна цивілізація створена через осмислення Голокосту," *Українформ*, Січень 29, 2020, дата звернення Липень 1, 2024, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2865316-vitalij-nahmanovic-istorik.html>, paras. 4–6.

³⁷ Keir Giles noted in his 2016 paper on Russian Information Warfare that "the aim in the initial [information] period of war is to incapacitate a state as much as possible before they realise the war has even started." Keir Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare* (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2016), 17.

³⁸ Тимофей Сергейцев, "Какая Украина нам не нужна," *РИА Новости*, Апрель 10, 2021, дата обращения Июнь 13, 2022, <https://ria.ru/20210410/ukraina-1727604795.html>.

³⁹ Сергейцев, "Какая Украина нам не нужна."

and Russian population”).⁴⁰ Putin’s *casus belli* speech on 24 February 2022 does, though, propose a putative threat to Crimea: “they will undoubtedly try to bring war to Crimea... just as members of the punitive units of Ukrainian nationalists and Hitler’s accomplices did during the Great Patriotic War.”⁴¹ The idea of the “denazification of Ukraine” causes dismay, alongside the confusion which suits the Kremlin, among western commentators: “to students of Jewish history it is a source of near incredulity that the same recurrent site of mass violence against Jews... is home to a fledgling democracy and an unlikely and inspiring Jewish president.”⁴²

What came before: the long road to shared clarity The foundations of the field

In 2022, surveying and categorising research on the Holocaust in Ukraine, and with a particular focus on the south of the country, Nadiia Ryzheva and Nataliia Suhats’ka divide it into work authored by foreigners; work by Soviet scholars writing between the 1940s–1980s; work by members of the Ukrainian diaspora; and work by scholars in Ukraine writing now.⁴³ In 2021, John-Paul Himka, in his abovementioned book on OUN and UPA involvement, categorised contributors to the study of the Holocaust in Ukraine as (in order according to the time at which they started to contribute, earliest first): Jewish survivors, mainly based in Israel; Ukrainian nationalist émigrés in North America and Western Europe; scholars based in communist-era Poland; Soviet propagandists; other (non-Ukrainian, non-Jewish) scholars in Germany and the US; and scholars and activists in post-1991 Ukraine.⁴⁴

Himka emphasises how availability and accessibility of sources marked and shaped the development of the field from the beginning.⁴⁵ He notes for example how Shmuel Spector in 1990 was the first person to combine in one study the use of German official documents with Jewish survival testimonies

⁴⁰ “Статья Владимира Путина «Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев»,” *Kremlin.ru*, Июль 12, 2021, дата обращения Апрель 29, 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

⁴¹ “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” *Kremlin.ru*, February 24, 2022, accessed August 29, 2024, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

⁴² David Myers, “The Ironies of History: The Ukraine Crisis through the Lens of Jewish History,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, March 9, 2022, accessed August 29, 2024, <https://katz.sas.upenn.edu/resources/blog/ironies-history-ukraine-crisis-through-lens-jewish-history>.

⁴³ Надія Рижева та Наталія Сугацька, “Сучасна українська історіографія Голокосту,” *Південний архів (історичні науки)* 37 (2022): 83.

⁴⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 21.

⁴⁵ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 69.

in his book about the Holocaust in Volhynia.⁴⁶ Before then, Raul Hilberg's important *The Destruction of the European Jews*, published in 1961, had drawn heavily on German sources.⁴⁷ By deriving from these sources a picture of apparent Jewish passivity and Judenräte collaborationism, Hilberg had "defined for years afterwards the starting assumptions with which other scholars approached the field as a result."⁴⁸

Another pattern in writing on this topic, and hardly surprising following the divisive trauma of the war, is of stories and histories recounted only as they relate to an ethnic or political group. Where narrative, psychological or political exigencies – or indeed moral discomfort – make the inclusion of other elements or participants difficult, they are omitted.⁴⁹ Himka notes that Polikarp Herasymenko's writing on the OUN during WWII, published in Canada in 1951, makes no mention at all of Jews or of any part of the Holocaust.⁵⁰ He draws our attention to the erroneous inferences made later by Aharon Weiss, writing in the 1970s and 80s: Weiss concluded, for example, that the Babii partisans were Ukrainian nationalist – because they were Ukrainian – when in fact they had been pro-Soviet; and that Jews who had gone into hiding in the forest had survived there because of the UPA, rather than, generally, in spite of them.⁵¹

Apart from the difficulty accessing sources and the issue of identity-specific perspectives our topic was also defined by Russia's approach to information control. Timothy Snyder describes how the post-WWII overarching Soviet narrative "submerged the Holocaust into a generic account of suffering" – because "the Jewish tragedy could not be enclosed within the Soviet experience and was thus a threat to post-war Soviet mythmaking."⁵² Other discursive cornerstones of this particular imposed narrative also contributed to the effective suppression of debate about and research into our topic. For example, the Stalin-era line that "Russia" had won WWII

⁴⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 25–26; Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews 1941–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The Federation of Volhynian Jews, 1990).

⁴⁷ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

⁴⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 23–24.

⁴⁹ Note Magocsi as a leading advocate of this approach more broadly. See: Paul-Robert Magocsi, *Ukraine: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ Г. Полікарпенко, *Організація українських націоналістів під час Другої світової війни*, 4-те доп. вид., ред. Б. Михайлюк (Канада, 1951); Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 30.

⁵¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust*, 26–27; Aharon Weiss, "Jewish-Ukrainian Relations in Western Ukraine During the Holocaust," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, eds. Peter Potichnyj and Howard Aster (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988), 409–420.

⁵² Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 335, 377.

discounted and removed from the discursive arena the fact that the Soviet, or subsequently Soviet, lands to the west of the RSFSR, including their previously numerous and significant Jewish populations, had suffered disproportionately worse in terms of loss of life than had Russia itself.⁵³ After the death of Stalin in 1953, disaffection with the Soviet Union in the then socialist countries it dominated was channelled, via a series of Moscow's special information operations, by using and encouraging antisemitism.⁵⁴ The possibility of any shared understanding of the past was prevented by a combination of discursive imposition from above and from outside, and the fomentation of intergroup distrust and dislike.

From 1991 to the Revolution of Dignity

This situation involving major restrictions on public debate and certainly on international debate pertained in Ukraine even during the dying years of the Soviet Union. Ryzheva and Suhats'ka note for example that wider awareness of the *Black Book* of survivor testimonies and correspondence assembled between 1944–1946 and edited by Vasilii Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg came only with its re-publication and wider distribution in 1991.⁵⁵

They note Anatolii Podol's'kyi's *kandydatura* defended in 1996 on *The Nazi Genocide and the Jews of Ukraine 1941–1944* as a first in post-Soviet Ukraine; and the *doktorantura* defended in 1997 by Feliks Levitas, likewise at the Institute of National Relations and Politics, on the *Jews of Ukraine During the Years of the Second World War* as the first doktorantura directly addressing the theme.⁵⁶ They note Oleksandr Marushchenko in 2003 as raising for the first time in Ukraine-based research the issue of the avoidance of the topic of WWII collaborationism in Ukraine.⁵⁷ Heorhiy Kas'ianov comments in his abovementioned 2022 article that

⁵³ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 335.

⁵⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 376.

⁵⁵ Рижєва та Сугацька, "Сучасна українська історіографія Голокосту," 83; Василій Гроссман и Ілья Еренбург, сост., *Черная книга. О злодейском повсеместном убийстве евреев немецко-фашистскими захватчиками во временно оккупированных районах Советского Союза и в лагерях Польши во время войны 1941–1945 гг.* (Київ: Оберіг, 1991).

⁵⁶ Рижєва та Сугацька, "Сучасна українська історіографія Голокосту," 84. Анатолій Подольський, "Нацистський геноцид щодо євреїв України 1941–1944 рр." (Дис. канд. іст. наук, Інститут національних відносин і політології НАН України, Київ, 1996); Фелікс Левітас, "Євреї України в роки Другої світової війни" (Дис. докт. іст. наук, Інститут національних відносин і політології НАН України, Київ, 1997).

⁵⁷ Олександр Марущенко, "Сучасна українська історіографія і проблема колабораціонізму в роки німецько-фашистської окупації України," *Сторінки воєнної історії України: зб. наук. ст.* 7 (2003): 47–62.

in these years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars and authors from elsewhere, in his description adepts of a generalised “western Holocaust religion,” were now pushing to fill the gaps in the Jewish history of Ukraine which were otherwise absent or inaudible.⁵⁸

Volodymyr V’iatrovych’s 2006 *OUN Attitudes Towards Jews: Forming a Position Against the Backdrop of a Catastrophe* is relevant both to Kas’ianov’s point about gaps and Marushchenko’s point about avoidance and defensiveness on the subject of collaborationism.⁵⁹ In his later career V’iatrovych will famously take an often-contentious and from some perspectives divisive national lead on historical politics and memory policy. In 2006 he still has an academic position in L’viv, at the Kryp’iakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies. In this 2006 work discussing OUN thought (rather than action), V’iatrovych emphasises the significance of policies which led to antisemitism in Poland, including in interwar Galicia; antisemitic Soviet initiatives; a connection between the assassination in 1926 in Paris of Symon Petliura — his Soviet-arranged assassin had been Jewish — and the intensification of an antisemitic mood among OUN networks — over and above the ideas which led to the violence, harm and antisemitism against Jews in Ukraine committed by Ukrainian people.⁶⁰ He retains, and this was widespread then, the use of binary Soviet passport identity categories, Ukrainian or Jewish, now seen to militate against the construction of civic nationhood. Having avoided the direct discussion of antisemitic violence, he nonetheless expresses the hope that his work “will improve mutual understanding and mutual respect between the two [!] nations.”⁶¹

Just as V’iatrovych in 2006 adhered firmly to one particular distorting historiographical approach (writing about thought with the consequence of avoiding writing about action), so Father Patrick Desbois, in the popular and non-academic *Holocaust By Bullets*, was in 2008 still adhering to the principle of the “real truth” of survivor testimony.⁶² It seems that just as it was not yet possible for V’iatrovych to write clearly about perpetration, in Desbois’s work a distinction is not yet clearly delineated between the limits of source validity for the historian and the different and separate therapeutic and moral value of survivor testimony. Also seeking an explanatory

⁵⁸ Kasianov, “Holodomor and the Holocaust in Ukraine,” 220.

⁵⁹ Володимир В’ятрович, *Ставлення ОУН до євреїв: формування позицій на тлі катастрофи* (Львів: Видавництво “Мс”, 2006).

⁶⁰ В’ятрович, *Ставлення ОУН до євреїв*, 100.

⁶¹ В’ятрович, *Ставлення ОУН до євреїв*, 101.

⁶² Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest’s Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, trans. Catherine Spencer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

causal framework in 2008 in *Harvest of Despair*, the historian Karel Berkhoff proposes that a “pervasive Soviet mentality militated against solidarity.”⁶³

To one side from our topic, but pertinent to it, in 2009 in *The Anti-Imperial Choice*, Iohanan Petrovskii-Shtern showed through literary analysis how, intersectionally, to be Jewish in Ukraine had often meant being anti-imperial, just as to be Ukrainian in Ukraine had often imposed comparable pressures and comparable choices, about assimilation as against retaining a different and more separate sense of self and of community.⁶⁴ By 2011 in *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams*, Charles King gives an unvarnished and matter-of-fact treatment of fluctuating antisemitism as one aspect of the history of the city.⁶⁵ Arguably, though, this is the privilege of the perspective of the non-resident researcher for whom the priority can be precision, rather than community relations or, equally, discursive security. Timothy Snyder had declared in *Bloodlands* (2010) that locally researching and narrating specifically the violent destruction of Jews on all these borderland territories between Soviet Russia and the Third Reich was a “civilisational challenge” laid down to those who now lived there.⁶⁶ This is what from a different perspective Heorhiy Kas’ianov had termed the requirement to follow a particular public and academic treatment of the Holocaust in order for Ukraine (and its neighbours) to “join Europe;” and what Petro Dolhanov more recently calls out as an important element of the external discursive structures used to “other” eastern Europe.⁶⁷

In 2011 was the 70th anniversary of the 29–30 September 1941 mass shooting of Kyivan Jews at Babyn Iar. In his foreword to the collection of papers from the academic conference marking the anniversary that October, Anatolii Podol’s’kyi notes that the government of the time (Mykola Azarov under the presidency of Viktor Ianukovych) had avoided public leadership

⁶³ Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁶⁴ Iohanan Petrovskii-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009). This was after the publication in 2005 of the English translation of Volodymyr (Ze’ev) Zhabotinsk’yi’s *The Five*, where the same point about the choice between assimilation or adhering to a separate (Jewish or Ukrainian) identity is set out by one of the characters. See: Володимир (Зеев) Жаботинський, *П’ятеро*, пер. Веніамін Білявський (Харків: Фоліо, 2020), 186–187.

⁶⁵ Charles King, *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams* (New York; London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011).

⁶⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 335. In 2023, Petro Dolhanov can articulate how this approach involved the “othering” of Eastern Europe (see next footnote).

⁶⁷ Petro Dolhanov, “Russian War, Neocolonialism and Holocaust Studies in Ukraine,” *Eastern European Holocaust Studies* 1 (1) (2023): 49–52.

on the subject of the anniversary altogether (Ianukovych's commemorative speech had not mentioned the antisemitic nature of the massacre).⁶⁸ The conference has reviewed contemporary approaches to the topic of Babyn Iar (the place name frequently refers in public and academic discourse synecdochally to the Holocaust in Ukraine as a whole) at the intersection, inescapable at the time, between academic and public history. Studying works of literature about Babyn Iar remains, as during the Soviet period, a way of coming closer to the lived experience of those involved.⁶⁹ Researching non-Jewish victim groups also still remains part of the mix.⁷⁰ The combination of post-WWII Soviet antisemitism and the conduct of the trial and punishment of perpetrators in circumstances of repressive Soviet information control is another theme.⁷¹ From outside Ukraine, the historian Jürgen Matthäus sets out the sequence of Nazi policy implementation in respect of Jews in Ukraine after 21 June 1941, and Karel Berkhoff argues that not enough is known about the actions and attitudes of non-Jewish Kyivans at the time of the September massacre: who helped their Jewish neighbours, who betrayed them, and how this happened in each instance.⁷²

This assemblage of Ukraine-based and non-Ukraine-based scholarship on our topic followed the years of the Iushchenko presidency when a single national memory policy had been accorded an important role for the first time since 1991 and the Holodomor had been a focus of public historical policy. Iaroslav Hrytsak also in 2011 discussed in the pages of *Krytyka* the original limited emergence, and associated disputes, in the 1980s

⁶⁸ Віталій Нахманович та ін., ред., *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього: матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції 24–25 жовтня 2011 р.* (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012). Oleksandr Hrytsenko seems to concur: he notes that little progress is made on Babyn Iar under President Iushchenko and makes no mention of it under President Ianukovych. See: Олександр Гриценко, *Президенти і пам'ять. Політика пам'яті президентів України (1994–2014): підґрунтя, послання, реалізація, результати* (Київ: К.І.С., 2017), 459–460.

⁶⁹ Борис Чорний, "Літературні свідчення масового знищення євреїв у Бабиному Яру," у *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього*, ред. Віталій Нахманович та ін. (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012), 198–210; Люба Юргенсон, "Спадщина Бабиного Яру в літературі," у *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього*, ред. Віталій Нахманович та ін. (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012), 211–220.

⁷⁰ Сергій Кот, "Учасники підпілля ОУН(м) – жертви Бабиного Яру (1941–1943)," у *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього*, ред. Віталій Нахманович та ін. (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012), 101–116.

⁷¹ Таня Пентер, "Під слідством за співпрацю: судове переслідування колаборантів у СРСР після Другої світової війни та злочинів у Бабиному Яру," у *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього*, ред. Віталій Нахманович та ін. (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012), 189–197.

⁷² Карел Беркгоф, "Бабин Яр: місце наймасштабнішого розстрілу євреїв нацистами в Радянському Союзі," у *Бабин Яр: масове вбивство і пам'ять про нього*, ред. Віталій Нахманович та ін. (Київ: Український центр вивчення історії Голокосту, 2012), 8–20.

among diaspora communities (non-Jewish and Jewish) in north America of an implicit comparison between the Holocaust and the Holodomor.⁷³ Hrytsak refers to a text written by Rafael Lemkin, the Lviv-educated author of the original post-WWII legal definition of genocide, shortly before his death (1959), but emerging only recently, as the first instance of this comparison (he does not cite the reference).

It was the following year, in 2012, before the next historical inflection point of the 2013–2014 Revolution of Dignity, that the Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine opened in Dnipro, integrating Jewish history municipally and regionally into the history of Dnipro, and nationally into the history of Ukraine and its Soviet and imperial past.⁷⁴

2014 and after

In 2014 Nelia Mel'nychuk publishes a survey of the recent historiography of the Holocaust in Reichskommissariat Ukraine.⁷⁵ She refers to Anatolii Podol's'kyi when she explains that until politicians give a stronger public lead on the treatment of collaborationism, researchers in Ukraine will not be able to proceed in this field with confidence.⁷⁶ The Revolution of Dignity appears to provide a discursive opportunity: widespread, though not universal, civic unity is on display throughout the country. Mel'nychuk argues that it is time to evaluate how much the study of the Holocaust in Ukraine has been integrated into the study of WWII in Ukraine overall, explaining that this may be a way of avoiding repeating the ethnic categorisations which reinforce ethnic divisions and, equally, reinforce cognitive

⁷³ Ярослав Грицак, "Голокост і Голодомор: виклики колективній пам'яті," *Критика* 1–2 (2011): 14–16, дата звернення Серпень 29, 2024, <https://krytyka.com/ua/articles/holokost-i-holodomor-vyklyky-kolektyvnyi-pamyati/print>.

⁷⁴ Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine, accessed August 27, 2024, <https://jhmuh.org/en/>. The Museum celebrates local Jewish social history and also devotes considerable space to the experience and statistics of the Shoah in Ukraine. It also points up instances of imperial-era and Soviet antisemitism. For an impression of its approach before 2022. See: Ursula Woolley, "The Securitization of Entangled Historical Identity? Local and National History Discourses in Dnipro During the Poroshenko Presidency," in *Official History in Eastern Europe: Transregional Perspectives*, eds. Korine Amacher, Andrii Portnov and Viktoriia Serhiienko (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2021), 319–348. Apart from the Tkuma All-Ukraine Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Dnipro, Nelia Mel'nychuk lists the other independent institutions conducting academic Holocaust research in the years preceding 2014 as: the Ukrainian Centre for the Study of the History of the Holocaust in Kyiv (<https://www.holocaust.kiev.ua/>), the Kharkiv Public Education Centre "Holocaust," now a part of the Kharkiv Holocaust Museum (<http://holocaustmuseum.kharkov.ua/>) and a Regional Centre for the Study of the Holocaust in L'viv. Неля Мельнічук, "Сучасна історіографія досліджень політики Голокосту на теренах Райхскомісаріату «Україна»," *Військово-історичний меридіан* 6 (2014): 27–28.

⁷⁵ Мельнічук, "Сучасна історіографія досліджень політики Голокосту," 24–36.

⁷⁶ Мельнічук, "Сучасна історіографія досліджень політики Голокосту," 31.

sticking-points. “Society (the «sotsium») in Ukraine has always been multi-ethnic and multi-confessional, so it cannot be divided into a Jewish historiography and a Ukrainian historiography.”⁷⁷ She lists themes of interest to historians in 2014 as: collaborationism; how local (auxiliary) police formations functioned; the fast-changing and “unstraightforward” “moods” of the local population; antisemitic propaganda; Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the (Nazi) “New Order.”⁷⁸ Despite this step change, the writing still, though, tiptoes around antisemitism as a motivation and around the discussion of concrete specific forms of participation in and responsibility for the mass killing of Jews.

Despite civic unity in one sense, though, there is a new urgency and forcefulness in national public history policy in response to Moscow’s annexation of Crimea and covert invasion of the Donbas. Iurii Amir Radchenko in 2016 reports in *Historians.in.ua* on his public discussion with Volodymyr V’iatrovych, now Director of the Institute of National Memory, about OUN attitudes to Jews “without [public] joint declarations.”⁷⁹ Radchenko is calling for more public directness about historical antisemitism (as he also does in his article about the role of Ukrainian auxiliary police in the Holocaust under Nazi occupation in the Donbas).⁸⁰ He notes that V’iatrovych has not been “spoilt by power” (in his new official national position) and that, whereas usually in his public appearances he is surrounded by supporters, in this instance he was happy to appear alone.⁸¹ Organising the public discussion in the first place was difficult, though: requests to the Museum of the History of WWII and to the head of the History Department at the Taras Shevchenko University (Ivan Patryliak) to host the event had gone unanswered in the first case and had been delegated and then refused in the second.⁸² V’iatrovych during the discussion now defended his position on the OUN like a politician, and even less like an academic than before, referring selectively to sources and professing ignorance of those

⁷⁷ Мельничук, “Сучасна історіографія досліджень політики Голокосту,” 26.

⁷⁸ Мельничук, “Сучасна історіографія досліджень політики Голокосту,” 32.

⁷⁹ Юрій (Амір) Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв: дискусія без «спільних декларацій»,” *Historians.in.ua*, Липень 3, 2016, дата звернення Серпень 29, 2024, <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1932-yurii-radchenko-stavlennia-oun-do-ievreiv-dyskusiia-bez-spilnykh-deklaratsii-chastyna-1>, part 1; Юрій (Амір) Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв: дискусія без «спільних декларацій»,” *Historians.in.ua*, Липень 5, 2016, дата звернення Серпень 29, 2024, <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1935-yurii-radchenko-stavlennia-oun-do-ievreiv-dyskusiia-bez-spilnykh-deklaratsii-chastyna-2>, part 2.

⁸⁰ Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв,” part 1, para. 1.

⁸¹ Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв,” part 1, para. 3.

⁸² Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв,” part 1, para. 3.

sources which might have obliged him to make modifications. Radchenko notes that Viatrovych dismisses more recent sources about Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust in Ukraine as part of a historiographical trend which sets out to blame Ukrainians.⁸³

Igor Shchupak, Founding Director at this point of the Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine, located in Dnipro, in 2016 sets out a proposed approach to national education on the subject of the Holocaust in Ukraine for the 75th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre.⁸⁴ His starting point, following the standard international pattern, is that the Holocaust has universal significance and that it was without historical precedent.⁸⁵ In Ukraine, though, it had its own particularities and there was a country-specific periodisation.⁸⁶ He names key points impersonally and neutrally, but directly, as the “process of the realisation of the Final Solution in Ukraine” and as the need to “consider separately... the attitude of the local population... to the destruction of Jews.”⁸⁷ Immediately following the point about the attitude of the local population to the destruction of Jews is his call that special attention should be given to the Ukrainian “righteous among the nations.” Individual agency is possible in any circumstances, and an example is set, and emphasised. Following that and on the same theme of agency is the requirement that the “main forms of Jewish resistance” also be taught.⁸⁸ The two interlocking issues for public history in Ukraine are firstly, how the subject of the Holocaust is taught in schools; and secondly, the question of repentance in Ukrainian society and how far the lessons of the Holocaust have been fully “taken on board.”⁸⁹

History-writing on our topic now reflects both a new confidence in exploring what was previously off-limits and a new awareness in public discourse, though not evenly distributed, of how conventional or

⁸³ Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв,” part 1, para. 6; Радченко, “Ставлення ОУН до євреїв,” part 2, para. 26.

⁸⁴ Ігор Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті: від наративу до осмислення й постановки суспільного питання про покаяння (до 75-ї річниці трагедії Бабиного Яру),” *Український історичний журнал* 4 (2016): 152–172, дата звернення Серпень 29, 2024, http://resource.history.org.ua/publ/UIJ_2016_4_12; Ігор Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті: від наративу до осмислення й постановки суспільного питання про покаяння (до 75-ї річниці трагедії Бабиного Яру)” (закінчення), *Український історичний журнал* 5 (2016): 176–201, дата звернення Серпень 29, 2024, http://resource.history.org.ua/publ/UIJ_2016_5_9.

⁸⁵ Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті,” 176.

⁸⁶ Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті,” 167.

⁸⁷ Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті,” 176.

⁸⁸ Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті,” 186.

⁸⁹ Щупак, “Уроки Голокосту в українській історичній науці та освіті,” 192.

unreconstructed approaches in narration had been used so successfully by Moscow, in Ukraine and internationally, in its covert invasion. Denys Shatalov challenges the convention about the suppression of the Holocaust in Soviet post-war narrative by pointing out how frequently it had been referred to, if not by name, in different individual post-war Soviet memoirs.⁹⁰ Andrii Usach, providing a different revisionist perspective, uses public court documents to examine how during the 1960s–1980s the Soviet state prosecuted former Nazi collaborators in Ukraine and tackled former Nazi collaborators now living abroad, as part of its ongoing control of the political threat to Soviet power from various national groups.⁹¹ Victoria Sukovata writes a historical-literary analysis of the “documentary” novella of a Jewish Soviet partisan doctor: history written as literary analysis indicates the influence on thought of different epistemic traditions, including Soviet information politics.⁹² Roman Romantsov compares the trajectories of the Holocaust in national memory policy and practice in Ukraine and Lithuania, concluding that Lithuania has made more progress than Ukraine, but not comprehensive progress.⁹³

Outside Ukraine, in 2016 Philippe Sands’ *East West Street* was influential in opening up the Jewish history of western Ukraine to a new generation of English language readers and in modelling both a warmer and a more confrontational public history dialogue about the Holocaust in Ukraine. Placing firmly in L’viv and L’viv Oblast the personal histories of Rafael Lemkin and Hersch Lauterpacht, the Jewish lawyers who coined the legal terms of “genocide” and “crimes against humanity” respectively, the book was an important act of recognition and an important challenge for Ukraine on the international stage.⁹⁴

In (and after) 2014, as in (and after) 2022, there is a spectrum of degrees of confrontation of the past in circumstances of new danger and potential and actual violence. This also depends on different degrees of involvement

⁹⁰ Denys Shatalov, “Non-Nipped Memory. The Holocaust in the Soviet War Memoirs,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 10 (2018): 127–188.

⁹¹ Андрій Усач, “Щоб вони більше не ходили по нашій святій землі: КДБ УРСР і політика пам’яті про місцеву колаборацію, 1960–1980-ті рр.,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 10 (2018): 42–64.

⁹² Вікторія Суковата, “Рецепция войны и Холокоста в советской послевоенной литературе: документальная повесть А. Цессарского «Записки партизанского врача»,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 10 (2018): 94–126.

⁹³ Роман Романцов, “Голокост в історичній політиці Литви та України 1991–2017,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 10 (2018): 12–41.

⁹⁴ Philippe Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity* (London: Weidenfeld&Nicholson, 2016).

in, and awareness of the implications of, public history as opposed to academic history. In January 2020 the religious affairs journalist Lana Samokhvalova interviews Vitalii Nakhmanovych for Ukrinform and their conversation addresses some of the big themes in public discourse on our topic at the time, though their differences in approach are framed as differences between “conservatives” and “liberals,” rather than as differences along other axes of debate.⁹⁵ They touch on, but do not explore in depth, the possibility of addressing in national narrative Ukrainian responsibility for the deaths of Ukrainian Jews during the Holocaust, in the context of a wider reckoning with the violence of the Soviet regime. Nakhmanovych makes the connection between Russia’s traditional interest in fomenting divisive identity politics in Ukraine and the outcry in Ukraine over the Babyn Iar Holocaust Memorial Center.⁹⁶ He is also sounding the alarm about Putin’s “Stalinist” ambitions to create an updated version of the Soviet Union: the interview takes place shortly after Putin’s diplomatically and presentationally successful visit to Israel for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.⁹⁷ President Zelens’kyi in this situation had turned down an invitation to take part.⁹⁸ Nakhmanovych and Samokhvalova together are setting out the national public discursive context and the international political context in which our field of research on the Holocaust in Ukraine is operating.

The evolution of the field since 24 February 2022

After 24 February 2022, Moscow’s “denazification of Ukraine” trope, meeting with surprise and confusion among English language audiences, often invited a response adducing President Zelens’kyi’s Jewish background.⁹⁹ In April 2022 a group of 17 Holocaust museums in north America, the UK and South Africa issued a joint statement condemning Russian war crimes in Ukraine.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Самохвалова, “Віталій Нахманович, історик.”

⁹⁶ Самохвалова, “Віталій Нахманович, історик,” para. 29.

⁹⁷ Самохвалова, “Віталій Нахманович, історик,” para. 12.

⁹⁸ Самохвалова, “Віталій Нахманович, історик,” para. 4.

⁹⁹ Marina Sapritsky-Nahum, “Putin’s War and the Making of a Ukrainian Jewry,” LSE Blogs, March 2, 2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2022/03/putins-war-and-the-making-of-a-ukrainian-jewry/>.

¹⁰⁰ “17 Museums Across the World Release Joint Statement Condemning Russian War Crimes in Ukraine,” Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, accessed August 29, 2024, <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2022/04/11/2420352/0/en/17-Museums-Across-the-World-Release-Joint-Statement-Condemning-Russian-War-Crimes-in-Ukraine.html>.

Historians (and their readers) in new circumstances

Anna Medvedovs'ka's monograph about the Holocaust in Ukraine in public thought and perception over the decades since WWII takes the most apt and pertinent title: *Chuzhoho Boliu ne Buvaie?* ("No such thing as another person's pain?" [which does not also touch me myself]).¹⁰¹ The book comes out in 2023 and in the preface she alludes to the new circumstances of invasion which change our reading of her writing. By investigating the Holocaust in Ukraine in public discourse and "historical memory" (and, often, its absence from those arenas) she sets out to understand what creates the propitious circumstances for the moments of honesty and clarity which then go on to improve collective understanding.¹⁰² "Reception studies" (how information is received, interpreted, absorbed) is as important in the writing of the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine as the issues of source availability and author perspective discussed in the previous section.¹⁰³ The possibility of psychological distancing from the extreme suffering and destruction of an outgroup must have been in operation during the Holocaust and is identified as integral to response among perpetrators.¹⁰⁴ The present war provides daily evidence of this human capacity, sometimes intentionally cultivated institutionally or politically, and sometimes experienced as an extreme stress response. Expressed as a question, though, Medvedovs'ka's title is simultaneously a challenge and a call to unity.

Her question shifts the debate forwards partly because it also "nails" so accurately a key question concerning our participation, or not, in the current war. In some instances, our awareness of the new war affects our reading — our perception and interpretation. Oleksandr Kruglov in 2022 looks at further documents recording the involvement of non-Jewish Ukrainians in killing Ukrainian Jews on the territory of Reichskommissariat Ukraine, this time in the settlement of Kalinindorf, now at the time of writing on the Russian-occupied left bank Kherson steppe.¹⁰⁵ Also on the subject of how destructive violence took place during the Holocaust in Ukraine,

¹⁰¹ Анна Медведовська, *Чужого болю не буває? Голокост в Україні в суспільній думці другої половини ХХ – початку ХХІ ст.* (Дніпро: Український інститут вивчення Голокосту "Ткума", 2023).

¹⁰² Медведовська, *Чужого болю не буває?*, 221.

¹⁰³ Ika Willis, "Reception Theory, Reception History, Reception Studies," *Oxford Research Encyclopaedias*, January 22, 2021, accessed August 29, 2024, <https://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-1004>.

¹⁰⁴ Hirschberger, "Collective Trauma," 1.

¹⁰⁵ Олександр Круглов, "Знищення єврейського населення в Калініндорфському єврейському національному районі восени 1941 р.," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 101–154.

Maksym Hon and Natalia Ivchuk write about the specific role and function of gender-based violence.¹⁰⁶

On the subject of fomenting the enmity which eases or encourages participation in the perpetration of violence and destruction, Roman Mykhal'chuk investigates the different social processes and arrangements used to encourage animosity towards the Jewish population in the Volyn town of Mizoch during Nazi occupation.¹⁰⁷ Petro Dolhanov analyses, from oral testimony, the different tropes which contributed to antisemitism among the Christian population of Western Volhynia during Nazi occupation.¹⁰⁸ In each case there are possible comparators or yardsticks in our current news consumption (about the processes used by Russian occupying forces) which help our understanding of the research and help us to see the potential non-academic applicability of our understanding.

Once there exists a shared feeling of enmity or animosity it affects, or can be used to motivate, other processes. Pavlo Khudysh looks at how the property of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust was distributed in post-WWII Carpathian Ukraine.¹⁰⁹ Daniil Sytnyk discusses how the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police were involved in the suppression of the Soviet Partisan resistance movement in Kyiv Okruh in 1941–1943.¹¹⁰ In all these instances discussed above, the “how” and “why” are central. Now it is so much clearer who took part in what violence, and in what capacity. The patterns of attribution and evasion of responsibility which characterised approaches to earlier versions of the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine are apparently now not completely absent, but less necessary.

If current experience, whether at first or second hand, makes it possible to write more incisively on our topic, our reading now of testimony from the time of the Holocaust is also different. Our news and social media feeds, and other more personal channels of communication, are full now of today's survivor and witness testimonies — though less, so far, of perpetrator

¹⁰⁶ Максим Гон та Наталя Івчук, “Жіноче «обличчя» Голокосту: гендерний аспект геноциду євреїв в Україні (1941–1944),” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 10–40.

¹⁰⁷ Роман Михальчук, “«Я був гірше ніж собака і весь час питаю чому так»: становище євреїв у Мізочі під час Голокосту,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 58–100.

¹⁰⁸ Петро Долганов, “«Інший/чужий»: образ євреїв у спогадах українських сусідів про Другу світову війну,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 41–57.

¹⁰⁹ Павло Худіш, “Післявоєнний сільський простір Закарпаття: конфіскація і розподіл майна вцілілих у Голокості євреїв, 1944–1945 роки,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 15 (2023): 42–59.

¹¹⁰ Даниїл Ситник, “«Bandenbekämpfung»: українська допоміжна поліція та її роль у придушенні радянського руху опору в генеральному окрузі Київ, 1941–1943,” *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 15 (2023): 10–41.

testimony. Roman Mykhal'chuk discusses the audio recording of the testimony of the Holocaust survivor Isaac Rosenblat, and what it tells us about society in Mizoch during the Nazi Occupation and Holocaust.¹¹¹ Anastasiia Simferovs'ka introduces a fragment from the memoirs of Ignacy Chiger, a survivor of the liquidation of the L'viv Ghetto, who recalls being a member of probably the only Jewish family in L'viv, of a pre-war Jewish population of about 100,000, of which both children had survived.¹¹² If current experience and new knowledge makes us more able as readers and researchers to engage with the specificity of the weakness, violence, failings and horror of the past, can texts of past testimony ease or facilitate our reception and absorption of the lessons of the testimonies of the present?

Some recent approaches respond more analytically. In their research, Oleksiy Honcharenko and Alina Ivanenko explicitly draw lessons about the administrative processes involved in enemy occupation.¹¹³ They examine archival documents showing how local (Ukrainian) administrative support for Reichskommissariat Ukraine was organised, and consider what this can teach us about patterns of behaviour under Russian enemy occupation in Ukraine today. Their approach claims a role for academic research in informing current public and policy debate. What is a productive and enlightening way to think about the life of other citizens of Ukraine under occupation now, and, consequently, what is a productive way to conceive of their reintegration in future?

Current circumstances of war have also made some scholarly tasks easier or less contentious. Nadiia Suhats'ka and Olena Kalitseva, in 2023 revisiting academic choices of terminology around the Holocaust in Ukraine, argue for its extreme form even by genocidal standards and argue, on the topic of genocide, in favour of preferring specificity over categorisation.¹¹⁴ Their approach does reclaim discursive space for study and academic debate beyond the noise of "participatory propaganda," and knee-jerk public discourse. Public political discourse from Ukraine since February 2022 has often used the term "genocidal" to describe the motivation behind

¹¹¹ Роман Михальчук, "Свідчення Ісаака Розенблата як джерело вивчення Голокосту та місцевої історії," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 15 (2023): 60–99.

¹¹² Анастасія Сімферовська, "Хронотоп п'їтми: український переклад фрагменту спогадів Ігнація Хігера," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 15 (2023): 100–131.

¹¹³ Oleksiy Honcharenko and Alina Ivanenko, "Participation of Local Administration Bodies of Provisional Military Administration and Reichskommissariat «Ukraine» in Ensuring Holocaust Measures (1941–1944)," *Eminak* 41, no. 1 (2023): 181–200, accessed September 2, 2024, <https://www.eminak.net.ua/index.php/eminak/article/view/629>.

¹¹⁴ Наталія Сугацька та Олена Каліцева, "До питання термінологічної бази Голокосту," *Південний архів (історичні науки)* 41 (2023): 84–92.

the full-scale invasion. It is significant, and likely to be missed in circumstances of war, that whereas in the past (and elsewhere in this text) it has been essential to understand how in Ukraine, because of the nature of Russian “smyslokratiya,” it has been hard or impossible to delineate (permeable) boundaries between academic discourse and public discourse, and public discourse and political discourse, Ukraine now has the discursive space (and this is a key victory) to progress both discussions of genocide in scholarly terms and use of the term “genocide” as (accurate) political epithet simultaneously. The “smyslokratiya” in some important respects is losing ground.

The profound change in wider perception caused by the full-scale invasion invites reframing by specialists from elsewhere too. Omer Bartov has looked ahead to the rearticulation of national memory in Ukraine, comparing the national “historical memory journeys” of Germany and Ukraine in respect of the Holocaust and asking whether in practice a “single national historical narrative” is always a “good thing.”¹¹⁵ Peter Pomerantsev early in 2022 had made a contrasting case. He had argued then that neither Germany nor Russia had, despite appearances – from some perspectives – to the contrary, done a good job truly of coming to terms with their roles in WWII, and that they were more similar in their approach to memory than either country might like to think.¹¹⁶ Iurii Amir Radchenko, in his article on the 2023 *Ukraina Moderna* volume discussed further below, argues more convincingly, drawing on Pierre Nora, for the relevance to Ukraine of the French approach to the commemoration of the Holocaust.¹¹⁷ In that instance, the integration of Jewish history into the national historical narrative and the development and expression of a French Jewish identity happened simultaneously, rather than consecutively; and lobbying from various under-represented social/ethnic groups, surely in some respects comparable to the situation in Ukraine over recent decades, had led to the new articulation of a more multi-confessional, multi-ethnic “national memory.”¹¹⁸ But again, as with the use of the term “genocide” in current political discourse, it is remarkable that Bartov now comparing Ukraine and Germany can be

¹¹⁵ Omer Bartov, “Should There Be One Universal Narrative for Remembering the Holocaust? On a Universal Narrative of the Holocaust and Remembering the Past in Ukraine,” *East European Holocaust Studies* 1 (1) (September 2023): 13–16. Here Bartov does not comment on the relevance of the issues of propaganda and information autocracy pertaining from politics.

¹¹⁶ Peter Pomerantsev, “What, Actually, is Germany’s Problem with Russia?,” *Zeit Online*, February 13, 2022, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2022-02/peter-pomerantsev-german-russian-relations-ukraine-conflict>.

¹¹⁷ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 14.

¹¹⁸ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” paras. 14–16.

grist to the mill of debate, whereas during “peak memory wars” that would not have been the case.

**Memory politics in hybrid “battle-fog:”
more clarity about Moscow’s “empire of meaning”**

Just because the arena for academic debate on contentious subjects in Ukraine now appears both bigger and, even in circumstances of war, somehow more secure, that does not mean that points of contention at the interface with other discursive arenas have either completely gone or are no longer relevant. The name given to the academic conference planned for autumn 2023, “Do we need Babyn Iar after Bucha?,” appeared both to play into the hands of that not necessarily pro-Ukraine narrative taking inappropriate pleasure in a “competition of victimhood,” and, to the casual reader (and so much of our information consumption in today’s “attention economy” can be even inadvertently casual), to imply antisemitism.¹¹⁹ In this interpretation, and in the currency of public discourse vulnerable to propagandistic manipulation, Bucha discursively “stands for” “Ukrainian” suffering where Babyn Iar “stands for” Jewish suffering (note the either/or identity categorisations governing our reading again).

Was this an academic intellectual provocation drafted without consideration of its circulation in and impact on a wider audience or of the possibility of interpreting it as antisemitic in its meaning? Was it a miscalculation about the scope and nature of the evidently now different arenas for public and academic discourse in Ukraine? The event was due to consider public history and commemoration, and just as the full-scale invasion had been seen to change the terms of international politics, so footage and testimonies of atrocities from Bucha and elsewhere was surely likely radically to change the terms both of public and of specialist historical understanding. In fact, though distressingly, from the point of view of Moscow’s hybrid war, the two are worth considering together. Audio and video testimony of violence perpetrated in Bucha in 2022 was also useful to Moscow for its broader psychological impact. Ilya Khrzhanovskii’s contentious “immersive” experience for Babyn Iar Holocaust Memorial Centre was to simulate the “lived experience” of those involved (all parties, from victims to perpetrators and others

¹¹⁹ Олеся Котубей-Герущка, “Інтелектуальна провокація чи порівняння геноцидів: чому обговорюють назву дискусії «Чи потрібен Бабин Яр після Бучі?»,” *Суспільне Культура*, Жовтень 10, 2023, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://suspiine.media/culture/589923-intelektualna-provokacia-ci-porivnanna-genocidiv-comu-obgovoruut-nazvu-diskusii-ci-potriben-babin-ar-pisla-buchi/>.

in-between) in the mass killings there from September 1941.¹²⁰ It seemed highly distasteful, partly perhaps because of violence instigated by Russia already in train after 2014 in Crimea and the Donbas, though this reaction of distaste was often presented in pro-Russian narratives as a sign of unwillingness from Ukraine to confront participation in historic violence. Putin in June 2023 had referred, with substantial inaccuracies, to the Holocaust in Ukraine in public remarks at the St Petersburg Economic Forum and staff of the Babyn Iar Holocaust Memorial Centre had issued a public response and corrections.¹²¹ The question posed by the Academy of Sciences was valid, in the still ill-defined and porous arena of academic comment on domestically and internationally politicised public history. The announcement for the conference was issued on 6 October 2023 and then taken down, with the explanation that it had been postponed indefinitely following the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel.¹²²

Whereas the Academy of Sciences did not insist in wartime on claiming the space with this conference to discuss commemoration, including commemoration of the Holocaust in Ukraine, Volodymyr Birchak of the Tsentrl Doslidzhen' Vyzvol'noho Rukhu and Deputy Editor of *Istorychna Pravda* wrote from the front in Sumy in September 2023 to insist on interpreting public outcry in Pennsylvania around a monument to Ukrainian nationalist fighters as a confected element of anti-Ukrainian propaganda.¹²³ Birchak quotes, at second hand, the veteran at the centre of attention explaining how witnessing Russian violence against the population in L'viv at the beginning of WWII had led him to decide that fighting on the side of the Germans must be the better option. Birchak draws comparisons with the bronze bust of a former Nazi still adorning the offices of NASA. Birchak has resorted in the face of propaganda to familiar old defences ("circumstances forced Ukrainians into it;" "former German fighters can be memorialised, but Ukrainian fighters no longer can"). His reaction – argue for the diminution of the responsibility of the (non-elite) individual; argue that the individual was treated unjustly compared with others who had done worse – shows

¹²⁰ Світлана Дорош, "Бабин Яр і російський слід. Що стоїть за конфліктом навколо меморіалу," *BBC News Україна*, Березень 3, 2021, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-56156925>, paras. 41–44.

¹²¹ "«Бабин Яр» відповів на антиукраїнські висловлювання Путіна на Петербурзькому економічному форумі," *Історична правда*, Червень 21, 2023, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2023/06/21/162822/>. Khrzhanovskii then resigned from the project on 5 September 2023.

¹²² Котубей-Геруцька, "Інтелектуальна провокація чи порівняння геноцидів," para. 2.

¹²³ Володимир Бірчак, "Штучний скандал," *Історична правда*, Вересень 30, 2023, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2023/09/30/163188/>.

how information operations can provoke a reversion to a more emotional, defensive and simplistic range of arguments. His reaction also reminds his readership about hierarchies of identity and the external perceptions which accrue to the individuals associated with those particular identities.

It is possible to tackle the issue of the extent of misperceptions from outside Ukraine in broader and more generalised terms. February 2022 began to lay bare the extent of misperceptions about shared knowledge and shared understanding from different perspectives. The combination of the emphasis on antisemitism in current (and historic) Russian propaganda with the role of the Holocaust in post-WWII “western” public history should make the theme of the historiography of the Holocaust a good focus for starting to tackle this major and challenging epistemic issue. In his English language article for the first volume of *Eastern European Holocaust Studies* in 2023, Petro Dolhanov analyses how the Holocaust has been instrumentalised in Russian propaganda since 24 February 2022; he evaluates the extent of the decolonisation of historical narratives in western academia; and discusses whether and how the Russian invasion has affected scholarship about the Holocaust in Ukraine and in the countries of the European Union.¹²⁴

Since February 2022 there has been a proliferation of “public engagement” writing about propaganda from Moscow. This had got under way already in 2014, both for audiences in Ukraine and internationally, but, with good reason from a public policy point of view, it now seems almost unmissable. V’iacheslav Likhachov explains, in an August 2023 article for *Istorychna Pravda* based on a lecture given at the Ukrainian Centre for the Study of the History of the Holocaust, how the trope specifically of the Holocaust functions in current Russian propaganda today.¹²⁵

The more deep-seated issue of epistemic influence remains. Likewise, there remains the tension between the need to acknowledge the existence of deep-rooted Russian epistemic imperialism in the discursive landscape and in its effect on scholarship, and the need at the same time in some senses to ignore it in order to conduct proper scholarship. Vitalii Nakhmanovych in May 2024 makes the case in the pages of *Istorychna Pravda* that the extent of Russian epistemic influence is still being underestimated by scholars and public historians of the Holocaust in Ukraine (and therefore by their audiences).¹²⁶ Petro Dolhanov, responding in the pages of *Istorychna*

¹²⁴ Dolhanov, “Russian War, Neocolonialism and Holocaust Studies,” 49–52.

¹²⁵ В’ячеслав Ліхачов, “Як Росія інструменталізує Голокост,” *Історична правда*, Серпень 14, 2023, дата звернення Липень 22, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2023/08/14/163024/>.

¹²⁶ Віталій Нахманович, “Пам’ять про Голокост як зброя гібридної війни,” *Історична правда*, Травень 7, 2024, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2024/05/7/163896/>.

Pravda three months later, argues that the only appropriate academic response to revanchist propaganda is more and better scholarship.¹²⁷ The new circumstances of war, as with the historical research discussed above, if not with every new debate on public history, are making Dolhanov's proposal more realistic than before. But what research will best unlock new perspectives, especially in this field at the politically instrumentalised boundary of academic history and still so important for "explaining Ukraine?"¹²⁸

Various contributors to the 2022 edition of *Holocaust Studies: A Ukrainian Focus* discussed Serhii Loznyiisia's film about Babyn Iar.¹²⁹ Ivan Kozlenko discussed the reception of the film on its launch in Ukraine in 2021.¹³⁰ The journal's editors discussed with Iohanan Petrovskii-Shtern some of the historical distortions it creates.¹³¹ Analysis of audience reception of the film is one way of measuring, and building a shared picture of, differences in understanding. This applies both between scholars and critics in Ukraine, and between them and their colleagues outside Ukraine. As Petro Dolhanov argued in *East European Holocaust Studies*, one consequence of the growing societal awareness in Ukraine of Moscow's approach to information war has been a heightened shared sensitivity to the extent to which misperceptions from outside Ukraine very often, if not overridingly, apply in Moscow's favour.

In 2023, Iohanan Petrovskii-Shtern and Anna Medvedov'ska continue with "film reception studies," looking at the 2019 Netflix documentary series *The Devil Next Door*.¹³² The series depicts the long legal battles of John Demjanjuk, the recurrent public interest around which in the 1980s was referred to by Iaroslav Hrytsak (in his abovementioned *Krytyka* article) as being central to the circumstances which gave rise to the initially interesting

¹²⁷ Петро Долганов, "«Зміщення акцентів», чи пошук істини? Якою має бути українська відповідь на інструменталізацію пам'яті про Голокост під час війни?," *Історична правда*, Травень 30, 2024, дата звернення Липень 22, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2024/05/30/163964/>.

¹²⁸ Willis, "Reception Theory."

¹²⁹ Сергій Лозниця, *Бабин Яр. Контекст* (Netherlands: Atoms&Void; Ukraine: Меморіальний центр Голокосту "Бабин Яр", 2021).

¹³⁰ Іван Козленко, "Бабин Яр Сергія Лозниці. Український контекст," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 173–183.

¹³¹ Йоханан Петровський-Штерн, "Бабин Яр. Викривлений контекст. Розмова з Йохананом Петровським-Штерном про документальний фільм Сергія Лозниці «Бабин Яр. Контекст»,» *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 14 (2022): 155–165.

¹³² Йоханан Петровський-Штерн, "Межа толерантності: «The Devil Next Door». Розмова з Йохананом Петровським-Штерном," *Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір* 15 (2023): 132–148. See: Yossi Bloch and Daniel Sivan, *The Devil Next Door*, United States: Netflix, 2019.

comparison between the Holocaust and the Holodomor, and inter-diaspora disputes about them in north America.¹³³ What documents used in Demjanjuk's trial had been fabricated by the KGB at the time and what effect had this had on public understanding?¹³⁴ If it is noticeably easier to discuss propaganda and information operations in public discourse now than it was ten years ago, and if the war now makes it more necessary, what are the best ways of conducting this discussion, when neat boundaries between policy discourse, academic discourse, political discourse and societal discourse do not apply, where many would prefer that they did? However, a year into the new circumstances of war, and in a new context of wider awareness about misinformation, discussing the role of fabricated documents now also becomes possible on the subject of the Holocaust in Ukraine.¹³⁵ This further constrains the influence of Russian smyslokratiya over Ukraine. The "reception studies" approach, underscoring the temporality and contingency of interpretation, facilitates the sharing of information where previously epistemic convention and hierarchy raised barriers to that.

A pause on the journey

It seems difficult accurately to assess progress in shared thought and shared learning during wartime. If it is not true that the "muses" (of intellectual and artistic endeavour) are "silent" during war, then at least it may be hard to hear or discern what is often the profound change and progress taking place. Iurii Radchenko in January 2024 discusses on the *Ukraina Moderna* website the contributions to debate of volume 34 of the related *Ukraina Moderna* journal of the previous autumn in what reads also like an evaluation of the state of play in our field.¹³⁶ At the time, he sounds a note of pessimism: he is not hopeful about the capacity of Ukrainian society to engage in a public conversation about the Holocaust in Ukraine, like the public conversation held in France ("or, as people say, even like Poland").¹³⁷

He distils the key points in public policy, in politics and in academic debate in this field as they interact with each other. He reminds us that evidence of talking about the national role in the Holocaust remains a kind of "train ticket for the journey to European integration."¹³⁸ With this stra-

¹³³ Грицак, "Голокост і Голодомор," 14–16.

¹³⁴ Петровський-Штерн, "Межа толерантності," 137.

¹³⁵ Петровський-Штерн, "Межа толерантності," 141–143, 148.

¹³⁶ Радченко, "Важлива дискусія у важкі часи."

¹³⁷ Радченко, "Важлива дискусія у важкі часи," para. 19.

¹³⁸ Радченко, "Важлива дискусія у важкі часи," para. 1.

tegic national issue in mind, he argues that the relevant question now is whether historians are reevaluating how the events of WWII are influencing events today.¹³⁹ He notes, in the *Ukraina Moderna* volume, the unhelpful oversimplification of the over-used binary distinction between “Jews” and “Ukrainians” on the subject of the Holocaust in Ukraine, when the presence of other identities, Jewish and non-Jewish, was also a factor.¹⁴⁰ Another way of overcoming this overly-well-established resort to binaries would have been to involve more Polish scholars in authoring the volume.¹⁴¹ The historic difficulty for Ukraine of finding the right balance between a strong society and strong enough institutions of state, especially because of the implications this has for the protection of minorities, remains in his view an unresolved problem. Comparing the Polish government-in-exile at the time of the Holocaust with the divided and partly imprisoned leadership of the OUN, he argues that even the antisemitic Polish government-in-exile was able to exert a moderating, and, crucially, explicitly anti-genocidal, influence on its followers in Poland in a way in which the OUN leadership was not.¹⁴² The theme of the weakness hitherto of Ukrainian institutions is present also, as he notes, in the discussion in the pages of *Ukraina Moderna* about the current dilapidation of pre-Holocaust Jewish cultural heritage and about the lack of state involvement in general since 1991 in its preservation.¹⁴³ The issue of the continuing vulnerability of Ukraine to Moscow’s information operations is also raised here, in the discussion of a film, in receipt of state funding from the Ukrainian Cultural Fund, which had questioned Krymchak and Karaite (ancient Crimean Jewish) identity, raising the idea that they (like other borderland identities open to manipulation in the imperial interest) were artificial Russian constructs.¹⁴⁴ The continued presence, in this volume at least, of practices seeping from pedagogy into academia, such as the need to be aware of external information manipulation instead of focusing on scholarly debate, is a source of irritation.¹⁴⁵ Further Ukrainian-Jewish emigration since February 2022 will not make interfaith progress, in scholarship and in the quality of public debate, any easier.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 0.

¹⁴⁰ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 4.

¹⁴¹ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 5.

¹⁴² Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 8.

¹⁴³ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 16.

This article has made the points that the development of the historiography of the Holocaust in Ukraine has been inextricably connected with the path of Ukraine's post-colonial relationship with Russia, and with the impact of the associated memory politics on public discourse. It has also argued that there have been signs, including since February 2022, of the consolidation of separate parts of the public arena, so that debate or dispute in academia and debate in public and civic life can now be simultaneously intersubjective and yet not overly mutually constraining. The event hosted in Kharkiv by the Literary Museum in collaboration with the Centre for Interethnic Relations Research in Eastern Europe, also to mark International Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, took as its theme "Why and how do we talk about genocides?"¹⁴⁷ The widening of opportunities in related public discourse, in the circumstances of the current war, is one of the fruits of momentum in scholarship on the subject of the Holocaust in Ukraine. The Literary Museum has made a priority of pursuing discursive agency as a strategic theme, "owning our own choice of names" as they have put it.¹⁴⁸ The event programme still epitomised the ongoing uneasy interaction between the wartime exigencies of public discourse – calling out "cultural genocide" – and the possibility of clearer acceptance of the national past through new literature and new historical approaches. The research of one of the speakers, Daria Mattingly, has focused on perpetrator studies: Ukrainian participation in the Soviet policies which caused the Holodomor.¹⁴⁹ Sofiia Andrukhovych, also participating, discussed the treatment of the Holocaust in her 2020 novel *Amadoka* with Nataliia Horbach of Zaporizhzhia National University – a treatment which Yuliya Ilchuk has described as managing to "overcome Ukrainian silencing and dismemory about Jewish suffering."¹⁵⁰ The national conversation about the Holocaust in Ukraine may have started but is far from finished: the Lit Museum's point

¹⁴⁷ "П'ятий Харків. Чому і як ми говоримо про геноцид?," *Історична правда*, Січень 24, 2024, дата звернення Липень 22, 2024, <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2024/01/24/163578/>.

¹⁴⁸ Маргарита Дежкіна та Микита Ольховський, "«Переосмислюємо топоніми міста.» У Харкові Літмузей відкрив виставку «Власні назви»," *Суспільне Харків*, Липень 29, 2023, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/539715-pereosmisluemo-toponimi-mista-u-harkovi-litmuzej-vidkriv-vistavku-vlasni-nazvi/>.

¹⁴⁹ Daria Mattingly, "«Idle, Drunk and Good-for-Nothing»: The Rank-and-File Perpetrators of 1932–1933 Famine in Ukraine and Their Representation in Cultural Memory" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ Yuliya Ilchuk, "The Multidirectional Turn in the Literature about Holocaust in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine (On the Material of Sofia Andrukhovych's *Amadoka*)," *Twenty-First-Century Literature and the Holocaust. A Comparative and Multilingual Perspective*, *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2024): 125–142, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://journals.openedition.org/td/22818>.

that the starting-point in Ukraine (starting from Kharkiv) must be embracing the responsibility for one's own choice of words is important here.¹⁵¹

Conclusion: growing historical perspicuity under pressure of war

This article has argued that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has begun to change our perceptions of the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine, alongside much else, whether from inside the country or from outside it. Partly this is because the full-scale invasion has made many readerships (not all) question knowledge assumptions about Ukraine, which had previously been founded on very long-standing paradigms guided by Moscow and managed in its interests. Now the "Overton window" for understanding Ukraine in general has moved quite sharply.

At the same time, and on a global rather than a national scale, for international audiences less focused on Ukraine, the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, and subsequent Israel-Hamas war, have again reframed global perceptions of our topic in public non-academic discourse. In his May 2024 article for *Istorychna Pravda*, Vitalii Nakhmanovych notes that Israel referenced the Holocaust as justification for its reprisals against Hamas in Gaza.¹⁵² He also underscores Moscow's interests in this renewed conflict there.¹⁵³ To the designation, in parts of mediated global public discourse, of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine as genocidal is added the designation, also in parts of international public discourse, of Israel's actions in Gaza as genocidal.

Because of the impact on Ukraine of the legacy of imperial *smyslokratiya*, the country's public leadership still often seems to require the contribution of academic historians (and not just of publicists or commentators). There is now more precision and openness in scholarship in Ukraine

¹⁵¹ The Centre for Urban History in Lviv in August 2023 convened a general workshop on public history. See: "Public History in the Context of War: Rethinking Approaches and Formats," Centre for Urban History, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/conferences/public-history-and-war-2/>; the Tkuma Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies used its specialist Holocaust Studies focus to convene a workshop at the Institute Beit-Chana in Dnipro on how wartime phenomenological learning influences the historian, academically and pedagogically. See: "Війна та погляд історика. Як життя під час катастрофи формує наше розуміння минулого," Український інститут вивчення Голокосту "Ткума," дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://tkuma.dp.ua/ua/2015-02-17-11-50-31/novosti/3785-vijna-ta-poglyad-istorika-yak-zhittya-pid-chas-katastrofi-formue-nashe-rozumynnya-minulogo>.

¹⁵² Нахманович, "Пам'ять про Голокост," para. 35. He comments (para. 31) that the Hamas atrocities in Israel on 7 October 2023 were interpreted by Jews internationally as a reminder of the Holocaust, though clearly, as he says, on a different scale.

¹⁵³ Iurii Radchenko, a consistent advocate for interfaith contact as the basis for building a strong interfaith society, noted the risk, after 7 October 2023, to earlier steps to joint Muslim-Jewish commemorative initiatives set out in the Abraham Accords, and expressed the hope that they would not be shelved indefinitely. See: Радченко, "Важлива дискусія у важкі часи," para. 13.

than there was in the past, about the different roles of ethnic Ukrainians in the destruction of the pre-WWII populations of Ukrainian Jews, during the Holocaust and in the aftermath of the war. In general, the public arena for the construction of shared meaning in Ukraine, as perceived from outside, is expanding and consolidating. If we take academic discursive leadership in this instance as a sign of the political leadership which will follow (rather than waiting for political leadership to define historical scope, in the style of a non-democracy), then perhaps, as before over the last thirty years, scholarly innovation and reframing augurs positively for national policy innovation in public history and commemoration on our topic.

This article has also argued that, while there have been changes to academic debate on the subject of the Holocaust in Ukraine since 24 February 2022, as might be expected given the often-radical changes in the lived experience of the scholars most closely involved, what has changed most for closer and more distant audiences is our perception of the field as a consequence of our perception and experience of the new war. This can decrease, as well as increase, our desire for engagement with the field. In a sober conclusion to his January 2024 article discussed above, Iurii Radchenko, on the subject of responsibility in respect of the study of the Holocaust in Ukraine, refers to a line from the Mishnah, from which in his translation I derive the meaning, “you may not ever be granted the satisfaction of finishing this work, but that does not mean either that you get to walk away from it”.¹⁵⁴

Away from our topic and contextualising it at the time of writing, there is a determination (and an opportunity provided by digital media) to create witness testimony and survivor testimony on a new scale; and much qualitative academic research is using interviews to record personal experience.¹⁵⁵ Conversely and simultaneously, one study of research from Ukraine post-February 2022 published in January 2024 shows, unsurprisingly, drops in academic output.¹⁵⁶

This article has also argued that current experience of the new war, whether direct or indirect, has in some instances at least allowed or obliged individuals to reinterpret their own understanding of their own knowledge in a way which moves scholarship forwards. For a country which is targeted

¹⁵⁴ Радченко, “Важлива дискусія у важкі часи,” para. 19.

¹⁵⁵ “Дослідження впливу війни на суспільство: методологічний семінар,” Cedos, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://cedos.org.ua/events/doslidzhennya-vplyvu-vijny-na-suspilstvo-metodologichnyi-seminar/>.

¹⁵⁶ “Вплив війни на українські дослідження,” Національний фонд досліджень України, дата звернення Серпень 30, 2024, <https://nrfu.org.ua/news/vplyv-vijny-na-ukrayinski-doslidzhennya/>.

for revanchist invasion and epistemic suppression by its larger neighbour, what should academic scholarship look like, on the parts played by Ukrainians in the most archetypal genocide in human history?

Scientific understanding of the social psychology of trauma suggests that shared experience in Ukraine now may be “facilitating the construction of different elements of social identity: purpose, values, efficacy and collective worth.”¹⁵⁷ But while these new shared senses of meaning are in the process of being created now, especially from outside, and no doubt in the thick of it as well, it is only possible to note, and take some encouragement, from the process, rather than to draw overly-firm conclusions. There is now new research, there is new school curriculum reform, based on a more courageous confrontation with the harm and violence of the past, and caused by a more courageous confrontation with the present, whether or not it was chosen or looked for.

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¹⁵⁷ Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma,” 3.

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